

Indigenous communities and social inclusion in Latin America

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Introduction

People of indigenous background are persons who descend from the populations which inhabited the country—or a geographical region to which the country belongs—at the time of conquest, colonization, or the establishment of present state boundaries, and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their social, economic, cultural and political institutions (ILO Convention No. 169). An increasing number of people self-identify as indigenous, and thus, there has been an increase in their census numbers. Indigenous people are themselves vastly diverse in terms of culture, language, world views, and beliefs. So profound is their diversity, that in any given country with a large presence of indigenous communities, more than 50 different indigenous communities speaking different languages can share a common land. The concept of indigenous peoples has four core dimensions: identity, common origin, territory, and linguistic/cultural.

The struggle for the recognition of the human rights of indigenous people has been long and bumpy. In Latin America, one major impediment are nation-states' efforts to normalize and homogenize national identities around a common culture and language. Indigenous communities—with their distinctive cultural and ethnolinguistic identities—become barriers to be overcome by states and their agencies.¹ From a legal perspective, citizenship in Latin America, like in other regions of the world, is defined in a simplistic manner. It lacks attention to how gender, ethnicity, and class affect relationships among people and between people and the state. Just as important to consider, citizenship, broadly defined, does not ensure actual access to rights, especially for those groups that have been historically marginalized and discriminated against (Carey, 2013, p.237). Another challenge is represented by the mixed results of social movements in support of indigenous people's rights— often led by indigenous women. Social movements are a response to globalization forces that usurp ancestral land and disregard the property and livelihood of indigenous people. They also center around the need to eliminate the urban/rural gaps, equalize access to social services, and enhance living conditions of indigenous people who live in poverty.

The United Nations (UN) has recognized minimum standards of rights which include the right to be free from discrimination; to express cultural identity; to use property; to control and access lands, territories, and resources; to pursue development and social well-being; to engage in political participation; and to express free, previous, and informed consent (UN Declaration). In

¹ French (2010) is an excellent analysis of the contradictions and dilemmas of building nationhood in Guatemala.

some countries, the activism of and support for indigenous communities has led to the recognition of their ethnicities and their own linguistic and cultural differences.

Despite recent legislation protecting the human rights of indigenous people, their socioeconomic situation and wellbeing continues to be deficient compared to non-indigenous people. The higher incidence of poverty and destitution, steadily high morbidity rates, and their lower chances for upper mobility severely hinder indigenous progress. In addition, they are discriminated against, marginalized, and excluded from mainstream society. Due to their profound heterogeneity, indigenous families vary enormously. They inhabit diverse communities and areas of residence, with distinct immigration statuses, levels of education, and so on. Some indigenous people co-reside within extended family structures and kin relationships with strong intergenerational solidarity, while others—who have relocated to urban areas—have less familism due to geographical distance and changing values. Furthermore, indigenous people and their descendants have migrated to other countries in Latin America, to the United States (US), and to Europe for economic and political reasons. Their struggle for enhancing wellbeing has continued in these host countries.

In this paper, we analyze the status of Latin American indigenous communities and factors affecting their social inclusion. We begin with an assessment of the size of the indigenous population in each country; we emphasize its rich diversity, and we look at dependency rates and aging. In the second section, we focus on the incidence of poverty, and in the third section, we consider the status of indigenous girls and women. In the fourth section, we consider the health and education dimension, and finally, in the fifth section, we address property rights, climate change, and self-governance. Conclusions are presented at the end.

1. Population, diversity and aging

Latin America is a region characterized by its multiethnic, plurinational, and multilingual populations that reveal its extensive miscegenation. Its cultural diversity results from the conflictive colonial subordination of the native populations to European states as well as the transatlantic African slave trade beginning in the 15th century to the end of the 19th century. Table 1 presents the indigenous populations at the moment of their colonial encounter.

Table 1
Western Hemisphere population ca 15th century

	millions	%
Mexico	21.0	37.3
Andean region	11.3	20.1
Southern South America	8.3	14.8
Caribbean	5.7	10.2
Central America	5.6	9.9
Canada & USA	4.3	7.7
Total	56.3	100.0

Source: Naciones Unidas (2014, Figure I.1, p.21)

Indigenous communities were exposed to European viruses and bacteria against which they lacked immunity. People got very sick and mortality rates increased sharply. In addition, the entire indigenous society was violently subjugated and required to pay high tributes to their European colonizers. The harsh, often inhumane, working conditions in mining and plantations led to substantial drops in life expectancy. Some indigenous communities fled colonial rule and found refuge in the Amazonian forest, remote sites in high-altitude planes, or in the southern tip of South America. A few organized indigenous movements that attempted revolts were ruthlessly put down. As a result, the New World experienced a dramatic demographic collapse: 80 years after the encounter, ninety percent of the population had died.

Estimating the current number of indigenous persons in Latin America is a complicated task. The history of the region is such that there has been an intense mixture of Europeans, indigenous people, Africans, and Asians. The following saying captures this reality: “Quién no tiene de Inga tiene de Mandinga,” which translates into, “Who does not have *Inga* (native DNA) has *Mandinga* (African DNA).” Thus, official statistics and policy makers rely on self-identification, whose number has grown as national pride on indigenous ancestry and sustainability efforts has increased among progressive sectors of youth. However, an unknown number of persons, who most probably have indigenous ancestry, may not self-identify due to stereotypes about the cultures and languages of indigenous peoples. There seems to be a widespread belief that official values on the proportion of the indigenous population underestimate its actual presence.

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC), Central and South America and the Caribbean region are home to between 45 and 50 million indigenous people (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015, p.084). In a recent report, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2017, chapter IV) agreed that—based on 2010 census data—the indigenous Latin American population was approximately 45.3 million. This population represents 826 different indigenous people or communities, and in addition, 200 other communities are estimated to be living in voluntary isolation (<https://www.cepal.org/en/infographics/indigenous-peoples-latin-america>). Table 2 presents the indigenous population for all seventeen Latin American countries ranked from highest to lowest. Bolivia is the country with the highest percentage of indigenous population (62.2%). It is followed by Guatemala (41%) and Peru (24%). In terms of the overall size of the indigenous population, Mexico has the largest (17 million), followed by Peru (7.5 million) and Bolivia (6.2 million). As was true five centuries ago, both Mexico and the Andean countries of Peru and Bolivia concentrate two thirds of the indigenous population, up 10% from 57.4% in the 15th century. Again, it should be kept in mind that the percentage of indigenous background and culture may be much larger than the values reported in Table 2. We should also note that when comparing the total regional indigenous population size between 1500 and 2015, we see a population drop from 56.3 million to 45.3 million. This decline in the size of the population reflects the impact of colonization and steady marginalization of indigenous people over five centuries.

In Mexico—which has a total population of 127 million—the indigenous communities (at least 15% of the total population) speak 68 different languages and 364 registered dialects (Jacqueline-Andersen, 2018). Most of these communities reside in the southern and south-central regions (<http://minorityrights.org/minorities/indigenous-peoples-4/>). In Guatemala, a smaller country—which has a total population of 16.7 million—more than 20 different indigenous communities, with their own language and traditions, represent no less than 40% of the total population (Jacqueline-Andersen, 2018). The majority of them are of Mayan descent, although there are non-Mayan communities as well (<http://minorityrights.org/minorities/maya-2/>). Peru (total population: 31 million) and Bolivia (total population: 11 million) are home to very large indigenous populations. The larger groups in these countries are Quechua and Aymara but include more than 100 additional communities in both countries.

Table 2
Latin America. Total and indigenous population, ca 2015

	Country	Total indigenous population (thousands)	Indigenous people in total population (in%)
1	Bolivia	6,200.0	62.2
2	Guatemala	5,900.0	41.0
3	Peru	7,500.0	24.0
4	Mexico	17,000.0	15.1
5	Panama	420.0	12.3
6	Chile	1,800.0	11.0
7	Nicaragua	520.0	8.9
8	Ecuador	1,000.0	7.0
9	Honduras	537.0	7.0
10	Colombia	1,600.0	3.4
11	Venezuela	725.0	2.7
12	Uruguay	77.0	2.4
13	Argentina	955.0	2.4
14	Costa Rica	105.0	2.4
15	Paraguay	113.0	1.8
16	Brazil	900.0	0.5
17	El Salvador	14.5	0.2
	Total	45,366.5	7.2

Source: <https://www.cepal.org/en/infographics/indigenous-peoples-latin-america>, Comisión Económica para América Latina (2018), and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2017, chapter IV).

As indicated above, the proportions of indigenous populations for both Peru and Bolivia in Table 2, column 3, seem to underreport actual figures. Finally, Brazil (total population: 208 million) has less than one million indigenous people but 305 indigenous communities, mostly in the Amazon. More than half of the communities live either on reservations or in one of the four

national parks located in the northern Amazon states, the north-east, or the states of Mato Grosso do Sul and Sao Paulo (<http://minorityrights.org/country/brazil/>). One fifth of these communities are in danger of physical or cultural disappearance (<https://www.cepal.org/en/infographics/indigenous-peoples-latin-america>). And, in the entire region of Latin America, there are more than one hundred indigenous communities in similar danger.

In addition to its indigenous ancestry, Latin Americans mixed with the European colonizers—mostly southern Europeans—as well as with Africans and Asians. Over the span of three to four centuries, colonies specialized in the production of raw materials for European consumption. Demand for work grew incessantly to satisfy the increasing growth of extractive activities in mining, rubber, potassium nitrate, guano (bird and bat droppings), lumber, and agricultural crops (e.g. sugar, coffee, and tobacco). The domestic demographic growth was not high enough and labor shortages emerged. To address this situation, more than twelve million African people were forced to migrate to the Western Hemisphere and compelled to work in mines and in plantations under slavery or indentured servitude. The slave trade was initially controlled by Portuguese dealers, and in the 18th century, by British companies. In addition to the African presence, Chinese immigrants arrived during the second part of the 19th century and throughout the first part of the 20th century. They found occupation in plantations, and when slavery was abolished, in commerce. Decades later, Japanese immigrants sought economic opportunities in the United States and in Latin American countries, notably, Mexico, Brazil, and Peru. The intermixing of people from various ethnicities and traditions created the remarkable diversity of the region.

Since 1980, census data in many Latin American countries collect information that help identify indigenous peoples. The 2010 census round was supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC) and the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE). CELADE developed “The Socio-Demographic System of Indicators for Indigenous People (SISPPI)” which is an online database. Using SISPPI we have obtained information on the proportion of indigenous persons residing in rural and urban areas in all countries for which data exists. The information is presented in Table 3² which also includes a column with information on how many times the percentage of rural indigenous population is larger than the urban population.

Mexico’s indigenous population in rural areas is 30% of the total rural population, and in urban areas, 10.7%. Thus, the percentage of rural indigenous population is 2.8 times higher than the urban. This is to be expected given farming background and ancestral connection to relevant land. In Brazil, where the indigenous population is relatively low, less than 1%, its concentration is the highest in rural areas, 3.5% vs. 0.4%, 8.8 times larger. Similar situations, in descending order, are experienced in Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, and Costa Rica. The reverse, however, is true in Uruguay, where the percent of indigenous people in urban areas is more than in rural areas. This is an outcome of high urbanization in Uruguay. For the selected countries, we

² The proportions of indigenous population per country is very similar to Table 2 —there are slight differences in Brazil and Costa Rica.

observe that indigenous peoples represent a larger proportion in rural areas, except in Uruguay. At the same time, however, a World Bank study found that, contrary to popular belief, more than half of indigenous persons in Latin America reside in urban centers (Freire et al., 2015). The data, therefore, is ambiguous.

Table 3
Latin America. Selected countries. Percent of indigenous population by area, ca 2010

	Area	% Indigenous population	Rural/Urban
Brazil	Urban	0.4	
	Rural	3.5	8.8
	Both areas	0.9	
Costa Rica	Urban	1.4	
	Rural	5.4	3.8
	Both areas	2.5	
Ecuador	Urban	2.4	
	Rural	14.8	6.2
	Both areas	7.0	
Mexico	Urban	10.7	
	Rural	30.0	2.8
	Both areas	15.3	
Panama	Urban	4.5	
	Rural	26.7	5.9
	Both areas	12.3	
Uruguay	Urban	2.5	
	Rural	1.7	0.7
	Both areas	2.4	
Venezuela	Urban	1.9	
	Rural	8.8	4.6
	Both areas	2.7	

Source: United Nations ECLA CELADE Population Division (2010).

This finding has three important family implications. First, it is possible that families are increasingly becoming fragmented as younger members migrate to urban centers for educational and job opportunities. As this happens, smaller villages and towns that are home to these communities are aging rapidly. Second, because of the tight relationships within kin and extended families, relatives and friends transfer both money and goods to family members left behind. These remittances are national and international and require access to banking facilities and/or other agencies. In the last few decades, this has been an important source of income for home communities. And third, as descendants of indigenous people grow and assimilate to the larger society in urban centers, there is the possibility that they may begin to acquire the values and perspectives from non-indigenous cultures. One aspect that has been

documented is the increased bilingualism of indigenous persons who speak their native language and either Spanish or Portuguese.

The SISPI database provides important demographic information on dependency ratios and aging among indigenous people that give us clues on family pressures. The dependency ratio is measured as the population of children from 0 to 14 plus the population over 65 (65+) out of the working age population, from 15 to 64. When the ratio is 10 it means that 100 working age individuals support ten persons in the other two brackets, 0-14 and 65+. This ratio should be read as an average of the obligation of working people, with regard to children and older persons. Social protection systems vary from country to country and among regions, and pension programs as well as public transfers may help fund the wellbeing of children, youth, and older persons. When the coverage is low and people are poor, however, high dependency rates are overwhelming for families. The ratio, does not indicate what bracket of the population is larger, children or older persons. We use the aging ratio, defined as the population 65+ over the population of children 0-14, to measure “how old” a given community actually is. A value of 10 means the presence of 10 older persons (65+) per 100 children (0-14).

Table 4 presents the dependency ratio and aging by indigenous/non-indigenous people for all Latin American countries for which data exists.

Table 4
Latin America. Selected countries. Dependency ratio and aging, ca 2010

		Ratio	
		Dependency	Aging
Brazil	Indigenous	71.5	15.6
	Non-indigenous	45.8	30.8
Costa Rica	Indigenous	53.7	33.7
	Non-indigenous	46.6	29.4
Ecuador	Indigenous	76.3	16.2
	Non-indigenous	59.6	21.2
Mexico	Indigenous	63.2	22.7
	Non-indigenous	54.0	22.4
Panama	Indigenous	94.7	7.8
	Non-indigenous	53.5	29.3
Uruguay	Indigenous	40.6	70.9
	Non-indigenous	56.1	63.9
Venezuela	Indigenous	68.7	10.5
	Non-indigenous	48.7	22.5

Source: United Nations ECLA CELADE Population Division (2010).

The dependency ratio for indigenous people is highest in Panama. It indicates that there are near 95 indigenous children and older persons for 100 working age indigenous people. The significance here is that working indigenous people in Panama have higher responsibilities regarding small

children. We know that this is true because the aging value shows the lowest, 7.8, which means that there are 8 older persons per 100 children, 0-14. Similar situations regarding indigenous people are observed in Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico. In contrast, the data for Uruguay, both for indigenous and non-indigenous people, show advanced aging.

The aging rate illustrates that indigenous communities in Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela are relatively younger than non-indigenous communities. In Mexico, these communities are slightly older, in Costa Rica somewhat older, and in Uruguay, they are the oldest. Thus, we see that the aging of these communities varies from slow to advanced. This situation has different implications for families. In the cases of indigenous communities with relatively younger people, the likelihood of private, intergenerational transfers in support of families is higher. This capacity is less in Uruguay and in Costa Rica, that have fortunately better social protection coverage. In the case of Mexico, indigenous populations are aging rapidly.

We should note that aging is in itself a different dimension among traditional, indigenous cultures than in western societies. In the former, aging is perceived as a cultural transition that adds wisdom and, usually, the respect from the kin and extended families. Often, in western culture, aging means not only a loss of abilities, but also, a loss of status.

2. Poverty

In the last two decades, Latin American countries have experienced a drop of poverty rates, although inequality remains large. Against this outcome, however, indigenous poverty rates remain much higher than the rest of the non-indigenous population. For instance, in Paraguay, the poverty rate of indigenous peoples is almost 8 times higher, 6 times higher in Panama, 3.3 times higher in Mexico, and 2.8 times higher in Guatemala (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009). The reasons are varied. First, indigenous peoples live predominantly in rural areas, often in remote villages, and are engaged in farming of low productivity. They are weavers, fruit collectors, small cattle ranchers, hunters, and fishermen in local rivers. Second, they have limited access to the provision of social services, particularly health and education. Third, when they migrate to urban and semi-urban areas, they are marginalized and lack the skills to find productive employment. Indigenous workers' earnings are on average half that of non-indigenous workers. And fourth, most rural indigenous people continue to be subjected to racism and social exclusion (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017, p.110).

Indigenous people, however, have not always been historically poor. It is the result of centuries of exploitation, disrespect for values, usurpation of land, and, in general, fierce colonization. Thus, it is of paramount importance that civil society and governments organize a decisive action to reverse their condition by recognizing indigenous identity and human rights. In Peru and Bolivia, sustained growth during the first decade of the 21st century created the fiscal space for the implementation of social policies including basic pensions for older persons. Interventions led to a drop in national poverty rates, and one third and one-fourth of indigenous households respectively were pulled out of poverty (Freire et al., 2015, p.58). However, chronic poverty continues in countries with large indigenous populations, especially

in rural areas. Poverty levels among indigenous people in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru fell, but this was not the case in Guatemala. In the latter, both poverty (\$4 per day) and extreme poverty (\$2.5 per day) increased by 14% and 21% respectively from the early 2000s to the late 2000s. But, despite apparent gains in the three former countries, the poverty gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people increased, whereas it slightly decreased in Guatemala (Freire et al., 2015, p.57).

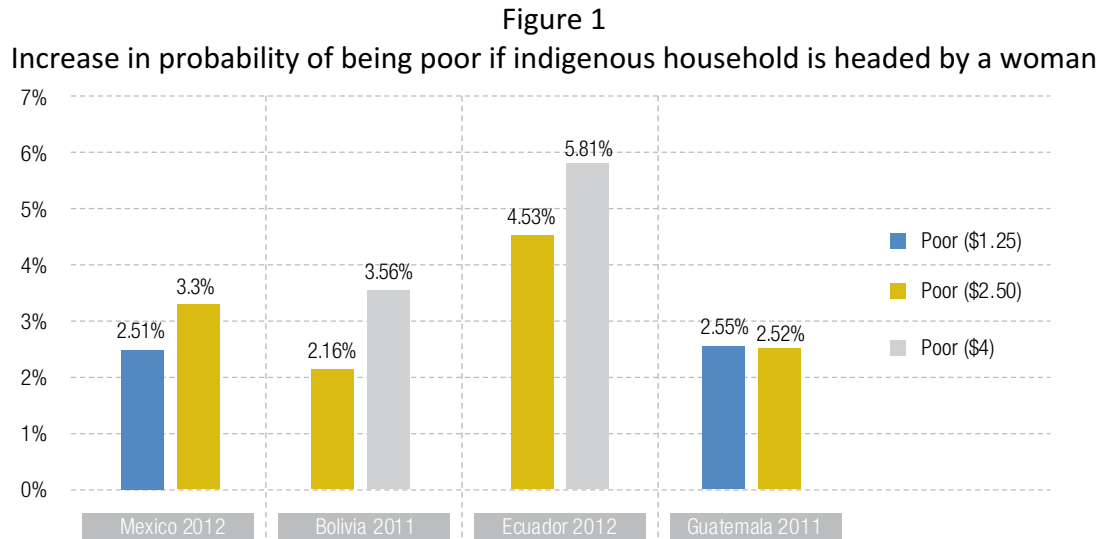
Table 5 shows the poverty gap for indigenous and non-indigenous people for six countries—Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. The extremely poor indigenous population living on less than \$1.25/day represents 9% of all indigenous people, while non-indigenous represent only 3%. The gap for people who live on less than \$2.5/day is 24% for indigenous people and 9% for non-indigenous people. Finally, 43% percent of indigenous people are poor and live on less than \$4/day. Only 21% of non-indigenous people live on less than \$4/day.

Table 5
Percentage of people living on less than \$1.25, \$2.5 and \$4, circa late 2000s

		Less than \$1.25/day	Less than \$2.5/day	Less than \$4/day
Selected countries	Indigenous, in %	9	24	43
	Non-indigenous, in %	3	9	21

Source: Freire et al. (2015, Figure 10, p. 59).

The probability of remaining poor for those of indigenous backgrounds is high. This is likely a consequence of indigenous youth having lower probability of completing primary and secondary education. On top of this, gender barriers and the urban/rural differences in access to services further reduces the chance of upward mobility. An indigenous household headed by a woman has a higher probability of being poor. Figure 1 shows these probabilities for Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Guatemala. For example, in Mexico and Guatemala, the probability that a household headed by an indigenous woman is extremely poor (\$1.25/day) is around 2.5% higher. In Ecuador and Bolivia, the probability of being poor (\$4/day) when the household is headed by an indigenous woman is 5.8% and 3.6% respectively.



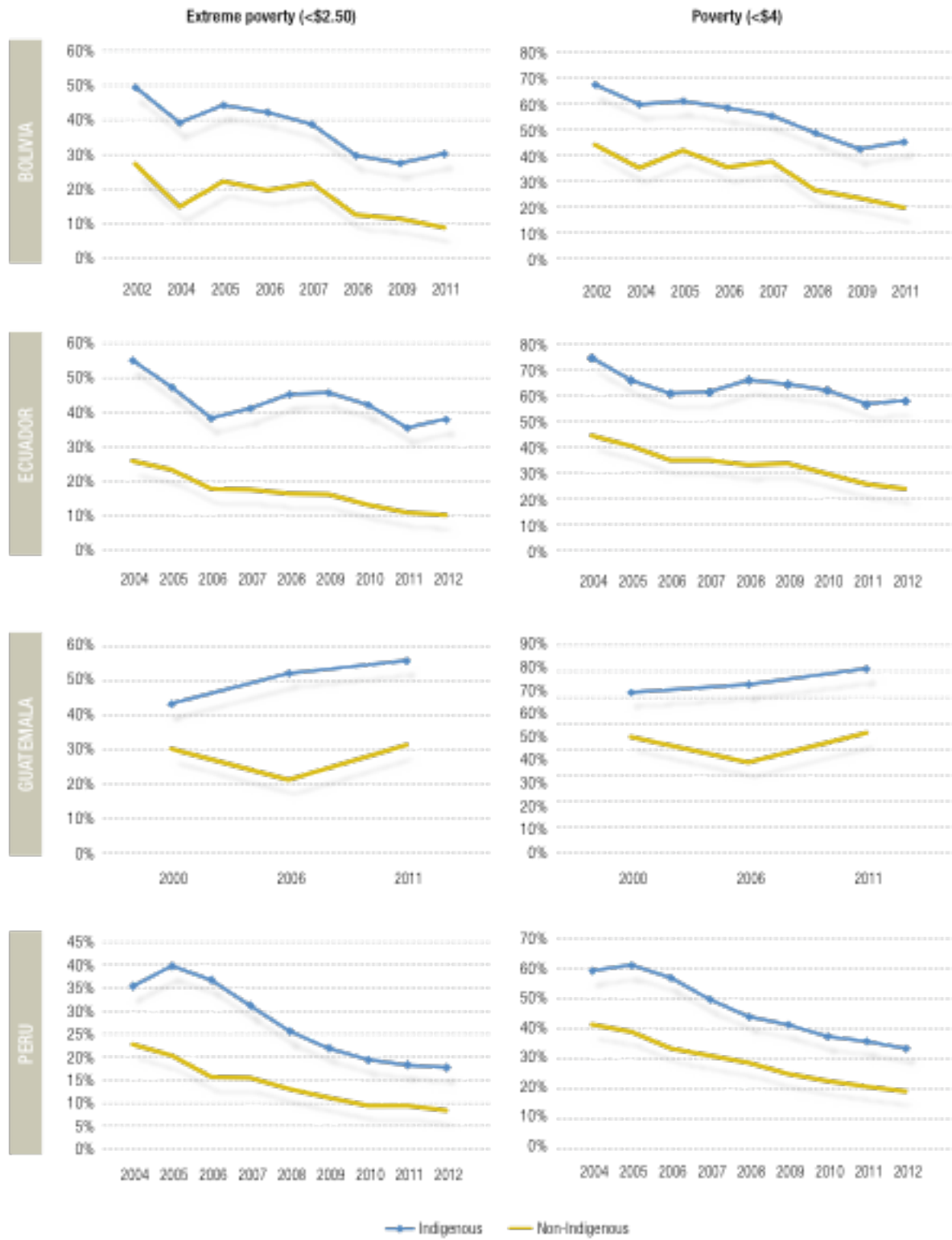
Source: Freire et al. (2015, Figure 14, p.62).

Trends for poverty and extreme poverty for Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru by indigenous and non-indigenous people are presented in Figure 2. We observe that, at the national level, poverty and extreme poverty have decreased for both populations. The exception is Guatemala.

Access to public services for indigenous and non-indigenous people are presented in Figure 3. The country information shows differences in levels of development and the provision of basic services. Chile and Costa Rica provided consistently almost universal services to their non-indigenous people, although there are important gaps for services to indigenous people. Gaps can be pretty severe such as in the cases of Colombia and Panama. In Bolivia, four fifths of indigenous households do not have access to drinking water, more than two thirds do not have sanitation services, and infant mortality rates are the highest in South America (<https://www.wikigender.org/wiki/indigenous-women-in-latin-america/>).

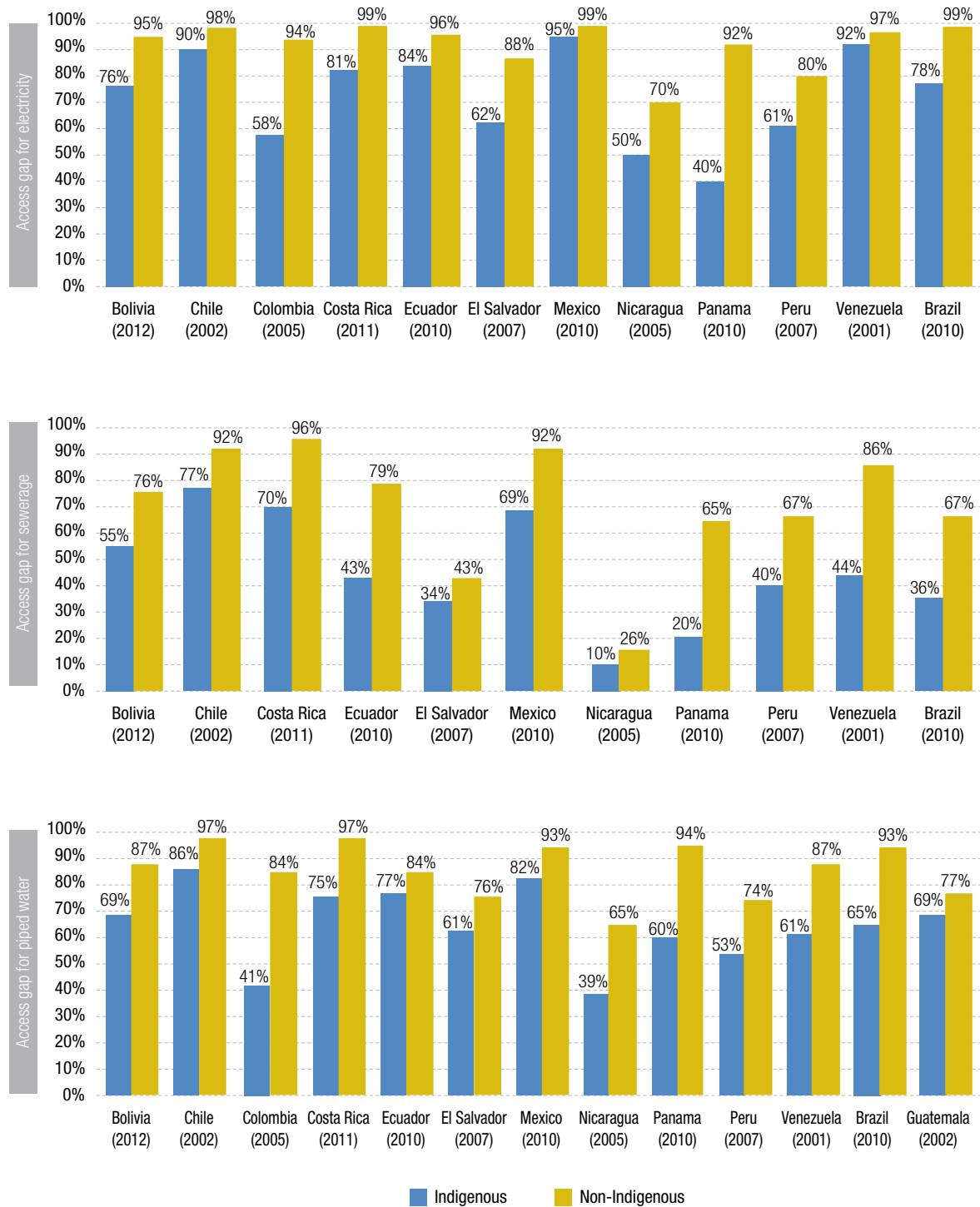
These findings show that addressing poverty necessitates multidimensional strategies. Increasing poverty-targeted, remedial assistance is not enough. It is imperative that governments ensure access to health care and education, the removal of gender-based discrimination, and a reduction of the rural/urban gap as necessary conditions. The latter includes making access to public services universal.

Figure 2
Poverty evolution in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru



Source: Freire et al. (2015, Figure 11, p.60).

Figure 3
Latin America. Access to public services by indigenous status, circa 2000s



Source: Freire et al. (2015, Figure 21, p.71).

3. The status of indigenous girls and women

Girls and women experience multiple forms of discrimination based on their ethnicity and gender. Roslynn Beighton (Minority Rights Group International, 2018) visited Guatemala to conduct research in 2017, where she lived with female activists fighting for their human rights. Beighton reported the following:

Every activist I interviewed recounted how they had been discriminated against for their ethnicity for as long as they could remember. Belen, a young woman working in a community radio station told of times when she had been denied employment over ladina women, despite having more qualifications and experience for positions. She was upset that she was seen, firstly as lower than men because of her gender and secondly as lower than other women because of her *traje* which represents her ethnicity as Quiché. (<http://minorityrights.org/2017/11/08/female-indigenous-activism-guatemala-inspiration-challenges-women-girls-agents-change-2/>)

In many Latin American countries, the culture of *machismo* is prevalent, and it stifles women's rights and work in critical causes. According to Beighton, girls and women lack resources to participate in spaces that would empower them. Social structures that are both racist and sexist block girls and women from accessing services such as health care and education. In Latin America, as in many other regions, patriarchal structures have cemented male dominance in the home and outside the home. Inheritance by lineage and access to rights—from property to suffrage—have consistently excluded women and limited their sphere of action. Women in some indigenous communities, however, have realized leadership, and demand work and responsibility from their male counterparts. In his study about Mayan women and their struggle, Carey (2013) documents both the strong presence of patriarchal societies and its challenges posed by women demanding reciprocity based on their condition as mothers and partners.

It is heartbreaking that indigenous women experience violence, beating, femicide, labor exploitation, harassment, sexual abuse, trafficking, and rape. It is furthermore unacceptable that the police and the judiciary often look the other way when such crimes come to light. Women's vulnerability reflects discrimination and exclusion that is exacerbated by enormous challenges including land dispossession, displacement, limited access to social services—health and education—as well as sexual and reproductive health education. Social marginalization implies that they do not have access to justice and other social services (United Nations, 2015, p.149). On occasion, governments have taken upon themselves the right to affect women's reproduction. In Peru, between 1996-2000, the government of President Fujimori sterilized approximately 270 thousand indigenous women without their consent (Jacqueline-Andersen, 2018, p.170). This is a crime against humanity that was never investigated properly, as the case was inexplicably closed by the Peruvian judiciary.

Mortality rates among pregnant indigenous women are three times higher than that of non-indigenous women, and infant mortality rates are also much higher. Illiteracy is widespread among indigenous women and a large number of women of childbearing age have never attended school. Since illiterate women tend to be monolingual, this increases their difficulties in accessing public services even when they migrate to urban areas. For the most part, public

services are provided in the language of the majority
(<https://www.wikigender.org/wiki/indigenous-women-in-latin-america/>).

Globalization forces have impacted social and gender relations as well as identity politics in indigenous communities. Many indigenous people engaged in international trade through their artisan work, a new form of income generating activity. In Guatemala, at the end of the 20th century, merchants contracted artisan households for weaving. Often, women took on the productive work in addition to their household duties, while men worked outside the home. With the passing of time, some women had more access to cash and became increasingly more organized. Indeed, they organized themselves into cooperatives and acquired stronger agency. They demanded access to political representation in their own communities. Meanwhile, women's stratification became more varied. New social class tiers emerged which were based on the distribution of contracted artisan work, differences in earnings, or political participation. Class differences were also established on the basis of marriage to well-off or influential merchants. A final dichotomy emerged between women who were home-weavers and women who were excluded from artisan work (the latter lacked social and financial capital for upward mobility). Thus, international trading and the subcontracting of household women weavers increased agency and affected the internal divisions of gender and social status (Stephen, 2005). As a result, a slow yet substantial evolution in gender politics is unfolding and affecting traditional patriarchal family structures.

In the 1990s, the empowering of Guatemalan women after the civil war took advantage of political openings around the writings of the new constitution of 1992 and the negotiations of the peace accord. As a result, women's organizations emphasized gender equality and challenged existing patriarchal structures. With the support of the UN and international women's organizations, peace accords included stronger language supporting women's rights: receipt of land, credit, assistance, elimination of discrimination against women, support for greater equality in the home and in the job market, and equal access to education and to enrollment in the armed forces (Berger, 2006). While normative progress is commendable, it is also true that new legislation has favored professional, middle-income women, thus showing that privilege continues for non-indigenous women. Governments' adoption of market oriented policies, as part of the globalization agenda, implied retrenchment of the State in the provision of basic services. This resulted in an increased burden on women who are care providers at home. A similar situation was experienced in Ecuador where a challenging political process led to the implementation of market oriented policies. The same paradox emerged. Indigenous women who struggled for their rights to land, access to social services, and gender equity experienced an increased pressure to compensate at home for services and support, formerly given by state agencies (Lind, 2005).

Duquette, Levy, Marques-Pereira, and Raes (2005) have shown that women have initiated major protests that have evolved into social movements to attain equal rights. They include indigenous women activism. For the most part, collective actions target the distributive implications of globalization and neoliberal programs adopted by governments in the region. Many activists have been harassed and persecuted. Their work, however, has increased

national awareness about the need to change legislation and grant access to rights. But, paradoxically, women's stress as they fulfill double duty, workers outside their homes and care givers at home, has remained largely unchanged.

4. Health and education

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015, p. 89) states the following:

Indigenous peoples make up to 40 per cent of the rural population in the region, where there is often little or no access to conventional health services. As a result, at least 80 per cent of indigenous peoples depend mainly on traditional therapists for medical assistance. The infant mortality rate is 54 per 1,000 live births expressed [sic] as profound and disturbing disparity; "infant mortality rates among indigenous children are 60 percent higher than among non-indigenous children.

Intercultural health means that health care providers respect the collective rights of indigenous people and recognize their diverse knowledge and wisdom regarding health, disease, treatment and the healing process. More research, data acquisition, and changing health approaches are needed to incorporate indigenous understanding of healthy life and healing. Giving birth varies from culture to culture and in many clinic facilities, spaces have been specially set aside that allow relatives and midwives to assist women using their own practices.

Indigenous people have much lower life expectancy than non-indigenous people. These gaps reflect important child mortality, malnutrition, and morbidity rate differences between these two groups. Globally, life expectancy is up to 20 years lower between indigenous and non-indigenous people (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009). In Latin America, the gap is 13 years in Guatemala, 10 years in Panama, and 6 years in Mexico. Diseases such as upper-respiratory and digestive infections, tuberculosis, diabetes, cardiovascular illnesses, malaria, dengue, and yellow fever affect a disproportionate number of indigenous people. In addition, malnutrition, natural disasters, and violence contribute to inadequate health. Almost all indigenous children 0-14 in Honduras suffer from malnutrition. Contamination and the degradation of surrounding environments negatively affect indigenous wellness. Among certain groups, drug dependency and depression are symptoms of stressful lives. Often, these problems lead to delinquent behavior and higher rates of incarceration. In urban areas—where indigenous people lack the support of kin and extended family—they face acute health and mental health conditions.

Latin American countries made important progress in providing universal primary education (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017, pp., p. 111). Fewer indigenous children than non-indigenous children, however, have completed primary education and thus, can't attend secondary and higher education schools. The gaps between years of education of these children fluctuates between 2.3 and 4 years in Peru and Bolivia respectively.

Table 6 shows that in all selected countries, except in El Salvador, there is a gap in the proportion of indigenous children who access primary education. This gap is substantial in

Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru. Factors that explain this gap include higher poverty rates, distance to schools, malnutrition, child abuse, and early pregnancy.

Table 6

Latin America. Selected countries. Proportion of children aged 6-11 at the primary school level, falling two or more years behind their classmates by ethnic group, circa 2009

Country	Indigenous peoples (%)	Mestizo and white (non-indigenous population, %)
Brazil	3.1	2.8
Chile	7.6	5.7
Ecuador	11.2	6.7
El Salvador	5.4	7.3
Guatemala	16.2	9.3
Nicaragua	23.4	12.7
Panama	13.2	4.7
Paraguay	16.6	6.5
Peru	8.9	3.8
Uruguay	4.9	4.8

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2017, Table IV.1, p. 115)

Access to primary school is not sufficient. The curricula should respect the cultural and ethnolinguistic identity of indigenous people if education is to contribute to social inclusion. In many countries, lack of adequate textbook content and poor efforts in the instruction of indigenous language restricts the liberating power of education. The lack of data on educational progress across communities prevents a better monitoring of progress.

Table 7 shows the gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous students regarding high school attendance and completion. Comparisons include national as well as rural areas. It can be clearly seen that attendance rates are higher than completion rates in all countries. The attendance rates are the lowest for indigenous students in Guatemala and Paraguay, closely followed by Panama and Ecuador. Nationally, completion rates are extremely low in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador, Paraguay, and Brazil. Similar situations are observed in rural areas, although indigenous students perform better than nationally. It means that the situation in urban areas are unfortunately worse. Chile scores the best with completion rates above 60% for both indigenous and non-indigenous students.

With such low secondary school completion rates, we can only anticipate low matriculation rates in higher education and technical schools. In fact, the ability of indigenous students to gain additional years of schooling that can lead to productive jobs is low. Again, this is an area requiring urgent and effective interventions.

Table 7
Latin America. Selected countries. Net rates of high school education attendance and completion, circa 2009

Country	Net rate of high school education attendance		Rate of high school education completion			
	National total		National total		Rural areas	
	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afro-descendant population	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afrodescendant population	Indigenous or Afrodescendant population	Non-indigenous, non-Afro-descendant population
Bolivia (2007)	90	94	38	44	55	71
Brazil (2008)	91	93	24	27	47	56
Chile (2006)	94	95	50	63	65	81
Ecuador (2008)	76	86	23	33	31	59
El Salvador (2004)	83	79	17	17	37	36
Guatemala (2006)	61	75	7	12	13	33
Nicaragua (2005)	86	84	5	13	21	32
Panama (2008)	74	89	12	40	12	60
Paraguay (2008)	71	92	21	36	25	62
Total	85	92	20	28	40	56

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2017, Table IV.3, p. 120)

5. Land, climate change, and self-governance

Access to land is one of the top vulnerabilities of indigenous people. Despite states' declaration that indigenous people's rights will be protected (United Nations General Assembly, 2014 p.170), corporations continue to attempt to usurp their ancestral land. A few countries recognize the right of indigenous people to their ancestral land, but land titling and demarcation is slow and incomplete. It has been the case that even when indigenous people owned the legal title deeds of their land, governments gave them away to allow for natural resource exploitation. In Brazil and Peru, substantial Amazonian forest areas have been allocated for the exploration and exploitation of mineral, oil, and timber industries, as well as for the commercial agricultural industry in the form of deforestation. Lands in the Amazon had traditionally been protected areas in which indigenous communities lived in voluntary isolation. This isolation, however, is currently unstable due to the presence of heavy equipment and foot traffic which transforms the land and environment.

During the late 1990s, several Shipibo-Coniba families from the deep Peruvian Amazon (Ucayali state), crossed the Andes and marched to the capital city of Lima to protest against oil exploration and deforestation. They also demanded access to social services and a better life for their community. The protesters camped in front of Congress for months. Eventually, the government authorized the military to forcibly move protesters to an abandoned sanitary landfill site. They erected a community, *Cantogrande* (Cock Crow), between a highway and a polluted river, Rimac River, at the foot of Cerro San Cristobal. *Cantogrande* is a slum which represents the largest urban settlement of indigenous people from the Amazon in Peru. In total, more than 300 families—representing two thousand people—live in tents or wood cabins within *Cantogrande*, with scarce drinking water and no electricity. To make matters worse, current Peruvian law does offer the same property rights to indigenous people who live collectively in urban areas. This means that the denizens of *Cantogrande* have even less rights than communities of the Amazon on ancestral territories.

In Ecuador, mining activity sanctioned by government permits takes place in indigenous communities without their consent. These activities pollute the water and the environment. Similarly, in Chile and Paraguay, indigenous communities have protested the use of their land for extractive purpose (Jacqueline-Andersen, 2018, p.10). The more than fifty-year long armed conflict in Colombia has created substantial displacement of thousands of indigenous people. This situation has been compounded by the presence of militias and armed groups engaged in drug cultivation and trafficking. In Belize, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2004) issued a report that recognized Maya people's collective right to land traditionally used and occupied in the district of Toledo. The Belize government had violated the right of Maya people to property and equality under international law.

Climate change is a global disturbance that is severely affecting indigenous people. The Potato Park (Cuzco, Peru) groups six Quechua communities of farmers and weavers who see themselves in reciprocal relationship with each other, the land, and the spirit world. They have been cultivating more than three thousand varieties of potato for thousands of years (Argumedo, 2011). In recent times, cultivation and harvesting of potatoes in the Potato Park (Cuzco, Peru) has been drastically affected by increased rain uncertainty and warmer temperatures. These events have pushed the farming of potatoes into higher altitudes already reaching the peaks of Andean mountains. Given climate change challenges ahead, the agency of indigenous communities is critically important in upholding and implementing the accords of the Paris Agreement.

The only viable and sustainable manner that indigenous people will participate in global governance is by asserting their right to be included in decision processes that affect their livelihood and future wellbeing. Thus, they are organizing, expressing their views supported by the legal mechanisms of international law and the UN system, gaining increased political representation in legislative bodies, passing laws, and attaining the ability to exert self-governance in their territorial domains.

In some countries (Panama, Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia), indigenous communities have attained territorial self-governance building on the principle of self-determination. This gives pause for optimism. Activists who defend the rights of indigenous people, however, have often been threatened and killed, thus raising public awareness on the vulnerability of indigenous communities.

Conclusions

The total population of indigenous people in Latin America is around 45 million. This figure may underestimate the actual number of persons who have indigenous background because they fear that if they define themselves that way they will be discriminated against. Indigenous people are vastly diverse in terms of their culture and ethnolinguistic identity. Most states in the region share citizenship definitions that do not take into consideration indigenous identities. Furthermore, often national governments are interested in normalizing and homogenizing their identity and in so doing, indigenous rights are excluded from an idealized “national unity” discourse.

The indigenous population in Latin America is very diverse and represents more than one thousand communities with their own languages and dialects. Some communities wish to be left in isolation, others have been displaced to urban centers. For that reason, increasingly, a large percentage of indigenous persons live in urban centers. The migration of this population is leading to three important implications. First, indigenous communities left behind are aging rapidly, and families are becoming fragmented. Younger members migrate to urban centers for educational and job opportunities. Second, remittances from family members who migrated for economic and social reasons are helping fund the life of kin and family at home. Third, descendants of indigenous people, who grow and are raised in urban centers, assimilate and acquire the values and perspectives from non-indigenous cultures.

Some indigenous communities are aging rapidly, but other communities are still very young. The latter have a greater probability of being self-supporting and of developing strategies to maintain their culture and ethnolinguistic identity. There are countries, however, that have indigenous populations that are rapidly aging and that live, for the most part, in urban centers. Aging, among indigenous people, has a connotation of wisdom and carries social respect in contrast to westernized perspectives.

One major challenge that indigenous populations face is poverty. In contrast to its past, a disproportionate number of indigenous people live in poverty due to disrespect for their values, their living style, usurpation of their land, and fierce colonization. Some factors explain this outcome. First, rural areas where indigenous people live are remote villages that lack adequate public services, health care, and education. Second, indigenous people on average lack the educational training to move into productive jobs. And third, even when they have acquired educational and/or technological training, they are discriminated against. A higher percentage of indigenous people are extremely poor (i.e. live with less than \$1.25/day) or poor (i.e. live with less than \$4/day). On top of it, the probability of remaining poor when a person is of

indigenous background is high. This is partially a consequence of indigenous youth having lower probability of completing primary and secondary education. Access to public services by indigenous people is low and inadequate.

The culture of *machismo* and the prevalence of patriarchal family structures abound in Latin America and it is also extensive among indigenous people. There are indigenous communities, however, where women take on leadership roles and give direction to their male counterparts. But, the evidence is overwhelming about the vulnerability of indigenous girls and women who experience violence, beating, labor exploitation, harassment, sexual abuse, and the risk of trafficking. Unfortunately, the police and the judiciary look often the other way.

Globalization and neoliberal policies have led to negative distributional effects such as job displacements and the retrenchment from the state, especially, in the provision of basic services. Women have taken on the lead in organizing protests that evolve to become social movements. These movements have led to the empowerment of women and enacting of legislation that ensures indigenous people's rights and gender equity. A paradox has emerged: although indigenous women have displayed significant activism, they carry greater burden from their double duty of working outside the home and providing care at home.

Indigenous people have lower life expectancy. They have higher morbidity rates, malnutrition, and are exposed to environmental degradation and contamination. Mortality rates among pregnant indigenous women are three times higher than that of non-indigenous women. At the same time, infant mortality rates among indigenous children are 60 percent higher than among non-indigenous children.

Despite regional progress in the provision of primary education, including indigenous children, fewer indigenous children complete primary education. Similarly, secondary school enrolment is much higher than its completion. In fact, completion of secondary school in some countries is less than 10 percent or around 20 percent. It means that a large percentage of indigenous youth will not be able to attend higher education or technological schools.

Access to land is a top priority for indigenous people. Despite government declarations that the indigenous rights to their land will be protected, they grant access to corporations for the exploitation of natural resources and commercial agriculture. Indigenous communities have not been consulted about the usurpation of their ancestral land and they have been forced to leave their land or to mobilize against governments' decisions and/or corporations. Severe conflicts have arisen with increased activism and violence.

Climate change is already a damaging challenge in many indigenous communities. Lack of prediction of the rainy season and warmer temperatures are leading to changes in farming and efforts to adjust to these climate changes. Some communities, for example, Andean indigenous communities of farmers and weavers, have witnessed sharp irregularities that are leading to accommodations regarding the timing for seeding and when to expect for rain.

In this context, indigenous people need to assert their rights, become tightly organized to express their views, and participate in decision processes. They need to use their agency to support the legal mechanisms of international law and the UN system. It is imperative for their representative to increase their political power in legislative bodies, passing laws, and attaining the ability to exert self-governance.

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