Katherine Modzelewski

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Mexico

Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

Topic I: Indigenous Peoples, Healthcare, Mental Health, and Wellness

The issue of healthcare and general wellness of indigenous people is a major issue in many nations today. It has been concluded that the majority of indigenous people’s access and quality of healthcare services is not equal to the services of their non-indigenous counterparts.[[1]](#footnote-1) The lesser quality or lack of healthcare altogether has the tendency to negatively impact the quality of life of indigenous people. The most prevalent disease in indigenous populations is Tuberculosis, which is associated with severe poverty that many indigenous populations typically encounter. Many indigenous people also are affected by mental health issue; in many cases, young adults are overwhelmingly affected by depression.[[2]](#footnote-2) Finally, many indigenous families are affected by infant mortality, which could be prevented with the aid of higher quality health care.

Mexico is a nation that millions of indigenous people inhabit and contains the largest of indigenous population on the American continent. The primary groups of indigenous people are the Nahua peoples and the Maya. The indigenous population of Mexico is affected by marginalization like the rest of many indigenous populations around the world.[[3]](#footnote-3) Specifically in Mexico one of the most marginalized groups is indigenous women. Statistics have demonstrated that indigenous women’s risk in of dying from childbirth in Mexico is three times higher than for women in the rest of the country due to the poor quality of health services available. Also, it is evident that the percentage of the indigenous population with health services is significantly lower than the percentage of the non-indigenous with access to health services.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In order to address this issue, the Delegation of Mexico proposes that support is necessary for an organization to help combat the severe conditions of indigenous peoples. Article 24 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals, and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services” and “Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Therefore, it is necessary for the United Nations to determine a program that will actually better the conditions of the indigenous populations. The delegation of Mexico urges the United nations to allocate resources to indigenous populations, recognizing that access to such services is difficult for these populations. Also, the United Nations needs to determine a method to find the fastest and most cost-effective methods to aid people with health issues leading to Tuberculosis and infant mortality.

In order to make progress on this issue, the United Nations must develop a program that makes health services more accessible to populations of a country, and specifically the indigenous population. Programs such as Doctors without Borders or other similar entities need to be funded and directed to communities with a high concentration of indigenous peoples. The delegation of Mexico looks forward to working with the rest of the committee to rectify this issue.

Katherine Modzelewski

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Mexico

Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

Topic 2: Indigenous Land Rights, Climate Change Impacts, and Environmental Protection of Resources

Indigenous populations tend to remain together in the remote areas of their country, where their land is more prone to being affected by climate changes and natural disaster. Additionally, the majority of today’s indigenous population rely more heavily on nature and natural resources to sustain their lives. An ideal solution to preserve the lands affected by climate change would be conservation of the land; however, this would disrupt any extraction of natural resources in the area. Also, many indigenous peoples could experience eviction from their native territories. Factors, such as climate change, can significantly impact the accessibility that indigenous populations have to food and other resources.[[6]](#footnote-6) Many of the struggles that indigenous populations experience is a result of misrepresentation of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes. The lands of indigenous people are more commonly exploited for natural resources due to this misrepresentation. Many Non Governmental Organizations now exist to combat the misrepresentation and marginalization of minority groups in different countries. In order to solve this issue, it is necessary for indigenous populations to be accurately represented in decision-making.

The Delegation of Mexico strongly urges for better representation of indigenous populations in order to eliminate or significantly reduce marginalization. However, one of the reasons that many indigenous populations are marginalized is due to the fact that countries do not have accurate data on the number of indigenous people in their country. The National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Mexico states, “Availability of disaggregated data was essential to helping the Government design relevant policies and programmes that could improve the lives and livelihoods of indigenous peoples. The collection of such data had led to vast improvements in household conditions in indigenous communities and had also helped close education and literacy gaps between the indigenous and general populations.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The delegation of Mexico has seen major improvements in the quality of life on minority groups by collecting data and improving conditions.

In order to address this issue, the United Nations must develop a method to have better representation of their indigenous populations. Countries need to determine the population of their indigenous people first to be able to assess whether any programs are negatively impacting them. Article 26 of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used. They have the right to own, use, develop and control these. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources.”[[8]](#footnote-8) In order for indigenous peoples to protect their rights to their own lands, they need to be well represented during decision-making. Therefore, the Non Governmental Organization that help assist indigenous populations to be better represented must be utilized by all countries.

The land rights, the effect of climate change and protection of natural resources is a significant issue that can only be solved if the indigenous populations gain more representation. The misrepresentation of indigenous populations has had detrimental effects. The delegation of Mexico looks forward to working with the rest of the committee to rectify this issue.

Katherine Modzelewski

Hopewell Valley Central High School

Mexico

Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

Topic 3: Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development

The communities of indigenous populations are some of the poorest communities in the world, which is a result of widespread discrimination and social racism. In addition, indigenous communities are more negatively impacted by natural disasters and government spending cuts than their non-indigenous counterparts. As a result of this poverty, many indigenous communities are also underdeveloped compared to other territories in their nation. Article 21 of the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples states “Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions.”[[9]](#footnote-9) The United Nations must develop a method to ensure this basic right of indigenous populations and improve their conditions.

The delegation of Mexico recognizes that poverty for indigenous peoples is a pressing issue. One of Mexico’s areas with one of the largest percentage of marginalized indigenous populations is Chiapas. This area struggles from the highest socioeconomic and health issues in the nation.[[10]](#footnote-10) On the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issue’s 1996 report, Mexico was rated forty-eighth on the Human Development Index; however, if its indigenous population was excluded, it would have been rated twenty-ninth. This demonstrates a significant difference in development and standards of living between indigenous and non-indigenous populations.[[11]](#footnote-11) Mexico is a Latin American country, which the indigenous populations are living in more remote and impoverished areas. By improving conditions for the indigenous populations, Mexico would achieve a higher rating on the Human Development Index.

In order to address this issue, the United Nations must work on combatting the two causes of indigenous poverty, which was determined by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. These two main causes of the poverty are weak indigenous land rights and exploitative transnational corporations.[[12]](#footnote-12) There are many approaches to suppress these significant causes. The most important solution is increasing the representation of indigenous populations in decision-making processes. If indigenous populations have more political power, it will be more difficult for their group to be marginalized. Another method of suppressing poverty would be establishing poverty reduction strategies into international law. These strategies will develop a framework to significantly combat the causes and impacts of poverty on a nation.[[13]](#footnote-13) Finally, primary education must become a priority and necessity for indigenous populations. The delegation of Mexico urges the United Nations to develop a program that will allocate funds to successfully support the education of impoverished indigenous populations.

The poverty that indigenous populations face is a pressing issue, because it not only affects the indigenous populations but the country as a whole. In order for countries to increase their own economic statuses, it is vital for countries to develop methods to reduce the poverty and increase the development of indigenous populations. The delegation of Mexico looks forward to working with the rest of the committee to rectify this issue.

1. Health and Nutrition, UNICEF TARCO. “Maternal, Neonatal, Child Health (MNCH): Health disparities in LAC.” UNICEF TARCO. Last modified July 21, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous People’s Issues. “The Health of Indigenous Peoples.” *Thematic Paper on the Health of Indigenous Peoples*, June 2014, 1-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pelcastre-Villafuerte, Blanca. "Community-based Health Care for Indigenous Women in Mexico: A Qualitative Evaluation." US National Library of Medicine. January 6, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Health and Nutrition, UNICEF TARCO. “Maternal, Neonatal, Child Health (MNCH): Health disparities in LAC.” UNICEF TARCO. Last modified July 21, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. March 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Securing Rights, Combating Climate Change.” World Resources Institute. Web. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “Despite Declaration, Reality for Indigenous Peoples One of Unacceptable Conditions That Requires Urgent Action by Governments across the Globe, Permanent Forum Told | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.” UN News Center. May 15, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. “UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” United Nations. March 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. March 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Eversole, Robyn, John-Andrew McNeish, and Alberto D. Cimadamore. Indigenous Peoples & Poverty: An International Perspective. International Studies in Poverty Research. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “Indigenous Peoples and the Millennium Development Goals,” Secretariat of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “Resolutions and Papers,” Center for World Indigenous Studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. "Human Rights, Health and Poverty Reduction Strategies." United Nations Humans Rights. December 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)