

Traditional and Indigenous Food Systems and Nutrition

Report 2023

Start Date: April 2018



IUNS
INTERNATIONAL
UNION OF
NUTRITIONAL
SCIENCES

Task Force Chair/s

Dr. Gina Kennedy, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

Active Task Force Members

- Dr. Harriet Kuhnlein, Steering Committee (Prof Emerita, McGill University, Canada)
- Dr. Thingnganing Longvah, Steering Committee (Senior Scientist, National Institute of India, India)
- Dr. Vish Prakash, Vice President of IUNS and Representative in this Task Force (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, India)
- Dr. Sinee Chotiboriboon, Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University (INMU), Thailand
- Dr. Namkolo Covic, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Ethiopia
- Dr. Treena Delormier, School of Human Nutrition, McGill University, Canada
- Dr. Rebecca Kanter, Department of Nutrition, University of Chile
- Dr. Patrick Maundu - Kenya Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (KENRIK), National Museums of Kenya
- Dr. Nasrin Omidvar, School of Nutrition Sciences and Food Technology and National Nutrition & Food Technology Research Institute, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Iran
- Zeyuan Wang, PhD candidate, University of Toronto, task force intern. Zeyuan Wang is a young career scientist, serving as volunteer with the task force since February 2021.

Has your objective(s) as a task force been modified since the original proposal? If so, please provide brief justification.

No. We have not modified our objectives.

Have the activities to be undertaken been modified since the original proposal? If so, please provide brief overview and justification.

As per the original 2017 task force proposal, the emphasis of this term of the task force has been oriented toward Traditional and Indigenous Food Systems and Nutrition, with the objective of documenting diverse national and local food systems and promoting elements within them for improving nutrition and health in various ways, including livelihood development of knowledge holders. TIFSaN members have remained very active. We completed and presented several key activities during the IUNS meeting in Tokyo, in December 2022.

In terms of activities, we have fulfilled our original ideas to;

- i. Prepare and deliver policy briefs to national governments, UN agencies, and scholastic societies to promote potential beneficial nutritional and environmental impacts of local traditional/Indigenous food systems to better enable governments to meet SDG commitments.
- ii. prepare and present symposia on "Why and how to document local cultural food systems of Indigenous/Tribal Peoples" and related topics on biodiversity and food composition and
- iii. Prepare and present a plenary and/or symposium at the next IUNS-ICN Congress in Tokyo

At the IUNS-ICN in Tokyo we;

- Ø Disseminated our Journal supplementary issue in Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems that was on the topic of Local, Traditional and Indigenous Food Systems for climate resilience and nutrition
 - Ø Prepared a paper "The role of traditional knowledge and food biodiversity to transform modern food systems" published in Supplementary issue of Trends in Food Science and Technology
 - Ø Delivered a session at IUNS on The advantages and challenge(s) of incorporating traditional foods in food-based dietary guidelines for more sustainable and inclusive population guidance
- Held a reunion of Task Force reunion of members past and present and recognized the contribution and longstanding service of Dr. Harriet Kuhnleing during an evening event at ICN Tokyo

Brief overview of activities since last annual report

During the period January to December 2023 we have had two virtual meetings of the task force in July and December 2023 respectively. During the December 2023 meeting our previous IUNS representative Dr. Prakash Vish confirmed that all task forces were no longer “on hold” and could resume activities in preparation for IUNS 2025 in Paris. During our two virtual meetings in 2023, we agreed to focus on recruitment of new members to help us prepare for the IUNS in Paris and the joint hosting of the webinar series with the Sustainable Diets task force.

Activities undertaken in 2023 by smaller groups of TF members include;

Dr. Chotiboriboon is engaged in two projects with an interdisciplinary research team from Thailand, Japan, and Russia, including indigenous researchers, government organizations, and non-government organizations. The title of the project is Climate Change Resilience of Indigenous SocioEcological Systems (RISE), funded by the National Science and Technology Department Agency, Thailand; and a project for recovery of climate change by local communities and civil society organized by the local development institute in Thailand.

Dr. Chotiboriboon has presented her research on Indigenous food systems: strengths, challenges for sustainable food systems, and nutritional status: a case study of the PWO. Karen People, Thailand during a Multi-country workshop: Forest food systems and their contribution to food security and nutrition. May 22nd, 2023. She also presented on indigenous food systems in the midst of climate change with interdisciplinary methodology at the 26th National Food and Nutrition Conference, which emphasized the promotion of good nutrition and elderly wellbeing. The seminar was arranged from March 15th to 16th, 2023, at the Bitec exhibition and conference center in Bangnaa, Bangkok. The research was also presented in November 2023 at the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre where the presentation elaborated on the wisdom of the Karen people of ThungYaiNaresuan in coping with climate crisis. The presentation was part of policy and academic work for public interest in coping with climate change and the loss of biodiversity among the people to support the COP movement.

Dr. Namukolo Covic and **Dr. Kennedy** have been active in the Vision for Adaptive Crops and Soils (VACS) initiative. Dr. Covic participated in VACS Phase 1 activities, which were to determine a prioritized set of the most important crops for nutrition across six crop categories for each of the five African Union sub-regions, targeting ~6-15 crops per region with specific focus on traditional and indigenous foods. A consultation on this took place May 18 – 19, 2023. Dr. Covic chaired the consultation meeting assisted by Rob Betram (USAID) and Lindiwe Sibanda (CGIAR- Systems Board Chair).

Determine a prioritized set of 15-25 crops for crop modelling in Phase 2.

Phase 2: conduct crop modeling to reflect potential for the 15 – 25 crops.

Work towards mobilizing resources to set up a crop trust to support research.

The partners are African Union, US State Department Office of Special Envoy on Global Food Security and FAO. The justification for this project includes the articulation that traditional and indigenous foods should be part of Africa's food systems transformation toolkit. You will recall that our Independent UNFSS Dialogue contributed to what was finally included in the African Common Position on Food Systems transformation.

Dr. Covic and **Dr. Kennedy** attended a VACS meeting hosted by the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, USA in November, 2023. The meeting furthered the impetus to focus on underutilized, nutrient dense crops that have the potential to improve diet diversity and nutritional status while also making farming and food systems more resilient to climate change.

Dr. Covic participated in the Resilience Evidence Forum hosted by USAID Bureau for Resilience and the Global Resilience Partnership in I participated in the above conference in Cape Town on 20 – 22 June 2023. At this meeting it was clearly indicated that traditional and indigenous foods must be considered in efforts to enhance food systems resilience on the African continent and elsewhere. Somebody from India also made the same statement for what she referred to as indigenous communities.

Dr. Delormier participated virtually in the FAO Indigenous Peoples Food Systems meetings in Feb/March. Dr. Delormier is part of a large research group called "Arramat" with over 100 researchers where she is working on biodiversity, ways of knowing food and Indigenous people's food sovereignty.

Dr. Kanter has been working on 2 large research proposals situated around the new FBDG of Chile. Chile's new FBDG emphasizes traditional culinary preparations and sustainable diets. One proposal Rebecca is working on is how to implement the guidelines. Another smaller proposal is an inter-disciplinary network of researchers and academics for food systems (farm to fork) trying to bring everyone together to work on the same problem of how we harness traditional foods and work together. There is also a new Food Sovereignty strategy for Chile. Rebecca is working on how to bring diverse disciplines together around these two new resources.

Dr. Kuhnlein participated on the Advisory Board for a US National Academy of Sciences project with the Swinomish Indian Nation – a Coast Salish Nation on the West Coast of North America. The project is "Transforming American Indian and Alaska Native STEM Learning via Indigenous Knowledge Translation, Education and the Environment. This is the 4th of a 5 year very successful project. Many of the activities relate to food. Dr. Kuhnlein contributed to the early planning of the Native American Nutrition Congress held at

Shakopee in Minnesota. In October 2023, she attended, and presented at the FAO Global Hub (in Rome) "Global Indigenous Youth Forum". This was an incredible meeting held in teepee-style tents at the FAO entry during the week of World Food Day.

Dr. Kuhnlein and **Dr. Longvah** are planning a book chapter on sustainability of Indigenous food systems for a book planned on NE India Indigenous food systems. Dr. Omidvar has been working on updating FBDG and has sent in a proposal FBDG for agro-ecological zones. She has held speaking engagements in Iran discussing the need for higher education for food and nutrition, the need to upgrade training programs and also the need to place some emphasis for working on traditional foods and cultural aspects of food intake.

Dr. Maundu is engaging in a comprehensive project with the Government of Kenya on the role of traditional foods in food security. The motivation for this research project has been the severe and prolonged drought. A series of talks has started with the Government of Kenya and incorporating traditional foods in food security policies. Dr. Maundu and his team are building the capacity of communities to document their traditional foods, youth engage in Key Informant interviews of elder persons who know about harvest and preparation of these foods. With support from the Government of Kenya to document Indigenous Foods of Kenya, they are setting up systems of documentation for all 47 counties in Kenya. Government is providing computers and cameras for this documentation. 5 counties have been completed thus far. They have partnered with India for some of the research and documentation protocols.

Patrick's role is training the young people on the research methods and tools that are being used to document the food system. Including video and audio equipment and the procedure of interviewing.

Zeyuan Wang attended "the Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems" with the Global Hub of FAO in Rome, Italy. He joined the drafting committee for "White/Wiphala Paper on Indigenous People's Mobility" and "Standards of Practice to Guide Ecosystem Restoration".

In July 2023, Zeyuan collaborated with Good Food Fund China and conducted "Identifying Indigenous Blang People's Food Biodiversity in Tea-ecosystem" and "Exploring an Art-based Food Education for Promoting Indigenous Food Systems in Jingmai Mountain, Yunnan, China". The team identified around 200 traditional food ingredients with medicinal functions, cultural meanings, and cooking methods. The team also co-created a play with local Indigenous Blang people for traditional food systems education. The results have been exhibited in the Shanghai Urban Space Art Season from September 2023 to November 2023.

In August, Zeyuan and his team presented “A Review of Indigenous Edible Spices in Chinese Minority Groups and the Implications for Sustainable Development” at the 11th Asian Food Study Conference in Bangkok, Thailand.

From August 2023 to November 2023, Zeyuan conducted fieldwork research in Palawan, the Philippines regarding how traditional health beliefs and infant formula marketing are disseminated through different communication channels and influence breastfeeding behavior. The interviewees include some Indigenous/minority groups, such as Tagbanua, Bajau, Palaw'an, Batak, and Molbog.

Please list any successes accomplished during this period

Planning for the collaboration between these two IUNS TF began in 2022 with a meeting at the IUNS ICN in Tokyo, attended by several members of both TFs. [Note: both TFs held collaborative sessions at the ICN.] Since then, meetings have taken place and a webinar programme for the Ag2NUT platform has been developed on FOOD AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, SUSTAINABLE DIETS, AND EVIDENCE.

Background and Objective of the three part series are to:

- Ø Strengthen the narrative across the agriculture, food system and nutrition communities on how evidence should be acquired, disseminated and used.
- Ø Provide examples and discuss how to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the evidence base while also respecting Indigenous Data Sovereignty
- Ø Navigating contradictions: holistic vs reductionistic approaches; innovation vs tradition; global vs local
- Ø Stimulate additional forms of knowledge dissemination through engaging a wider community of practice on the topic (supplemental issue, discussion paper, podcast series)

The series that is planned to begin in April, will include the following three parts;

1. Methods: This webinar will provide an overview of past (Harriet) and present (Patrick Maundu, Tesfaye Bekele, Gina/Selena) methods used to collect data on community knowledge related to traditional and indigenous foods and discuss Indigenous Data Sovereignty
2. Perspectives: This webinar will discuss diverse approaches and perspectives that accompany research methods and building the scientific evidence base. It will cover topics such as two eyed seeing, perspectives of connectivity and relationships with people and nature, Western and Indigenous science. Wompam bill – Europeans see the world this way, Indigenous peoples see this way – we can live together in a peaceful way, even though we can not reconcile our differences, we can still live peacefully.

3. Evidence: that starts with the Ecosystem, disaggregating to biodiverse diets, disaggregating to foods –an entirely holistic approach or a reductionist approach are possible. How to connect them? Which approach brings more sustainability? Sustainable diets with IPs food systems illustrating the principles. Peru maintaining 1000 varieties of potato- Potato park to maintain and protect traditional knowledge, in this case they have the right to create the knowledge – good Peru example. Bring it together to have a larger impact on the effort, per the paper in Nature food for rethinking hierarchy of evidence. Evidence needs to be built on principles of sustainability, rights-based approach, respect for diverse ways of generating evidence.

Expression of Interest to Join the Task Force

Based on experience with preparing for the IUNS in Tokyo as well as feedback from task force members, we have started a process for recruitment of new members in order to assist us in meeting our task force goals in 2024 and mid-2025 and to provide additional support in preparing for IUNS in Paris. Internal discussions with the entire task force as well as with task force leadership lead to the development of an expression of interest for new members that focused on engagement with a new cohort of nutritional scientists, with an emphasis on recruitment of persons who self-identify as indigenous persons as well as applications from applicants in Asia/Pacific, Africa and Latin America. The expression of interest was circulated by current task force members through their networks. Applications will be reviewed by task force leadership and then vetted by the entire task force during our next virtual meeting. We anticipate adding 3-4 members to the group.

Please mention your plans for the coming year and how they have been adapted based on success to date.

We are focusing on three inter-connected activities in 2024.

1. We will recruit some new task force members to strengthen our representation of Indigenous Peoples and shore up membership across geographies.
2. We will hold a series of webinars together with the Sustainable Diets Task Force
3. We will prepare to lead a session during the IUNS meeting in Paris in 2025.