



SPOTLIGHT ON KEY ORGANISATIONS: INDIGENOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA

This Spotlight presents an overview of some of the most important organisations supporting indigenous peoples' access to justice in Latin America. These organisations contribute to enhancing indigenous rights through research, advocacy and capacity building activities. Most of them focus on community justice and self-legislation, judicial pluralism and interlegality. In this Spotlight, the organisations have been categorised according to the geographical reach of their work: [international and regional](#); [national](#); and [local-level](#).

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

► **Andean Network for Peace and Community Justice (*Red Andina de Justicia de Paz y Comunitaria*)**

Link: <http://www.justiciaenlosandes.org/>

Areas of Expertise: Access to justice, human rights, indigenous rights, public policy, indigenous justice

Key Activities: Access to Justice Observatory, public policy analysis

The Andean Network for Peace and Community Justice seeks democratic reforms to enhance the inclusiveness of justice systems. It runs the [Access to Justice Observatory](#) to monitor progress and setbacks in access to justice. The network is represented by civil society organisations working in three Andean countries. They are the [Legal Defence Institute \(*Instituto de Defensa Legal*\)](#)¹ in Peru; the [Participation and Justice Network \(*Red Participación y Justicia*\)](#) in Bolivia, which promotes national and regional actions to strengthen citizen participation, access to justice and democracy; and the [Centre for Law and Society \(*Centro sobre Derecho y Sociedad*\)](#) in Ecuador, which promotes justice, and the application of law, human rights and democratic values. Its regional scope enables the network to conduct interesting comparative exercises between different justice systems and contexts.

¹ For more information, the Legal Defence Institute is also featured below in 'national-level organisations'.



▶ International Institute of Law and Society (*Instituto Internacional de Derecho y Sociedad- IILS*)

Link: <http://www.derechoysociedad.org/sobre/sobre.html>

Areas of Expertise: Human rights, international humanitarian law, multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue, indigenous peoples and collective rights, judicial pluralism, citizen participation

Key Activities: Civil society capacity building, education programmes and diplomas, networking, organisation of workshops and events, South-South knowledge exchange, strategic litigation

The IILS seeks to promote institutional and legal reforms by bringing together Peruvian and international academics to debate pluricultural and democratic governance, and the rule of law. It currently coordinates the [International Programme of Exchange on Multiculturalism, Judicial Pluralism and Indigenous Rights](#) which has three main components: an inter-university exchange programme; public policy monitoring and advocacy activities; and provision of technical support to indigenous peoples and to other specialised agencies.

▶ Latin American Legal Anthropology Network (*Red Latinoamericana de Antropología Jurídica - RELAJU*)

Link: <http://relaju.alertanet.org/>

Areas of Expertise: Judicial pluralism, justice in indigenous communities, gender and access to justice, prior consultation rights, free determination in development, interculturality, indigenous territories

Key Activities: Workshops and events, networking, research, analysis, publications

RELAJU aims to improve judicial pluralism in multi-ethnic countries in Latin America. To do so, it brings together anthropologists, legal scholars and sociologists from 11 countries to share and advance knowledge on law, justice and indigenous rights. RELAJU's last congress took place in Bolivia in October 2012 and focused on issues around interlegality, state power and collective rights.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

▶ Centre for Research and Academic Studies in Social Anthropology (*Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social - CIESAS*)

Link: <http://www.ciesas.edu.mx/>

Areas of Expertise: Social anthropology, history, ethno-history and linguistics

Key Activities: Research, expert training, advocacy, analysis and evaluation of public policies

Thanks to its regional approach and collaborations with local, national and international organisations, this Mexican research centre is regionally recognised for its leadership in its areas of expertise. In particular, it is known for its work in judicial anthropology and human rights, and for its specialised training programmes.



► Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador - CONAIE*)

Link: <http://www.conaie.org/>

Areas of Expertise: Collective rights, natural resources, land and territories, intercultural education, cultural identities, women and children, indigenous youth, community self-legislation, participatory democracy

Key Activities: Advocacy, communications, capacity building and organisational strengthening

This national organisation unites the three main confederations of indigenous movements in Ecuador: [CONFENIAE](#) in the Amazon; [ECUARUNARI](#) in the mountain region; and COICE on the coast. Between them, these confederations represent all the different ethnic and indigenous groups in the country. The main objective of CONAIE is to defend indigenous rights in relation to economic, political and socio-cultural issues. Its main activities include promoting indigenous rights to self-determination and conserving indigenous identities. In 1998, CONAIE contributed to the incorporation of indigenous peoples' collective rights into the [national constitution](#).

► Indigenous Cooperation Centre of Colombia (*Centro de Cooperación Indígena de Colombia - CECOIN*)

Link: <http://www.observatorioetnicocecoin.org.co/>

Areas of Expertise: Public policy, territory and natural resources, indigenous organisation, indigenous rights, human rights and conflicts, Afro-descendants

Key Activities: Research, advocacy, database management, education and training for indigenous leaders, publication of the journal *Ethnic Groups and Politics* (*Etnia & Política*)

CECOIN is a leading indigenous rights organisation in Colombia. One of its main activities is to produce a database of indigenous territories in Andean areas affected by investment projects and armed conflicts. This comprehensive database is particularly relevant as it is compiled with information provided by indigenous communities and organisations themselves.

► Institute of Social and Economic Studies (*Instituto de Estudios Socio-económicos - INESC*)

Link: <http://www.inesc.org.br/>

Areas of Expertise: Budget and financial sector policies, human rights, international politics, children and youth, indigenous rights, nutrition and food safety, social and environmental rights, agrarian reform

Key Activities: Civil society capacity building, advocacy to increase citizen participation in decision making and public policy design, public policy analysis and oversight, budget analysis and oversight

This Brazilian organisation seeks to improve representative and participative democracy by strengthening civil society to increase its influence on decision making processes. One of its main activities is to promote and strengthen the demands of Brazilian indigenous groups for the safeguarding of their human rights. It also seeks to enhance the responsiveness of public policy to the specific needs of indigenous groups.



► Legal Defence Institute (*Instituto de Defensa Legal - IDL*)

Link: <http://www.idl.org.pe/area/pueblos-indigenas>

Areas of Expertise: Transparency, governance, gender and women's access to justice, interculturality, peace, community justice, human rights

Key Activities: Analysis and monitoring of public policy, legal representation and advising on social processes

Through its [Access to Justice Department](#), this Peruvian organisation promotes the strengthening and use of community mechanisms to resolve conflicts with the aim of improving access to justice for rural and indigenous communities. In collaboration with civil society organisations, IDL provides legal representation, advising on social processes and public policy analysis. IDL is also part of the [Andean Network for Peace and Community Justice](#).²

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

► Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca - CRIC*)

Link: <http://www.cric-colombia.org/portal/>

Areas of Expertise: Indigenous peoples' social, economic and cultural development, indigenous rights, territory, and environmental, political, economic, educational, health and legal autonomy

Key Activities: Community-based projects, advocacy, defence of indigenous rights, capacity building, legal support

CRIC is an indigenous organisation with one of the oldest histories of struggle and activism in Latin America. It has played a key role in community development and community organisational strengthening. CRIC is particularly significant as it has managed to keep out of the armed conflict that has been going on in Colombia for more than thirty years. This impartiality has helped indigenous communities to gain more territorial, political and legal autonomy.

► Kuna General Congress (*Congreso General Kuna*)

Link: <http://www.gunayala.org.pa/>

Areas of Expertise: Social, economic, cultural, environmental and political development, territorial integrity, Kuna identity

Key Activities: Analysis, design, implementation and monitoring of development plans and projects, protection of ecosystems and community and private goods, natural resource management, defence of territorial integrity and Kuna identity, institutional strengthening, appointment of commissions and funds management

The Kuna General Congress is the highest political authority of the Kuna – one of the indigenous peoples living in Panama – and administers 49 communities within the Kuna Yala Region. Through its administrative and political functions – including development projects, design of regulations, appointment of community authorities and training for judges – the Kuna General Congress seeks to protect Kuna identity and territorial integrity. As such, it has the power to sanction institutions, communities and individuals who do not comply with their commitments or with the decisions made by the Congress.

² For more information on the Andean Network for Community and Peace Justice, see the 'International and Regional' section above.



► Mixe Peoples' Services (*Servicios del Pueblo Mixe*)

Link: <http://www.redindigena.net/ser/frameset.html>

Areas of Expertise: Indigenous rights, indigenous autonomy, community legal systems and judicial pluralism, land and territories, organic production, fair trade, equitable development for women

Key Activities: Legal counsel, capacity building, research

This Mexican civil society organisation brings together indigenous professionals to provide individuals, organisations and authorities from the Mixe people and other communities of the State of Oaxaca, including the Mixtecas, Chinantecas, Huaves and Zapotecas from the northern and southern mountain regions, with legal advice, information and capacity building. It also contributes to the promotion and defence of indigenous peoples' rights and cultural identity, specifically through research on judicial pluralism and community legal systems.

► Tlachinollan Mountain Human Rights Centre (*Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan*)

Link: <http://www.tlachinollan.org/>

Areas of Expertise: Indigenous peoples' collective rights, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, militarisation, migration, public safety, prosecution and administration of justice, indigenous territories

Key Activities: Advocacy, civil society capacity building, networking

The Tlachinollan Mountain Human Rights Centre is a Mexican civil society organisation whose mission is to promote and defend the rights of the Na Savi, Naua, Me'phaa, Amuzgos and Mestizos indigenous communities from the mountain zones and the Costa Chica from the State of Guerrero.

CONTACT [FUNDAR](#)

To learn more about these and other key organisations focusing on indigenous rights in Latin America, contact the authors, Juan Carlos Martínez, PhD, Researcher in Fundar's Human Rights and Citizen Security Area, at juancarlos@fundar.org.mx, and Marine Perron, ELLA Researcher, at marine@fundar.org.mx.

FIND OUT MORE FROM [ELLA](#)

To learn more about other approaches to promoting indigenous and ethnic minority rights in Latin America, read the [ELLA Guide](#), which has a full list of the knowledge materials on this theme. To learn more about other development issues, browse other [ELLA Themes](#).



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