

Message of Lakshmi Puri
Acting Head of UN Women
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
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On the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, UN Women calls for the promotion and protection of the human rights of indigenous women and girls. Despite indigenous peoples' extensive contributions to society, their communities continue to be among the most marginalized and discriminated against in the world. Indigenous women across their lifetime, including girls, adolescents and widows, face multiple layers of violence, discrimination and inequality that must be addressed in a more robust, inclusive and comprehensive manner.

Of particular concern to UN Women are the thousands of indigenous women and adolescent girls who are victims of gender-based violence in need of legal protection and health services. This past May UN Women joined other UN agencies in issuing a study, entitled "Breaking the Silence on Violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women," which outlines recommendations for action to end impunity, and enhance their ability to seek protection and recourse.

We are also concerned about the high rates of maternal mortality amongst indigenous women that testify to the lack of access to education, information and services to protect sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, maternal mortality rates in indigenous communities can be up to three times higher than national averages. Thus, the development of culturally appropriate initiatives to promote the inclusion of indigenous women, including young indigenous women, in decision making and programmes that promote women's empowerment is vital.

UN Women is committed to promoting the human rights, empowerment and participation of indigenous women. Indigenous women are strong contributors to the economy and to the social fabric of their communities and countries, as educators, workers, farmers, political leaders and government officials. We promote indigenous women's political participation and leadership not just so that their voices can be heard, but so they are able to design and influence laws, policies and measures that empower indigenous women and girls.

We supported indigenous women's participation in the recent 57th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, where they were able to raise their voices on the priority theme of preventing and ending violence against women and girls. We also supported indigenous women's groups' participation at the Rio+20 conference, and continue to support their participation in ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, and in UN Women's civil society advisory groups.

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we reiterate our full support for the human rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples, including their right to self-determination, to the promotion and protection of human rights for indigenous women, and to development in accordance with their aspirations and needs.