



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

**Training of Trainers
on Indigenous Peoples' Issues**
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Overview of Indigenous Peoples' Issues



United Nations

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Overview

- What are “indigenous issues”? – Umbrella term for issues that are specific to, or disproportionately affect indigenous peoples.
- Which issues do we refer to?
- Why are “indigenous issues” different from general development or human rights issues?
- Why should the UN treat these issues differently?

Some issues that are specific to indigenous peoples

- Discrimination
- Conflicts related to identity and culture (e.g. forced assimilation, limitations of cultural expressions, suppression of indigenous languages)
- Opposition to the right to self-determination and self-governance
- Conflicts over ancestral lands and natural resources
- Threats to the maintenance of traditional lifestyles, including territorial occupations
- Marginalization and exclusion from mainstream society (including public services) and from policy and decision-making

Issues related to the collective/traditional way of living of indigenous peoples

- Land and natural resource rights
- Ways of decision-making, consultation and participation/indigenous peoples' own governance structures
- Traditional knowledge
- High dependence on natural environment for survival (e.g. hunting, fishing, forest products)

Issues that disproportionately affect indigenous peoples

- The development issues/imposed development
- Poverty, poor healthcare, lack of access to education facilities, high child and maternal mortality
- Uncertainty in regards to food security
- Environmental pollution and degradation
- Vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters
- Limited development opportunities and choices

Why are indigenous issues different from general development or HR issues?

- These issues are specifically linked to being indigenous
- They are collective in nature and therefore affect whole communities and peoples, rather than just individuals
- They require a solution that addresses this characteristic of collectiveness
- The process of achieving an acceptable solution is different from dealing with individuals only.
- Legislative frameworks often do not allow for collective solutions (e.g. land rights)

Why are indigenous issues different from general development or HR issues? (cont.)

- Indigenous peoples want their rights to be acknowledged, not just symptomatic solutions for individuals
- Deep, historical underlying causes, including genocide, slavery, ethnocide, forced assimilation, marginalization and neglect
- Duty-bearers may see the requested solutions as threats rather than opportunities
- Governments may not want to give up political and economic power in favor of indigenous peoples.

Why have indigenous issues not been fully addressed?

- They have not been made a priority – often seen as threats to established power structures and systems.
- Advocacy has not been strong enough, or has been ignored, among other reasons due to the marginalization and discrimination.
- Organizations and institutions do not fully understand the issues and the possible solutions and continue to design superficial interventions.

Why should the UN treat these issues differently?

- They **ARE** different, deep-rooted, and need a different approach if real solutions are to be reached.
- They need an approach of “development with culture and identity”
- The UN has the mandate and duty to address them (see next slide)

The UN's mandate and duty to address indigenous peoples' issues

- Human rights are at the heart of the UN Charter
- There is a very explicit link, in the case of indigenous peoples, between human rights and development
- The HRBA should be the fundamental approach in programming and implementation
- The UN should be impartial and independent and is in a unique position to play a “broker role” in sensitive situations
- Some UN agencies have specific policies on indigenous peoples, or policies that are relevant to indigenous peoples.
- The UN has a clear role in respecting, promoting and implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (see Articles 41 and 42)

Thank you very much!

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