



UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY AMIDST SHIFTING GLOBAL TRENDS

Ensuring Sustainable Development in
Indigenous Communities and Minority Groups

Securing the Social Inclusion of Child Refugees
and Asylum Seekers

ENSURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND MINORITY GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

According to the *United Nations* (UN), there are more than 370 million indigenous peoples and 5,000 distinct people groups in over 70 countries worldwide. These estimates account for 6% of the total world population. The claim of indigenous peoples to their traditional lands as an innate right has been a source of discourse and discussion in the international community. Indigenous peoples are highly dependent on their lands, which provide them with natural resources and basic needs.

The fundamental consideration for sustainable development is rooted in the principle of "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs." Gearing the capacity of indigenous communities towards sustainable development strategies can allow countries to implement policies and frameworks that can benefit the needs of all people groups without sacrificing the needs of the future. Including the participation of indigenous groups into the development process fosters an inclusive society that ensures shared growth and prosperity while

reflecting and protecting their concerns while committing to the promises of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind."

Several of the 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) are cognizant with the objectives of indigenous communities such as Goal 2 which emphasizes the need to focus on developing and expanding technologies and opportunities that shall allow indigenous farmers to raise their agricultural outputs. Furthermore, Goal 4 also reflects the call for granting equal access to education to rural communities and indigenous children. Indigenous peoples are continuously advocating for these goals in order to protect and promote their human rights as stipulated in the human rights clause of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIPS).

However, indigenous peoples and other minority groups are still subjected to barriers and challenges that hinder their productive potential and interfere with their opportunity to enjoy their human rights. Obstacles such as marginalization, exploitation, oppression, and lack of opportunities contribute to the fact that a number

of indigenous communities are still left out of the development process. A number of indigenous groups have articulated their dissatisfaction with the slow progress of the 2030 Agenda as well as the lack of targets that specifically address their unique needs. Moreover, the SDGs is inadequate in referring to several of the key elements that have been detailed in UNDRIPS such as collective rights in basic social services, access to land, cultural sensitivity, and self-determination.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

The international community's recognition of the Indigenous Peoples and its rights did not start until 1982 with the establishment of the *Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP)*, a subsidiary organ to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The Working Group provided an opportunity for indigenous peoples to share their experiences and raise their concerns at the United Nations. By 1989, the *International Labor Organization (ILO)* created the *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention* and the *Decent Work Agenda* that deals with the rights of these peoples and to eliminate all forms of discrimination for their empowerment and self-

determination. Moreover, ILO sees that access to decent work enables indigenous women and men to harness their potential as change agents in poverty reduction, climate change action and sustainable development.

In 1993, through Resolution RES/47/75, the *UN General Assembly proclaimed the International Year of the World's Indigenous People* with the aim to encourage a new relationship between States and indigenous peoples, and between the international community and indigenous peoples (UNDESA). This was a collaborative effort of the UN, State Governments and Indigenous Organizations. The following year proved to be another step in the global recognition of the indigenous communities as the *UN General Assembly adopted A/RES/48/163* that paved way for the *International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004)*. This marked the deeper commitment of the UN to promote and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide with the help of various UN agencies. Furthermore, the *UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)* was established in July 2000 as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, mandated to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights (UNDESA).

In recent decades, the international community has given special attention to the human rights situations of indigenous peoples. In this context, the Commission on Human Rights decided to appoint in 2001 a Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, as part of the system of thematic Special Procedures. Moreover, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur was re-established by the Commission on Human Rights in 2004, followed by United Nations Human Rights Council's expansion of its mandate in 2007.

Following the success of the First International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the *UN General Assembly* then adopted Resolution 59/714 and 60/270, which launched the *Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005-2015)*. Its goal is to further strengthen the promotion and protection of the rights of these peoples and to ensure greater cooperation for the solution of the problems faced by the indigenous communities in areas such as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment, and social and economic development. In addition, the *UN Human Rights Council* established the *Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)* in 2007 under Resolution 6/36 as a subsidiary body of the Council. EMRIP serves as a consultative body to

the council that focuses on the study and research of the rights of Indigenous people. On the same year, the UNGA adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIPS)*, a keystone international document that first established and recognized the collective rights of indigenous peoples.

The *World Conference on Indigenous People*, which was held last 2014, was the most recent gathering dedicated for the Indigenous Peoples. It presented different perspectives on Indigenous Peoples and served as an avenue for States to share their best practices. Moreover, this conference highlighted the objectives and progress of the UNDRIPS. Despite the number of international actions for the promotion of the rights and inclusion of the Indigenous Peoples, they are still often neglected when creating feasible solutions to the world's most pressing issues. They were underrepresented in the drafting of the Millennium Development Goals, and their issues were also not considered. This problem has been addressed in the creation of *Agenda 2030 or the Sustainable Development Goals* as the international community through the UN agreed that human rights is for all, thus, the Indigenous peoples participated all throughout the process and preparation of the

Agenda 2030. Promotion of human rights, non-discrimination and inclusion, and reduction of inequalities are just some of the solutions included in the Goals that are inclusive of the indigenous communities. The implementation of the SDGs is now crucial as it should uphold the indigenous peoples' human rights as stated in the UNDRIPS and other international instruments for human rights.

UNPFI is currently working with other UN agencies such as the *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, *International Fund on Agricultural Development*, and *International Labor Organization*, among many other, to provide indigenous-specific indicators that will help in poverty and inequality reduction, social inclusion and sustainability of the Indigenous Peoples' community. In addition, according to the United Nations, there are six direct references to indigenous peoples in the new agenda, including SDG 2 that relates to agricultural output of small-scale indigenous farmers, and SDG 4 on equal access to educational opportunities for indigenous children. The global indicators also examine the special concerns of indigenous peoples and focuses on providing a thorough process that can record the income of small-scale food producers by indigenous status, indigenous peoples' access to education

compared to other groups, and indicators that are cognizant with the unique needs and rights of indigenous peoples. The aforementioned efforts from the international community were able to expand the opportunities of indigenous peoples to participate and utilize their transformative potential to contribute in the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, there are still existing obstacles that hinder indigenous peoples from being fully included into the development agenda, thus there is a need for intensified actions and proactive solutions that ensure the protection of their basic rights and social inclusion.

ROLE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

As one of the main deliberative bodies of the United Nations, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) provides an arena for Member States to engage in discourse and discussions that are relevant to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the UNGA provides a holistic environment to forge key alliances and partnerships to accelerate and ensure that the SDGs are cognizant to previous resolutions and established frameworks. In addition, the UNGA is granted with an extensive scope in the SDG

implementation through three distinct tracks:

(1) Raising the global public's awareness of the importance of SDG implementation; (2)

Strengthening momentum in the implementation of each of the 17 SDGs; and (3) Supporting the UN and related agencies in making their maximum contribution to SDG implementation at all levels.

CONCLUSION

In order to further promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is a call for Member States to recognize the necessity to create a holistic environment that recognizes the transformative potential of all people groups. The participation of minority groups and indigenous communities needs to be stressed in order to create an inclusive society that is cognizant to the aspirations and promises of the 2030 Agenda. Global indicators of sustainable development need to reflect the progress made in indigenous communities as to promote the inclusion of their active participation in the implementation of the SDGs. A substantive review of the 2030 Agenda is recommended to fully incorporate the essential role of indigenous peoples.

GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. How can indigenous peoples be included in the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals?
2. How can existing mechanisms be strengthened in order to promote the social inclusion of indigenous peoples?
3. How can relevant organizations help monitor and implement the SDGs among indigenous communities?
4. How will both developed and developing states address the issues of inequality and marginalization among the world's indigenous peoples?

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SECURING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILD REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 60 years, millions of generations of children have been born and raised as refugees, with no opportunity of returning to their homeland or of finding employment in the countries sheltering them. Nearly 50 million children worldwide have been uprooted from their homes due to violence, poverty, and other factors out of their control. Of that total, unprecedented 28 million child refugees are driven from their homes by violence and conflict within and across borders. Child refugees suffer in innumerable ways because of the conflict in the country of origin and their ensuing displacement. Many of them have witnessed terrors, such as the violent torture and death of their loved ones and the destructions of their communities. These resulted to lack of access to education and are often exploited into illegal child labor. Child refugees are also at greater risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking and forced military recruitment.

The abrupt and violent onset of emergencies, the disruption of families and community structures as well as the shortage of resources

with which most refugees are confronted, deeply affect the physical and psychological well-being of the refugee children. Due to these conflicting situations, these children are being deprived of their youth with the lack of opportunities for them to learn, the danger they are facing and the absence of protection, as well as security as they are forced to leave their home.

National and international efforts to safeguard the wellbeing of refugees have intensified with the increase in the presence of national officials and international staff in refugee camps and settlements in order to further promote on-the-ground coordination amongst vulnerable groups. Furthermore, unsafe refugee routes and transit points have been relocated to more stable locations and offenders have been prosecuted. In addition, governments have advocated several programs in order to provide basic emergency services such as medical treatment, rehabilitation, counseling, and other essential treatments for victims of violence and torture.

However, a number of countries still encounter obstacles that hinder the full implementation of programs and policies that are conducive to the

prevention of exploitation and violence in vulnerable refugee groups.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

The refugee crisis has alarmed the international community in the 21st century where refugee influx continuously grow in number in the different parts of the world impeding the rights and security of an individual specifically the children as a susceptible victim. Noting this, in 1993, the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*, through the *EC/SCP/82*, also known as *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Children*, laid out the different special needs of refugee children. In addition, it also includes legal foundations for actions providing a framework for the responsibilities of Member States to all children residing in their borders including child refugees. Lastly, reiterating the organization's commitment in responding to refugee children in the escalating situation. UNHCR, consistently addressing this issue, has released the *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care* in 1994, which highlights the various concerns in different aspects such as the Rights of a Child, Health and Nutrition, Education and more for the safety, and protection of these refugee children.

In response to the crises, the *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)* has been actively supporting the activities and rescue mission for children refugees through programs and policies ensuring the rights and needs of these children are given to them. They also aim to expand their services on humanitarian aspect: providing the basic needs of the children as a means for their physical, psychological, mental, and emotional support. In addition, the UNICEF as a specialized agency continues its support for local governments of conflicted areas by providing services in respective refugee camps and hosting communities. Through its humanitarian strategies, its goal for this year is to provide education, access to basic needs and psychological support for children particularly in war-torn areas, as well as the countries that are hosting great numbers of refugees.

The *UN General Assembly adopted A/RES/51/77* containing the Rights of the Child. The aforementioned resolution dedicated one aspect in stressing the need for prioritizing the aid for children in this disposition. Entitled as Refugee and Internally Displaced Children, it called upon various entities to ensure the safety and protection of these children. Moreover, the *UN General Assembly Plenary* held last September 2016 emphasized the importance of

addressing the matter through the adoption of *Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* in cooperation with the *International Organization for Migrants*. In this session, Member States expressed their utmost support in dealing with the issue at hand and shared viable accounts to be contributed with some states stressing the issue on child refugees.

Recently, a joint press release was accounted by *UNHCR, UNICEF, and IOM*, requesting to increase the measures on safety regulations for refugees as the number of child deaths crossing the sea have been growing in number as they try to escape the realm of conflict. The three agencies, adding to the report, mentioned that more than 340 children, mostly babies and toddlers have been part of the cases of drowning. The international community remains cognizant of the worsening refugee crises in the different regions. These international actions need to be supplemented with concrete and specific solutions in order to combat the rising number of affected refugee children.

ROLE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) shall serve as a platform for a fruitful collaboration among Member States with the goal of

discussing and providing security and social inclusion for children refugees and asylum seekers that would be cognizant to all Member States. As the largest committee, UNGA guarantees an inclusive participation among Member States in establishing solutions with reference to past international and national actions. Crisis in Syria has been the center of attention with the unceasing dispute inside the area; however, the UNGA is not limiting its scope within the said state and extend its solutions to the other disputed countries in the other parts of the world.

CONCLUSION

Due to the substantial number of children in the various large-scale refugee situations in different parts of the world and to the complexity of the problems to which their presence gives rise, as well as to the wider international attention now given to children in general and refugee children in particular, there is call for the international community to protect and help displaced children, as well as protecting them from exploitation and violence; ending the detention of those who seek asylum; keeping families together; and providing them access to education, health care and other services. The plight of refugee children requires the urgent attention of governments, UNHCR and non-

governmental agencies. Further study and understanding of their situation is essential in order to redefine and reorient existing programs and, where necessary, to establish new ones to meet their specific problems.

GUIDE QUESTIONS

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