ILO CONVENTION
ON INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES,
1989 (No. 169):

A MANUAL
The purpose of this publication is to make it easier to understand and use ILO Convention No. 169.

In general, indigenous and tribal peoples are not effectively protected by existing laws and policies. National laws often do not address their specific situations, characteristics and needs, and they are often among the most impoverished and disadvantaged groups in any country. This situation has led to the development and adoption of ILO Convention No. 169, aimed at the protection of indigenous and tribal peoples and their rights.

Convention No.169 is the foremost international legal instrument which deals specifically with the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, and whose influence extends beyond the number of actual ratifications.

Some indigenous and tribal peoples are already knowledgeable about ILO standards. There is still a need, especially for those who do not have a legal background, to be provided with an opportunity to become familiar with the principles of the Convention. A number of examples of real situations involving indigenous and tribal peoples have been included in this manual. It is hoped that these will help the readers to understand the articles of the Convention, and how to apply them in a practical context.

Convention No. 169 may be used as a tool to stimulate dialogue between governments and indigenous and tribal peoples, and in this way, to improve their situation. We sincerely hope that in this way, we will have been able to contribute, in a very small way, towards increased co-operation and harmony between and among governments, indigenous and tribal peoples, and others.

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How to use this manual

This is an easy-to-use manual to ILO Convention No. 169. It helps to understand the Convention, and how it can be used to gain recognition, promotion and protection of indigenous and tribal peoples’ rights.

The manual does not explain each article of the Convention. It focuses on key concepts such as, for example, human rights, culture, land, development, education and health.

Nor does it strictly follow the structure of the Convention. It is divided into different sections. Each section deals with a key concept.

For easy reference, we have included the article or articles of the Convention which are being discussed.

There is a descriptive explanation of each article. Concepts are introduced by using examples and experiences from indigenous and tribal peoples. This is to demonstrate the articles of the Convention in a practical way.

We have also included diagrams and photographs which highlight and explain some important elements of the articles.