



Indigenous peoples make up one-third of the world's poorest and suffer alarming conditions in all countries

First UN publication on the state of the world's indigenous peoples reveals alarming statistics on poverty, health, education, employment, human rights, the environment and more.

Indigenous peoples all over the world continue to suffer from disproportionately high rates of poverty, health problems, crime and human rights abuses.

- ◆ In the United States, a Native American is 600 times more likely to contract tuberculosis and 62 per cent more likely to commit suicide than the general population.
- ◆ In Australia, an indigenous child can expect to die 20 years earlier than his non-native compatriot. The life expectancy gap is also 20 years in Nepal, while in Guatemala it is 13 years and in New Zealand it is 11.
- ◆ In parts of Ecuador, indigenous people have 30 times greater risk of throat cancer than the national average.
- ◆ And worldwide, more than 50 per cent of indigenous adults suffer from Type 2 diabetes – a number predicted to rise.

These are just a few of the startling statistics in the United Nations' first publication on the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, a thorough assessment of how indigenous peoples are faring in areas such as health, poverty, education and human rights.

While indigenous peoples make up around 370 million of the world's population – some 5 per cent – they constitute around one-third of the world's 900 million extremely poor rural people. Every day, indigenous communities all over the world face issues of violence and brutality, continuing assimilation policies, dispossession of land, marginalization, forced removal or relocation, denial of land rights, impacts of large-scale development, abuses by military forces and a host of other abuses.

Alarming state of indigenous health

The publication's statistics illustrate the gravity of the situation in both developed and developing countries. Poor nutrition, limited access to care, lack of resources crucial to maintaining health and well-being and contamination of natural resources are all contributing factors to the terrible state of indigenous health worldwide.

According to the report:

- ◆ Indigenous peoples' life expectancy is up to 20 years lower than their non-indigenous counterparts.
- ◆ Indigenous peoples experience disproportionately high levels of maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, cardiovascular illnesses, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis.



- ◆ Suicide rates of indigenous peoples, particularly among youth, are considerably higher in many countries, for example, up to 11 times the national average for the Inuit in Canada.

Displacement and dispossession destroying indigenous communities

One of the most significant threats facing indigenous peoples identified in the publication is the displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands, territories and resources. The publication details several examples of displacement, separation and eviction, including in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hawaii, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Colombia.

“When indigenous peoples have reacted and tried to assert their rights, they have suffered physical abuse, imprisonment, torture and even death,” states the publication.

The State of the World’s Indigenous Peoples was authored by seven independent experts and produced by the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Note to Editors:

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and Myrna Cunningham, one of the authors of the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, will hold a press conference at UN Headquarters in New York, to launch the report:

When: 14 January, 2010, 1:15 p.m.

Where: Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium, UN Headquarters, First Avenue and 46th Street

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