



Issue: The protection of indigenous tribes
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Introduction

The rights of indigenous tribes have always been a concerning issue. There are indigenous people in more than 70 countries with a population of nearly 370 million indigenous people. They are one of the most marginalized and discriminated against. Indigenous tribes suffer from several issues such as lack of political representation, economic marginalization and land grabbing. They are a minority in several countries hence they are not given equal rights in society. Even though efforts are made by the United Nations and other countries there is lack of proper implementation in those procedures. So, it is important to have a better implementation of the policies and to protect indigenous tribes against marginalization in society.

Definition of Key Terms

Indigenous people

Indigenous or native people refer to the people who lived on a land before it was colonized. ('United nations Security Council Resolution 660')

UNDRIP

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. The declaration aims to protect the rights and well-being of indigenous people.

Land Grabbing

Land grabbing refers to refers to large-scale land acquisitions mainly by private investors but also by public investors and agribusiness that buy farmland or lease it on a long-term basis to produce agricultural commodities. ('Land grabbing')

Colonization

The action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.

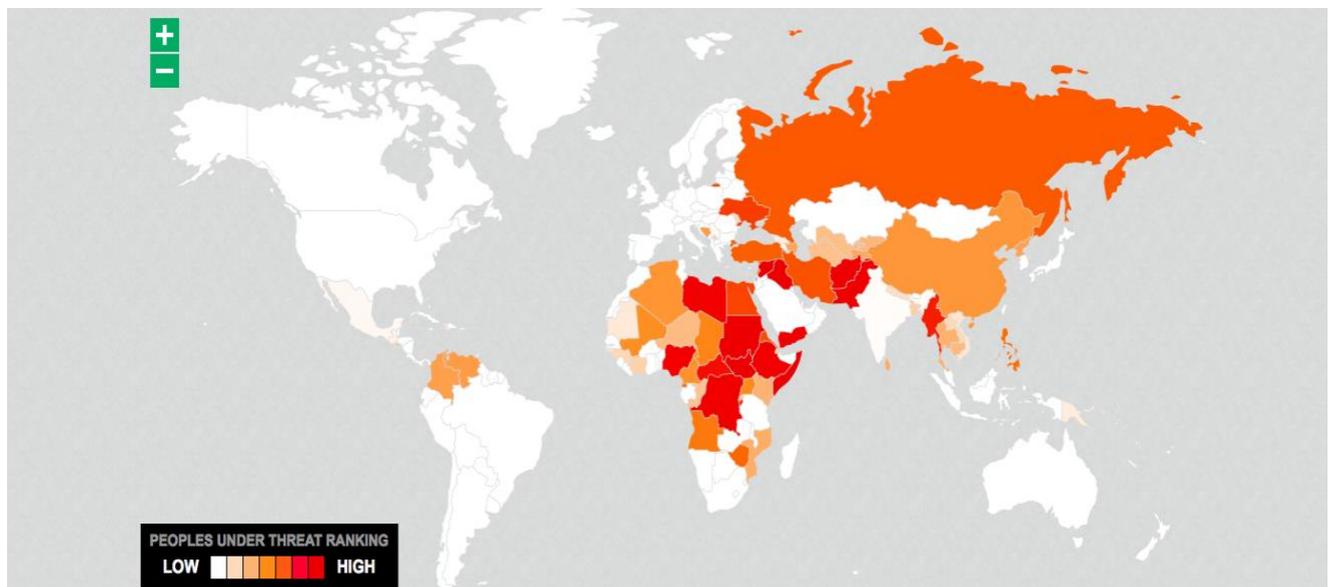
IWGIA

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs is a human rights organization that focuses on protecting and defending the rights of indigenous people. ('IWGIA')

General Overview

Colonization has been a huge part of history in several countries. Due to colonization the native and indigenous people have suffered enormously as they become minority. They are at risk of losing their culture and heritage as new culture becomes dominant and they are being discriminated against. Due to lack of representation in politics and other fields their rights are not protected. Even though, there have been several efforts by the UN and other countries the Indigenous tribes are still not protected and there have been several reports of human rights violation.

There are over 5000 indigenous tribes over the world with different languages, customs and traditions. However, they all face the same issues and abuse. Due to the increased industrialization and climate change, it has threatened the lifestyle of several indigenous tribes.



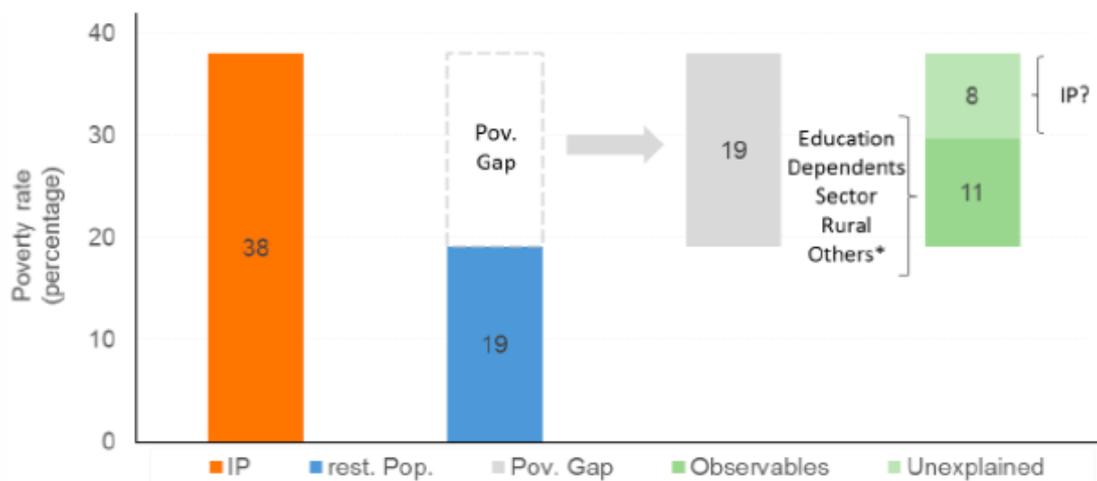
Indigenous tribes all over the world (peoplesunderthreat.org/)

In several countries indigenous tribes are faced with several challenges like illiteracy and unemployment. They are discriminated against in schools, workplace and society. They are denied the right to their land and traditions. Several governments implement policies to exploit their lands for several years. ('Learn more')

Although several countries have legal framework, they lack implementation. Due to marginalization indigenous tribes have little control over the land and policies related to land. There is a lack of documentation and recognition for land ownership. Although, in some Latin American countries like Panama, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia indigenous people have won territorial self-governance building on the fundamental principle of self-determination within the international indigenous peoples' rights legal framework. ('United Nations')

Why is poverty higher among Indigenous Peoples?

The remaining 8 percentage points remain unexplained, suggesting that Indigenous communities face unique challenges to moving out of poverty.



Source: SEDLAC (World Bank and CEDLAS).

Poverty rates among indigenous people (Calvo)

The graph above highlights the poverty rates among indigenous people. It can be clearly seen that indigenous population has a relatively higher poverty rate than rest of the population. The difference is usually due the education level, sector of employment, residence area etc.

More than 50% of indigenous people reside in urban areas. Over the past three decades, people from indigenous tribes have migrated from their traditional lands to urban areas to look for better job opportunities. Although, due to the discrimination they face, they are more likely to get less income and have a lower education quality. ('Indigenous Peoples, Democracy')

The issue of abuse against indigenous tribes roots deeper than government policies. There is an issue of systematic racism in the society that leads to the oppression of indigenous

tribes. They are not treated equally in society and the government policies exploits them. So, it is extremely important to tackle this issue.

Major Parties Involved

Bolivia

Bolivia is a country with high percentage of indigenous tribes with 41% of the population identifying as indigenous and 36 recognized indigenous communities. Despite the legal framework in place there are several issues such as land grabbing and discrimination. ('Bolivia')

Guatemala

Guatemala is one of the most populated countries in Central America. Official reports suggest that nearly 40% of the population is indigenous. However, according to the indigenous people representative it can be nearly 60% with 22 different tribes accounted for. ('Guatemala')

Peru

Peru has population of 32 million and consists of approximately 15% indigenous tribes. A new road is being built in Peru through the rainforest. The road threatens the lives of indigenous tribes voluntarily living in isolation. ('Isolated Tribes and Forests')

Ecuador

Ecuador has a population of over 16 million and Indigenous people consists 25 to 30% of the population. Ecuador has 14 distinct minority indigenous groups that include Tsáchila, Chachi, Epera, Awa, Quichua, Shuar, Achuar, Shiwiar, Cofán, Siona, Secoya, Zápara, Andoa y Waorani, and Afro-Ecuadorians. ('Ecuador')

IWGIA

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs is a human rights organization that focuses on protecting and defending the rights of indigenous people. It was founded in 1968 alarmed by the genocide on indigenous tribes in Amazon. ('News')

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
1968	IWGIA, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, is founded.

1971	The UN passes a resolution that authorizes a study on the living conditions of indigenous people.
1977	International Non-Governmental Organizations Conference on Indigenous Populations in the Americas, held in Geneva, Switzerland.
1983	The fifth and last volume of the study initiated in 1971 is finished.
13 September 2007	The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is adopted by the General Assembly.
30 October 2018	New law land in Myanmar threatens the livelihood of millions of indigenous people.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Within the past several years, the issue of protecting the rights of indigenous peoples has been one of the most prominent items on the international human rights agenda. A fact that isn't known by many is that back in the 1970s, indigenous groups organized and extended their concerns about the current problems they faced to international bodies like UN. If not for their own efforts to secure their legal protection, their situation would have probably been much worse off nowadays.

One of the most important resolutions drafted by the UN Economic and Social Council was one in 1971 that authorized a study on the condition of indigenous populations worldwide. The study was conducted by José R. Martínez Cobo and completed in 1983. It drew important conclusions and provided extensive and viable recommendations to UN to improve the living conditions of the indigenous peoples.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was a turning point in history regarding the protection of indigenous people. While the first draft of the declaration was written all the way back in 1994, there were concerns expressed by some states. These concerns regarded the right of self-determination that was to be given to the indigenous peoples and control over national resources on their land would be given to them as well. Hence, the process moved extremely slowly. Notwithstanding, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was finally adopted in 13 September 2007 with 144 states in favor, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions. ('United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples')

Possible Solutions

The loss of control over their land and natural resources are a great threat to the survival of indigenous tribes living in rural or otherwise unpopulated areas. However, it is possible for indigenous tribes to take over the reins as far as their own land is concerned: Territorial self-governance can be achieved to secure land rights by using the fundamental principle of self-determination thanks to the declaration in 2007. In many Latin American countries, the indigenous people have stood up for their rights and claimed what was rightfully theirs. To make sure that there are no obstacles that stand in the way of indigenous tribes standing up for their land rights and earning them, the committee must take measures that would facilitate their activities towards this goal. Some relevant solutions would be to introduce new international framework or explore methods to improve and regulate the ways in which current frameworks are being implemented in countries.

Another important issue faced by indigenous tribes is lack of political representation. In fact, the problems they face in ensuring that their rights are represented well stems from this very predicament. To solve this, more indigenous people must become involved in the politics of their countries. However, this requires a level of education not many indigenous people currently receive. Therefore, it is important to raise their education quality if they are to be better represented in the political instruments of the country. As more indigenous politicians start representing their own peoples, the rest of the citizens living in the country will slowly become less biased against them and become more acquainted with their problems, which would inspire sympathy instead of prejudice. Not only that, but a better education would mean that indigenous people can get better jobs. With access to better jobs, they can use the increase in their economic standing to help those among their community who are less fortunate and stand together to achieve their goals. On that note, inspiring unity through solidarity among members of the communities where such ideas are not prominent is a must.

Appendix/Appendices

General Assembly Resolutions on Indigenous Peoples –

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/general-assembly-resolutions-on-indigenous-peoples.html>

CIA World Factbook – <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Reuters – <https://www.reuters.com/>

IWGIA Official Website – <https://www.iwgia.org/en/>

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