INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
A Fieldguide for Development

Development Guidelines No. 2

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PREFACE

Throughout the world there are minority peoples who lead their lives independently of the nation state. Over generations then, have watched national boundaries harden around and through their territories until they have become outcasts in their own lands. Economic growth has further undermined these people by encroaching on their land base and transforming the environments on which they depend for their survival.

This manual is for fieldworkers in NGOs (non-governmental organisations) who work with indigenous peoples. It presents some ways in which indigenous peoples can reverse the general trend and cope with change. In writing it, we began with the experience of the indigenous peoples of western Amazonia. With the support of NGOs over the last twenty years, many indigenous groups of this area have taken steps to defend their lands from invasion. They have devised a model of change that builds on their traditional self-reliance and strengthens their negotiating position with the state. This manual shows how this and other models offer hope another indigenous peoples.

The book is divided into two parts. The first examines experience, the second presents advice. Part One, Experience, describes the main features of indigenous societies and reviews the different ways in which governments and other institutions have sought to change them (Section 1). Unfortunately most interventions planned to affect indigenous lives have been highly damaging (Section 2), but the conditions found to be necessary for indigenous self-management are also recorded (Section 3). Part Two, Advice, sets out with some practical detail activities in which NGOs have been of use to indigenous people (Section 1). Part Two concludes with specific advice to NGO representatives in the field, guiding them through some of the many pitfalls they are likely to encounter (Section 2).