**SSUNS 2016 Position Paper**

**Committee:** **United Nations General Assembly: Special Session on Indigenous Affairs**

**Country: Republic of Madagascar**

**Population: 25,149,163**

**Topic One: Indigenous Peoples, Healthcare, Mental Health, and Wellness**

Madagascar has not seen much exposure to the public regarding their indigenous people and their treatment. However, the health of indigenous people is a topic that should be discussed in great depth. As the fourth largest island in the world whose population consists very largely of indigenous people, the health of these people is a large priority.

Madagascar’s population has been living in poverty for years, much of the population being of indigenous heritage, in fact 60% of the population of 25,149,163 lives under the poverty line. What this means is that Madagascar’s citizens can not receive their basic needs for living and can not afford proper health care. Madagascar’s life expectancy is at 64 years for males and 67 years for females which is low in relation to countries like Canada which is at 80 years for males and 84 years for females. This is a direct result of the poverty in Madagascar as this low life expectancy is indicative of the lack of basic needs that is caused by poverty. A very common cause of death in Madagascar is also malaria which caused 552 deaths in 2012.

In terms of health care, Madagascar is extremely impoverished and relies mostly on traditional medicines. These medicines, however, are at odds with modern medicine. Despite the inadequacies of the traditional medicines in practicality and medical purposes, the general population are using them. The reasons being the poverty in Madagascar causing the population to be unable to afford proper medical care, along with their lack of knowledge towards such technology. Modern medicines are intimidating to such an impoverished country and must be introduced very slowly through a better means as to not scare the citizens away from the treatment they need. What can be done is a collaboration of traditional and modern medicines to be able to ease the population into using modern medication as well as acquiring modern medication at all, as well as an educational campaign to introduce things like modern medical technology with more ease.

Within these small indigenous communities, many citizens have poor mental health as a result of the poor living conditions of Madagascar. After all, one can not be social if they are bedridden, or be active if they do not have the energy to do so. What this means is that there is a direct correlation of the physical health and mental health of

the Malagasy citizens. A 2009 study of patients with severe chronic pulmonary disease

found that 22% of the participants had at least mild depression from social isolation. This shows that there is a connection between mental health and physical health.

In efforts to work towards improving the mental health of Madagascar’s citizens, improvements in physical health must be made. That being said, the first step in resolving this issue is to have improved health care and a more effective medical infrastructure within Madagascar.

Although Madagascar is such a poor country, there is still hope for this impoverished nation. Aside from the internal affairs of Madagascar, improving the living conditions and health care within the Malagasy communities will set a precedent for other countries to follow. On a global scale, Madagascar has much to offer as a display for the methods of resolving the pressing issues within many other countries. With that in mind, any resolution within this committee should have a collaboration of modern and indigenous values to allow for accessibility of the solutions to citizens as well as more advanced solutions to the issues at hand.

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

The Malagasy people of Madagascar have been living in extremely poor conditions for all of their life. This has been going unnoticed for many years and the situation is only getting worse due to the misrepresentation of indigenous people within discussions. As a nation whose country’s population consisting mostly of Malagasy, the representation of indigenous people is a high priority to our governance.

An issue that has plagued the majority of country’s indigenous people is the lack of infrastructure in terms of education and healthcare to support the living conditions of their citizens. As was stated earlier, Madagascar’s population has 60% of people under the poverty line. That being said, the peoples of this nation can not afford the proper needs to live. The extremely hot weather’s within the island of Madagascar are possible to live in but will only be comfortable if a proper infrastructure is sustained. However, to be able to sustain a proper infrastructure, a country needs money, money that Madagascar does not have. It is also prudent to state that Madagascar has been in a drought since October of 2014. This issue is also very common within other countries, some with the proper resources to sustain a good infrastructure for both the non-indigenous citizens and the indigenous citizens. For example, Canadian indigenous peoples have been living without proper education and healthcare for years despite Canada being a relatively rich country. This shows that the problem is not that the countries in question do not need money for a better infrastructure but instead a larger focus on the indigenous peoples of their country.

A problem that had been mentioned previously was the misrepresentation of indigenous people within international discussion. The Malagasy people, and indigenous peoples of all races, need better representation within things like committees and discussions. Although the indigenous people of different countries could be represented by the delegate of each country adequately, such a thing is not done. As of now, indigenous people are ignored which leads to the stagnation of the poor living conditions in each country for these native citizens. For example, rich countries like Canada are neglecting the treatment of indigenous people by allocating funds to other areas and leaving these indigenous communities living in poverty. According to CBC News, half of Canadian First Nations children live in poverty. As much as a focus on indigenous people would fix the problem, that solution would arguably not need to be in place if the indigenous people were represented properly. This would allow other delegates to consider indigenous affairs in their resolutions rather than neglecting them to support the modern population.

**Topic Three: Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development**

Historically, indigenous peoples have been misrepresented and neglected by society and the governments. This has caused the poverty and lack of infrastructure within these countries’ indigenous people. This lack of infrastructure regarding education and healthcare is evident in all indigenous communities around the world. Education for indigenous communities is limited both in workers and in financial support, poverty within these communities is a larger problem than ever, and drug abuse in these communities have been growing to be a huge problem. If nothing is done about these problems soon, the destruction of indigenous cultures will happen, if it has not already happened.

A very large problem within these communities which could single handedly solve the problems with these communities is education. Indigenous communities have seemingly been left behind by society and the neglect of indigenous communities have led to a very poor education system which causes the indigenous societies to become unaware and uneducated towards the real world. If education within the indigenous communities were a larger focus of committees and discussions, than the development of more aware indigenous citizens could allow for the communities to fix themselves through a new generation of civically active people with indigenous roots.

An issue that contributes to the issue of education is the lack of financial attention being given to indigenous communities by the government. A larger financial focus on indigenous communities would allow these communities to build a better infrastructure and ultimately build a better living environment for them to live in. However in the case of Madagascar, something like financial support can not be provided due to the nation wide poverty. A different solution to this issue rather than direct involvement would be to support the NGOs who support the communities rather than support the communities themselves. The NGOs are run outside of the country which allows the Madagascar government to support them along with citizens from around the world to support their cause.

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