United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

Paraguay

Topic 1: Indigenous Peoples, Healthcare, Mental Health, and Wellness.

Paraguay has a very poor and inefficient health care system. A key issue with the health care system is the funding provided the national Paraguayan government. Although the funding has increased since 1980 and has rose to 1.7% of the GDP by 2000, the effort put in by the government to better the health care system has slowed. Now, Paraguay spends less in its people than most of the other latin American countries. Paraguay spends between 13 to 20US$ per capita per year. Due to the fact that most of the government funding (88%)  goes to private health care and that private health insurance is very limited, it makes it incredibly hard for the poor population from receiving proper health/medical treatment. In 2001, a survey showed that 27% of the Paraguayan population had no access to private nore public health care.

Indigenous people in Paraguay are prone to live in extreme poverty in rural and secluded areas of the country. This makes even harder for the indigenous population to receive any help from the government and to get any proper health care treatments. The native population is more vulnerable to diseases and would be less likely to be treated. For example, active tuberculosis amongst the indigenous population is eight times higher compared to the general population.

Paraguay’s suicide rate amongst the indigenous population is at 1.5%.

Furthermore, the fertility rate amongst indigenous women is at 6.3 which is almost the double of the rate for the general population which is at 3.9. Though Indigenous women are faced with a significantly higher rate of infant mortality compared with that of the general population.

A Health Ministry document states the unfortunate situation for the indigenous population: “regarding health care, health systems do not meet the indigenous population’s needs, in terms of either quality, quantity or distribution. The indigenous minorities are the victims of longstanding discriminatory relations and still number among those excluded from the health system. Systematic care focused on these populations, where the children die from respiratory infections and the adults from tuberculosis and Chagas disease, not to mention the other ills they are prey to because of malnutrition. Neither are drugs provided to combat the many diseases that affect them.There is a health law exempting them from payment at any of Paraguay’s care institutions, but the authorities do not always comply with it” (Rojas, 2006:89).

Paraguay has tried to make it easier for natives to receive proper health care the only solution would to enforce stricter punishments on those who violate the health laws.

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

Since the colonisation of Paraguay in 1516, the indigenous peoples of Paraguay lost all their claims on their ancestral territories and have been fighting for those territorial rights ever since. In 1825, a decree was issued by the government that made it mandatory for all Paraguayan citizens to show all titles for the lands they owned. The land that lacks any proper titles will thereby become State property. These means that, seeing as indigenous territories have no titles, all of the ancestral lands of the Paraguayan indigenous peoples belongs to the State. This includes Chaco, a territory whose population is predominantly indigenous which, later on, had significant portions of its land sold by the government to European landowners.

In 1992, the Paraguayan constitution was adopted. The constitution acknowledged some of the rights of the indigenous people within the parameters of the country. In Article 64, Paraguay acknowledges the right of indigenous people to own land. (Article 63: The indigenous peoples of the Paraguay are guaranteed the right to preserve and develop their ethnic identity in their own habitat. **Article 64: The indigenous peoples of Paraguay have the right to ownership of land in quantity and quality sufficient for the conservation and development of their particular ways of life**)

Deforestation of indigenous ancestral territory is a big issue in Paraguay, especially the Chaco forest. In the past decade, more than 2.5 million acres have been transformed into plantations, leaving the Chaco forest with the reputation as one the world’s biggest deforestation areas.

The indigenous people of Paraguay are fighting back by creating an organisation called ***Forest People Programme.*** This group mainly fights against deforestation of their land.

Paraguay has made some effort to stop deforestation by extending the *Zero Deforestation Law* until 2018. It is a law that was adopted in 2004 and has significantly slowed the process of deforestation.

Topic 3: Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development

Paraguay has a rich indigenous history and culture. Having 17 different ethnic groups that can be divided into five language families. Although fully indigenous peoples in Paraguay only make up 1.7% of the population, 95% of Paraguayans identify themselves as having some native origins and as being *Mestizos (métis).*

Paraguay was colonized by Spain in 1516. The conquistadors took the land of the indigenous groups and to this day the land has yet to be returned.

Despite the fact that the Paraguayan government has taken some action to help indigenous people in the country by adopting a constitutional framework that recognizes the rights of indigenous people the discrimination is still ongoing. Racism and discrimination is rampant within the country. The indigenous people of paraguay lack the security for their rights and the justice they deserve.

Furthermore, There is a stark inequality concerning extreme poverty in the country. The rates of extreme poverty for indigenous people are at a shocking 63% which happens to be 6 times greater than the rate of extreme poverty for the non-indigenous portion of the population.

Concerning education, the indigenous population spend an average of three years in education whereas the non-indigenous population spend an average of eight years. This has resulted to a illiteracy rate of 40% amongst the indigenous population.

    Taking into account the fact that 91.5 % of the indigenous population lives in rural areas of the country, which can prove to be a challenge for children to attend school, the Paraguayan government plans to raise both the average of years spent in education and the literacy rate amongst natives. We plan on building schools in rural zones giving an easier access for education. Moreover, we plan to create more jobs for indigenous people by building infrastructures such as roads in rural areas which can also be beneficial for natives living in the country.

Bibliography

* Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. *Indigenous peoples in Paraguay*. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.
* Amnesty International. *Third ruling condemns Paraguay for its treatment of Indigenous Peoples*. Amnesty International, 2010. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.
* Tauli-Corpuz, Victoria. *Report: The situation of indigenous peoples in Paraguay*. , 2015. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.
* Pimenta, Cristina, Veriano Terto, Luciana Kamel, Ivia Maksud, and Juan C. Raxach. *Access to AIDS treatment in*
* *Bolivia and Paraguay international cooperation and social mobilization*. Translated by James Mulholand, pp. 28-29.
* Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. *Health in Paraguay*. wikipedia. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.
* UN News Center. *Paraguay: UN expert concerned over indigenous peoples’ rights to land, resources*. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.
* Sussie Eshun, Gurung, editor. *Culture and Mental Health: Sociocultural Influences, Theory, and Practice*. John Wiley & Sons, 2009 , pp. 308-09.
* VanSteelandt, Amanda, Ana M. Hurtado, Miriam Rolón, Antonieta Rojas de Arias, and Juan C. Jara. *Research Article High Tuberculosis Disease Burden among Indigenous People of the Paraguayan Chaco and Associated Community Characteristics, 2002–2004: An Ecological Study*. Hindawi.
* United Nations. *Social Panorama of Latin America 2005*. United Nations Publications, 2006, pp. 193-94.
* World Land Trust. *Deforestation and its climate change impacts*. , 2012. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.
* MacDonald, Christine. *Green Going Gone: The Tragic Deforestation of the Chaco*. RollingStone, 2014. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.
* Forest Peoples Programme. *The Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Paraguay: Their lands and the Laws that Would Protect Them*. ENEWSLETTER, 2015. Accessed 9 Nov. 2016.