



Florida High Schools Model United Nations

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**OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)**

**COVID-19'S EFFECTS ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES AND MINORITIES**

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COMMITTEE BRIEF

Introduction

Since 2020, COVID-19 has posed a global health emergency that has killed millions and led to unstable economies, tumultuous supply chain interruptions, and a global recovery effort heavily focused on developed nations, leaving entire populations and nations marginalized and alone to face one of the most dire international crises of this generation. Even in the most developed nations in the world, governments, NGOs, and other institutions dedicated to public health have left certain populations behind, not the least affected of which are indigenous peoples and minorities.

For the past two years, countless studies and statistics have portended the fact that indigenous peoples and minorities are especially vulnerable to COVID and the subsequent health crisis, though many governments' measures have been inefficient, as lawmakers lacked the knowledge and understanding of the situations these populations face.¹ Subsequently, governments instituted blanket COVID policies that did not account for Indigenous People's nor minorities specific circumstances. The effects of the pandemic did not stop with the health crisis; it threaded its way throughout each facet of life previously thought independent from each other. The effects of the pandemic revealed longstanding and stark inequities and discriminations these communities have been grappling with in every part of society "long before the outbreak."² While the pandemic moves towards becoming endemic, nations have begun to revert back to their respective societies pre-COVID, though this course of action would perpetuate the challenges these populations faced before the pandemic and continue to face today. Current conditions and the lack of meaningful response have exacerbated discrimination faced before the pandemic, and have stripped indigenous people and minorities of several of their basic human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.³

"A Firestorm of Death [and] Sickness"⁴

Indigenous people from the Americas have endured a tragic history concerning infectious diseases, and in the context of COVID, their marginalization has continued to adversely affect groups throughout the Western Hemisphere. In Latin America alone, over 8 million indigenous people are at an elevated risk of contracting and dying from COVID due to their living conditions.⁵ The glaring disparity in risks between indigenous and nonindigenous people observed throughout indigenous communities is in part due healthcare access.⁶ Over 80% of

¹ Minority Rights Group International, *Minority and Indigenous Trends 2021: Focus on COVID-19*, ed. Peter Grant (2021).

² Ibid.

³ United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), <https://www.standup4humanrights.org/en/declaration.html>.

⁴ NeshunNuunat' Taawaay Ti Naahuun' et al., "An Open Letter by Indigenous Peoples to Indigenous Peoples in Brazil on Surviving COVID-19," Cultural Survival, December 15, 2020, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/open-letter-indigenous-peoples-indigenous-peoples-brazil-surviving-covid-19>.

⁵ "The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples in Latin America (Abya Yala)," *United Nations*, 2020, 84, https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46698/1/S2000893_en.pdf.

⁶ Yvette Praeli, "Indigenous People Are Most Vulnerable to the Spread of Coronavirus in Latin America," Mongabay, March 30, 2020, <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/03/indigenous-people-are-most-vulnerable-to-the-spread-of-coronavirus-in-latin-america/>.

indigenous workers in Latin America are employed in the informal sector, a part of the economy in which workers face more occupational health risks, lower pay, and less access to health services than do their formal counterparts.⁷ Jobs in the informal sector of the economy, such as street vendors or domestic workers, do not carry typical government benefits because they operate independently of government knowledge and oversight. Additionally, most informal jobs are high-contact, meaning workers are more likely to be exposed to COVID. While the implementation of healthcare centers in indigenous areas appears as a soluble course of action, governments have not always executed this strategy in culturally appropriate manners. Many indigenous communities have rich cultural practices when it comes to medicine, and the introduction of other methods of treatment can threaten or eradicate a way of life that has persisted for centuries. Article 24 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples dictates that traditional indigenous medicinal practices is an inherent right, and while nations cannot infringe on this right, they are also obligated to ensure indigenous people's access to all health services without discrimination.⁸ Ensuring a balance between these two rights is of the utmost importance, and with over 1,000 different indigenous languages spoken in the Americas alone, it is easy for nation states to generalize approaches to indigenous access to healthcare. As of 2019, 32.6% of the rural indigenous population in Latin America lacks legal healthcare service coverage.⁹ This is an extremely delicate situation propelled to a global stage upon the urgency of a global health pandemic. Before COVID, lack of access to health services had taken a dire toll, with indigenous life expectancy twenty years lower than non-indigenous people worldwide.¹⁰

Although healthcare access, or the lack thereof, is a major block to helping stem the tide of COVID in these communities, there are other factors that contribute to COVID's spread. In Latin America, lack of access to clean water and a consistent food source for many indigenous populations have left them even more vulnerable to COVID. For example, domestic access to safe water is so limited that frequent handwashing has become "impossible," as cited in a UN study of Latin American indigenous conditions.¹¹ In Colombia, over 50% of the indigenous population has deprived access to drinking water.¹² Water is a basic right to any and all humans, and in the perspective of the Latin American case study, it is apodictic that any UN response to the pandemic within indigenous populations must understand and overcome the water deprivation crisis. Without a consistent and secure water source, handwashing and basic sanitary necessities will facilitate the spread of COVID and leave these populations even more vulnerable in the case of another pandemic.

Further north, particularly in the United States, indigenous populations face the problem

⁷ Nisha Naicker et al., "Health Services Use and Health Outcomes among Informal Economy Workers Compared with Formal Economy Workers: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 6 (March 19, 2021): 3189, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18063189>.

⁸ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>.

⁹ "The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples in Latin America (Abya Yala)," *United Nations*, 2020, page 28.

¹⁰ The World Bank, "Indigenous Peoples," 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples#:~:text=Although%20they%20make%20up%20just,of%20non%2Dindigenous%20people%20worldwide>.

¹¹ The study consisted of five Latin American countries (Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru) whose indigenous populations make up 80% of the indigenous population in the region. See "The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples in Latin America (Abya Yala)," *United Nations*, 2020, page 14. https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46698/1/S2000893_en.pdf.

¹² Ibid.

of food insecurity, which has increased vulnerability to COVID in these communities. Diet is one of the highest risk factors for preventable diseases, and throughout North America indigenous people have suffered from the effects of food insecurity evident from the US' Office of Minority Health's study that found Native American adolescents are 30% more likely to be obese than their white counterparts.¹³ Obesity carries its own risks of heart disease and diabetes, both of which can make COVID-19 much more difficult for the human body to combat. Nationally, the United States' food insecurity rate is 11%, though in Oklahoma 60% of indigenous people are food insecure.¹⁴ The result of such disproportionate food insecurity in the United States has been presented in a Princeton University study that, although Native Americans have higher vaccination rates than other populations, they "generally have a higher prevalence of socioeconomic and health-related COVID-19 risk factors."¹⁵ Solutions to food insecurity among indigenous people in the United States have included food banks, public health announcements encouraging healthy eating, and SNAP, though these methods are insufficient for a variety of reasons. For example, healthy eating PSAs may inform people on the benefits of fruits and vegetables, but they do not break down the "systemic barriers that Native Americans face when it comes to accessing" those foods.¹⁶

Food, water, and adequate access to healthcare are all basic human rights, and their absence amongst many indigenous communities around the world have increased the risk to global pandemics, only becoming painfully obvious during COVID-19's worldwide surge. Delegates to the OHCHR must understand that lack of access to basic services and necessities has increased indigenous people's risk of severe illness and death, and any solution tailored to curbing COVID-19 in these communities must stem from an understanding that COVID-19 did not spawn the crisis; the crisis was perpetual, and the latest pandemic exhumed these dire conditions for the world to see through elevated critical sickness and death rates despite some of the highest vaccination rates. The international community can no longer remain catatonic on the matter of ensuring basic human rights to indigenous people.

A "Triple-Threat"¹⁷

As in the Western Hemisphere, indigenous populations in Asia face problems with access to reliable healthcare and nutritious and sustainable food sources. Throughout South and Southeast Asia, a third major threat afflicts indigenous people. To help cope with the economic hardship concurrent to the pandemic, governments throughout Asia are approving development

¹³ "Obesity and American Indians/Alaska Natives," US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, 2020, <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=40>.

¹⁴ Valarie Blue Bird Jernigan, "Ending Food Insecurity in Native Communities Means Restoring Land Rights, Handing Back Control," May 27, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/ending-food-insecurity-in-native-communities-means-restoring-land-rights-handing-back-control-158858>.

¹⁵ Katherine Leggat-Barr, Fumiya Uchikoshi, and Noreen Goldman, "COVID-19 Risk Factors and Mortality among Native Americans," *MedRxiv*, January 1, 2021, 2021.03.13.21253515, <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.03.13.21253515>.

¹⁶ Valarie Blue Bird Jernigan, "Ending Food Insecurity in Native Communities Means Restoring Land Rights, Handing Back Control," May 27, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/ending-food-insecurity-in-native-communities-means-restoring-land-rights-handing-back-control-158858>.

¹⁷ "Looking Back at a Year under COVID-19: Indigenous Peoples' Struggles and Resilience during the Pandemic - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs," accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/news-alerts/news-covid-19/3952-looking-back-year-under-covid-19-indigenous-peoples%E2%80%99-struggles-and-resilience.html>.

projects which are leading to the practice of “land grabbing.” Land grabbing is the contentious stripping of indigenous “land, livelihoods and ancestral ties that [indigenous people] have cultivated for generations, and threatening massive environmental damage.”¹⁸ In Bangladesh, the Jumma indigenous community has lost 5,000 acres of their rubber plantations to land grabbers throughout the COVID-19 lockdown.¹⁹ This loss of land only intensified the Jumma’s problems with COVID-19, specifically in regards to land. With the land loss, occupation of their community land “has increased,” thereby making it harder for social distancing and other safety measures to be implemented.²⁰

The government, however, is not the only institution that will commit these land violations. In the Philippines, for example, wealthy and influential families have evicted indigenous people from their homes. In the Casiguran municipality, for example, the development of APECO (Aurora Pacific Economic Zone and Freeport), a plan for developing a tourist sector in the area, has forced “several hundred families out of their homes” near a primary food source in order to build an airstrip.²¹ In some cases, the deeds of sale to APECO make no mention of the tenants on the lands, many of which are indigenous people. According to Article 8 Section 2 Subsection B of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons:

2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for the prevention of, and redress for:
*(b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;*²²

Article 10 also stipulates that:

*Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.*²³

The preceding articles, as well as articles 25, 26, 27, 28, and 32 are all violated in the APECO case.²⁴ As clearly demonstrated by the numerous violations of Indigenous People’s rights, land grabbing is an egregious violation of indigenous sovereignty and international law.

NGOs such as the Indigenous People’s Human Rights Defenders (IPHRD) have been able to report and protest human rights violations, especially in “addressing the challenges posed by COVID-19 when measures were inadequate or contrary to international human rights law.”²⁵ IPHRDS will monitor territories of their community and document any human rights violations.

¹⁸ “Land Grabs in the Philippines: ‘It’s like They Have Killed Us Already,’” Oxfam International, July 14, 2014, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/land-grabs-philippines-its-they-have-killed-us-already>.

¹⁹ “Strengthening the Security of Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders in Asia during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, January 7, 2021, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/news-alerts/news-covid-19/3950-strengthening-the-security-of-indigenous-peoples-human-rights-defenders-in-asia-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-2.html>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Land Grabs in the Philippines.”

²² United Nations General Assembly, “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (United Nations, September 13, 2007), https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Strengthening the Security of IPHRDs in Asia during COVID-19.”

Because they are present in both the formal and informal sector, namely in the logging industry, the nature of their work is perilous.²⁶ Other NGOs that help discover and report human rights violations and support IPHRDs include the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and the Civil Society in Development (CISU).²⁷

COVID and Vulnerable Indigenous Populations

Indigenous Girls and Women

Intersectionality can cause many people to face heightened levels of discrimination with little or no method of justice. Amongst Indigenous women, this intersectionality can lead to lifelong economic and social barriers that stem from unique “historical circumstances of marginalization”²⁸ that is “exacerbated [by the] threefold discrimination [they] suffer, as women, indigenous, and of limited economic means.”²⁹ Because of this historic discrimination, Indigenous women have been ranked among the most at risk for many diseases, including COVID-19.³⁰ The International Indigenous Women’s Forum (IIWF) conducted studies around the world to further understand the effects COVID-19 have had on women; their findings painted a bleak picture for the lives of women during the pandemic. In Sri Lanka, for example, Mukkuvar Indigenous Women reported domestic violence due to “increasing frustrations and overcrowding in communities.”³¹ Restrictions and lockdowns due to the pandemic heavily affected life in the Mukkuvar community. For one, their lack of access to sanitary materials such as masks, sanitizers, and household disinfectants limited their ability to combat COVID, so lockdown measures became evermore necessary to help prevent the spread.³² Lockdown, however, was not always a viable option. As many large families lived in small houses, and therefore cramped conditions,³³ COVID could spread within the household. The conditions, as reported by the IIWF, have also caused elevated domestic disturbances which have primarily affected women.³⁴ As financial burdens, the stress of the pandemic, and the living conditions of Indigenous people combine, women are consistently at an elevated risk of becoming victims of domestic violence in Indigenous communities throughout the world. A UN survey in Latin America found that 53% of Indigenous youth believed that violence against girls and women had increased during the pandemic, with just under half saying they had no access to healthcare

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples in Latin America (Abya Yala).” *United Nations*, 2020, page 32.

²⁹ Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA), *Informe regional: mujeres indígenas de las Américas frente a la pandemia del COVID-19*, Bogotá, May 2020 [online] <http://www.fimi-iiwf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Informe-COVID19-ECMIA.pdf>.

³⁰ Zapeta, Teresa, and Nadezhda Fenly Mejia. “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Lives of Indigenous Women and Their Strategies to Deal with the Pandemic.” *International Indigenous Women FIMI*, 2020. <https://fimi-iiwf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/INFORME-COVID-Y-MUJERES-INDIGENAS-TRADUCCION-INGLES.pdf>.

³¹ *Ibid.*, page 18.

³² Organization for Community Development. “Enabling Mukkuvars to Address COVID-19.” *Tebtebba*, 2020. <https://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/covid-19/covid-19-documents/supporting-emergency-needs/enabling-mukkuvars-to-address-covid-19-tamilnadu-state-india>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Lives of Indigenous Women,” page 18.

services for the victims.³⁵ This statistic is striking, and should be an indication of the glaring deficiencies of healthcare and victim-centered care services throughout Indigenous communities.

COVID-19 has also affected young women, especially due to the strains the pandemic has put on healthcare services. The pandemic has exacerbated the issue of access to healthcare services for conditions and diseases not directly related to COVID-19.³⁶ In Nepal, for example, the stress and anxiety due to the conditions of pandemic have led to symptoms of depression in many young women, though the healthcare system is commonly too inundated with COVID cases, too far away, or simply insufficient in helping treat those afflicted with mental health problems related to the pandemic.³⁷ The Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP), an NGO that worked in Nepal, reported violence between Indigenous Peoples in Nepal as a result of self-isolation and land-grabbing. The multi-faceted problems arising from socioeconomic and political discrimination, as well as the stress of the pandemic, has made life much more dangerous for Indigenous women and girls.

Indigenous Youths

The pandemic has also caused a lack of continuous schooling for many Indigenous children. Although in many developed nations the cancellation of school was nothing more than an inconvenience for most of the population, many schools in developing nations without widespread internet access did not have the faculties to be able to carry out virtual school.³⁸ This also revealed gaps in Indigenous access to communication technology that is ubiquitous in non-Indigenous regions. In Canada, for example, over two-thirds of on-reserve homes do not have access to high-speed internet, with half of Nunavut households getting download speeds of 5 megabits per second.³⁹ For reference, Zoom requires download speeds of at least 10 megabits per second to be effective. In Peru, over 30% of Indigenous children have experienced some form of educational discontinuity.⁴⁰ It is also hard for children to continue their education if they lack a consistent and stable household. In Cameroon alone, 3,822 children were displaced to cities due to the health crisis spawned by COVID-19.⁴¹ This not only affects the child's education and wellbeing, but also puts in danger the valuable cultural traditions that these children are tasked with carrying on in their lives and to their posterity.

Youths in any community should not have to worry about where their next meal will come from, and should have equal access to education regardless of socioeconomic status. In Indigenous communities, however, many children have neither of these rights. A UN survey on Indigenous youth in Latin America "revealed that 44.9% of Indigenous youth felt that there were

³⁵ H. Ullmann, "Jóvenes ante COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe: presentación preliminar de resultados. Encuesta en línea 2020", New York, United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), 13 August 2020, https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/ppt_dia_internacional_de_la_juventud_2020.pdf.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, page 19.

³⁸ Ibid, page 20.

³⁹ Buell, Mark. "Indigenous Communities Must Have Internet Access on Their Own Terms." *Internet Society* (blog), January 20, 2021. <https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2021/01/indigenous-communities-must-have-internet-access-on-their-own-terms/>.

⁴⁰ The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples in Latin America (Abya Yala)." *United Nations*, 2020, page 32.

⁴¹ "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Lives of Indigenous Women," page 22.

food shortages in their communities and 32.2% lacked economic resources to buy food.”⁴² With 38% of respondents also saying they did not attend school, the pandemic has most likely had the greatest effect on Indigenous youth.⁴³ Delegates to the OHCHR must understand that these issues afflicting the youth can have disastrous consequences for them in the future, so a fast and effective solution that both helps those affected and prevents a similar situation for future generations is of paramount importance.

Endangered Indigenous Peoples

Endangered Indigenous Peoples are populations who face a risk of disappearance or cultural extinction. Before the pandemic, about 40% of the world’s languages - the majority Indigenous - were at risk of extinction.⁴⁴ In many South American countries, there are legal protections for many of these peoples, although many of the nations’ responses to COVID-19 have neglected these populations.⁴⁵ Although specific legal protections actually include dealing with epidemics that threaten their existence, states continue to ignore their plight, leading to a truly harrowing situation in which an entire culture and way of life slowly dies, even though the capacity to save them is in the hands of those in power. Delegates to the OHCHR must understand the importance of these legal protections, and see that any longer of a delay in helping many of these people could lead to the end of their existence as a way of life.

“A New Indigenous World”⁴⁶

There are about 4,000 Indigenous languages spread over 5,000 different cultures in almost 100 countries, each one with their own characteristics, ideals, and beliefs.⁴⁷ Because of these vast and numerous differences, properly ensuring adequate and appropriate services for each community is very difficult but altogether necessary and a violation of human rights if neglected. Many nations’ COVID responses have lacked measures of prevention specific to any Indigenous populations, let alone individual populations. Many nations, as well as international organizations such as the UN, can effect positive change on government response to the effects of COVID on these communities.

Many nations broadcast alerts and updates concerning the pandemic and their response to it, but a majority presume that their populations will be able to access this information due to how widespread internet and news access has become. Because of the aforementioned widespread lack of access to information technology throughout many Indigenous communities, NGOs such as the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) assisted Indigenous populations in Tanzania to find methods of receiving relevant information on the

⁴² H. Ullmann, “Jóvenes ante COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe: presentación preliminar de resultados. Encuesta en línea 2020”, New York, United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), 13 August 2020, https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/ppt_dia_internacional_de_la_juventud_2020.pdf.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ UNESCO. “Indigenous Peoples and the COVID-19 Pandemic,” August 7, 2020. <https://en.unesco.org/news/indigenous-peoples-and-covid-19-pandemic>.

⁴⁵ The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples in Latin America (Abya Yala).” *United Nations*, 2020, page 37.

⁴⁶ NeshunNuunat’ Taawaay Ti Naahuun’ et al., “An Open Letter by Indigenous Peoples to Indigenous Peoples in Brazil on Surviving COVID-19,” *Cultural Survival*, December 15, 2020, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/open-letter-indigenous-peoples-indigenous-peoples-brazil-surviving-covid-19>.

⁴⁷ “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Lives of Indigenous Women,” page 11.

pandemic.⁴⁸ Measures such as these should be implemented by governments, not by NGOs. It is the right of every citizen to be able to receive information of dire importance, and presumed ignorance of the government is not an excuse as death rates rise amongst those who do not have access to such necessary information. Other NGOs have also adapted to the culture and languages of the Indigenous populations they are informing, making it much easier for the Indigenous population to understand and to form their own responses to the health crisis. For example, the Indigenous Media Foundation (IMF) has produced information about the pandemic in twenty different Indigenous languages and has disseminated it throughout numerous channels of media to ensure it reaches as many people as possible.⁴⁹

Overall, state responses have been insignificant at best concerning their response of Indigenous struggles during the pandemic, so many Indigenous communities have taken responses into their own hands. Exercising their right of self-determination, many Indigenous communities restricted or fully closed their borders to prevent transmission.⁵⁰ Other Indigenous responses have included, among other actions: data gathering of infections and deaths, adoption of containment and isolation measures, and measures to ensure food security.⁵¹ This is a fantastic solution for a people that have been left all but fully abandoned by their governments who claim and have written law ensuring they will protect these communities in the event of a crisis. The benefit of these collective resistance responses has been a more tailored and individualized set of solutions which allow Indigenous communities to use their unique understanding of their situation along with their culture and traditions to respond to COVID in a way that does not destroy their heritage. Sometimes, however, government services are needed in order to ensure health and safety. Inadequate, culturally incompatible, or simply absent healthcare centers pose a major threat to the health indigenous communities, while an over-abundance of such centers can endanger traditional medicinal practices that may not be respected nor understood by governmental health agencies.

Delegates to the OHCHR have the ability and responsibility to take action for Indigenous peoples around the world. Indigenous people have suffered greatly due to the pandemic, much more so than most other populations worldwide, and the lack of sufficient assistance combined with perpetual discrimination of every kind has led to a major international human rights crisis. Governments, corporations, and other organizations have committed human rights violations in some form or another during the pandemic; as Indigenous people were reeling to adapting to a new form of life and focusing on finding their next meal, outside forces decided to use this tumultuous period as a way to force their way onto traditionally indigenous land, all while the government focused on other populations while deciding how to stem the tide. The OHCHR is tasked with understanding the source of this crisis in order to find rational and long lasting solutions that work towards the *root* of the solution, rather than the effects that the root caused.

⁴⁸ “Looking Back at a Year under COVID-19: Indigenous Peoples’ Struggles and Resilience during the Pandemic - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs,” accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/news-alerts/news-covid-19/3952-looking-back-year-under-covid-19-indigenous-peoples%E2%80%99-struggles-and-resilience.html>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples in Latin America (Abya Yala).” *United Nations*, 2020, page 51.

⁵¹ Ibid.

RESOURCE REVIEW

United Nations Documents

United Nations General Assembly. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.” A/75/185. 20 July 2020.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-indigenous-peoples>.

This report “reviews existing initiatives undertaken by States, indigenous peoples and others to ensure that the rights and specific needs of indigenous peoples are considered and addressed in the fight against the pandemic. It also identifies protection gaps which require Member States and their partners’ attention.” Delegates should utilize this document to learn more about how certain responses to COVID-19 in certain nations have had dire and disproportionate consequences on the indigenous populations. In this report, delegates can also find beneficial COVID-19 responses that were generated with indigenous participation.

Other Primary Documents

“Looking Back at a Year under COVID-19: Indigenous Peoples’ Struggles and Resilience during the Pandemic - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.”

Accessed June 21, 2022.

<https://www.iwgia.org/en/news-alerts/news-covid-19/3952-looking-back-year-under-covid-19-indigenous-peoples%E2%80%99-struggles-and-resilience.html>.

NeshunNuunat’ Taawaay Ti Naahuun’, Hah no Nigahoa Esh, Lianna Costantino, Renda Dionne Madrigal, and Eliane Potiguara. “An Open Letter by Indigenous Peoples to Indigenous Peoples in Brazil on Surviving COVID-19.” Cultural Survival, December 15, 2020.

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/open-letter-indigenous-peoples-indigenous-peoples-brazil-surviving-covid-19>.

“Strengthening the Security of Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders in Asia during the COVID-19 Pandemic - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.”

Accessed June 21, 2022.

<https://www.iwgia.org/en/news-alerts/news-covid-19/3950-strengthening-the-security-of-indigenous-peoples-human-rights-defenders-in-asia-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-2.html>.

RESOURCES & NOTES:

- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: COVID-19 and Indigenous Peoples (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/covid-19.html>)
 - Recommendation: To better provide for indigenous communities, services and facilities should work to provide resources in indigenous languages.

- Indigenous populations are at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 because of the socio-economic marginalization they experience.
 - Factors like inaccessible contact-tracing and early-warning systems in addition to inadequate health and social services all contribute to a greater risk of infection.
- OHCHR: Indigenous Peoples Have Been Disproportionately Affected by COVID-19 (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/09/indigenous-peoples-have-been-disproportionately-affected-covid-19-senior>)
 - Senior UN Official emphasized the importance of involving indigenous communities in the UN discussions about them.
 - Has not been carried out or considered in the past.
 - The UN has raised concerns that some states have used the pandemic as an excuse to further marginalize indigenous communities.
 - To date little has been done to include indigenous peoples in the conversation about pandemic recovery policy.
 - States should respect autonomy while providing the necessary information and funding for indigenous communities--according to experts.
- OCHA: Minority and Indigenous Trends 2021 - Focus on COVID-19 (<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/minority-and-indigenous-trends-2021-focus-covid-19>)
 - Indigenous peoples experience a higher risk of infection as a result of limited healthcare access, higher rates of pre-existing conditions, greater poverty rates, and denser concentrations of people in work and life.
 - Indigenous people often undertake more hazardous careers: delivery services, public transport, medical work, etc.
 - The pandemic has disrupted the employment, education, housing, and mental-health of indigenous populations.
- Minority and Indigenous Trends 2021: Human Rights and COVID-19 Repression and Resistance in the Midst of a Pandemic (<https://minorityrights.org/trends2021/chapter-3/>)
 - Some states took racist and discriminatory measures, in an attempt to segregate and restrict the movement of minority populations, at the start of the pandemic.
 - In South Africa indigenous people were barred from collecting forest products.
 - Gender-based violence exponentially increased during the pandemic, most for indigenous and minority women.
- ILO: The Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Communities (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_757475.pdf)
 - Indigenous Navigator was implemented to monitor and track the progress of indigenous communities in regards to adopting international standards.
 - It was created to collect data that wasn't initially available.
 - Even when indigenous people have access to healthcare, they are usually not equipped with culturally appropriate accommodations.
 - COVID-19 has increased the risk of gender-based violence for indigenous women and children.
 - COVID-19 will also have generational impacts on indigenous populations.
- National Library of Medicine: COVID-19 and Indigenous Peoples (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7272911/>)

- Indigenous people have a history of being pushed to the side during pandemic times.
 - Spanish Flu
 - H1N1 Flu