

**OASIS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

Economic and Social Council

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Guiding package

Topic (1): Promoting the Political, Socio-economic, and Cultural Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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11. **Abstract :**

Rigoberta Menchu, a human rights activist once said “We are not myths of the past, ruins in the jungle, or zoos. We are people and we want to be respected, not to be victims of intolerance and racism.” According to the United Nations, Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. Also known as first peoples, aboriginal peoples or native peoples, they are ethnic groups who are the original inhabitants of a given region.

They are the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the fundamentals to sustainably manage natural resources. Aboriginal peoples hold their own diverse concepts of development, based on their traditional values, visions, needs and priorities.

They have maintained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that distinguish them from those of the dominant societies in which they live in. It is estimated that there are more than 370 million indigenous peoples spread across 70 countries worldwide. Globally, they face a lot of common challenges and problems concerning their rights as distinct people. They seek recognition of their identities, culture, further knowledge as well as ancestral and traditional lands. Throughout history, their rights have been violated as they are considered the most vulnerable groups of people in the world.

The international community have acknowledged the special measures that are required to protect their rights and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life. Indigenous peoples’ rights under international law have evolved from existing international law, including human rights treaties, to address the specific circumstances facing indigenous peoples as well as their priorities, such as rights to their lands, territories and resources, and self-determination. Unfortunately, many indigenous peoples continue to face a range of human rights issues.

1. **Introduction:**

Through the advancement of new technologies, ethnicity and culture have become an understatement. Nowadays, our era is invaded with the need to evolve economically and politically. As indigenous peoples become unrecognizable and recessive under the dominant culture’s power. They have become a neglected segment of the society, as they lack participation in political and economical matters as well as access to social services and face discrimination. With striking differences between indigenous and non-indigenous communities on a social, economical, political and cultural level.

Despite the multiple approaches to attain justice for indigenous communities, the  
implementation of their rights is far from perfect. Some of the most difficult  
human rights challenges for indigenous peoples are from on their lands,  
territories and resources as a result of activities associated with development  
and the extraction of resources. Their cultures continue to be threatened, and  
the protection and promotion of their rights challenged.

1. **Definition of key terms :**
2. ***Indigenous peoples:*** are [ethnic groups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group) who are the original inhabitants of a specific region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied or colonized the area more recently. Syn: first peoples, aboriginal peoples or native peoples[[1]](#footnote-0)
3. ***Minority group:*** are a group of people [differentiated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differentiation_(sociology)) from the social majority of which it is a part of.[[2]](#footnote-1)
4. ***Rights:*** are legal, social and ethical principles that presents the fundamentals of freedom.[[3]](#footnote-2)
5. ***Socioeconomic:*** related to or concerned with social and economic factors.
6. ***Inheritors:*** “a person who has been given something by someone who is dea.d”[[4]](#footnote-3)
7. ***Practitioners:*** “ a person who practices something specified.”[[5]](#footnote-4)
8. ***Intolerance:*** refusal to tolerate or respect opinions or beliefs of other people.[[6]](#footnote-5)
9. ***Rapporteur:*** “a person appointed by a committee to prepare reports of meetings or carry out an investigation.”[[7]](#footnote-6)
10. ***Ancestral:*** something inherited from, or derived from ancestors.[[8]](#footnote-7)
11. ***Expertise:*** special skill or knowledge in a particular domain.[[9]](#footnote-8)
12. ***Marginalize:*** Make something seem unimportant and useless.[[10]](#footnote-9)
13. ***Recognition:*** the identification of something or someone. Verb: Recognize[[11]](#footnote-10)
14. **Background Information:**

There is no single definition of indigenous peoples under international law and policy, and the Indigenous Declaration[[12]](#footnote-11) does not set out any definition. In fact, it's articles 9 and 33 state that indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned, and that they have the right to determine their own identity. With several meetings and negotiations, the United Nations adopted the most  
appropriated definition that is globally used.

There are approximately 370 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide, in over 90. countries. Although they make up 5% of the global population, they account for one-third of the world’s 900 million extremely poor rural people.[[13]](#footnote-12) While Indigenous Peoples own, occupy, or use a quarter of the world’s surface area, they have an important influence on the nature due to their ancestral knowledge and expertise.

Indigenous peoples all over the world continue to suffer from disproportionate high rates of poverty, health problems, crime and human rights abuses. Health-wise,  
they experience high levels of maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, cardiovascular illnesses, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. As well as the high rate of suicide particularly against youth. Their life expectancy is up to 20 years lower than the non-indigenous communities. Historically, they have suffered from colonization, deprivation of their lands, territories and resources, oppression and  
discrimination, as well as lack of control over their own ways of life. Their right to development has been largely denied by colonial and modern states in  
the pursuit of economic growth.[[14]](#footnote-13)

Women in particular present in indigenous societies face extreme issues concerning their dependence and basic rights. Education wise, their education systems do not respect indigenous peoples’ diverse cultures. While also promoting a competitive atmosphere rather than having a cooperative atmosphere. Many decisions made at the international level are not always respected or implemented at the national level, and indigenous peoples’ voices are marginalized.

Nevertheless, over the last 20 years Indigenous Peoples’ rights have been increasingly recognized through the adoption of international actions. Such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, the establishment of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNSR).

1. **Major countries Involved :**

* ***The Commonwealth of Australia:*** is one of the world's safest countries. But on basic standards of living from health, to education, to employment; Australia's Indigenous population is being left behind. According to a governmental report, Indigenous peoples suffer from severe psychological problems and have the highest suicide rate in the world. And the issue is growing, the last decade has seen a 56 % rise in hospitalization rates for self-harm.[[15]](#footnote-14)
* ***The Republic of Kenya:*** ’s aboriginal population lack a voice in governance which restricts their ability to address severe issues. Such as low levels of income, poor health, educational performance, and physical infrastructure. The government works against the human rights of indigenous peoples in a number of ways as. The indigenous peoples have complained about the destruction of their cultures and the deprivation of their lands through ‘the so called development projects such as mining, logging, oil exploration, privatization of their territories, and tourism’[[16]](#footnote-15).
* ***People’s Republic of China:*** The general population in China face severe monitoring and censorship of expression and assembly. Public opposition is nearly impossible, and the documentation or sharing of human rights violations leads to severe punishments, ranging from enforced withdrawals to arbitrary detention and imprisonment. Indigenous peoples as minorities in the society, face additional constraints where any criticism of the political regime may be equated with a terrorist activity.

1. **Major organizations involved:**

* ***International Fund for Agricultural Development:*** is an international financial institution and a specialised agency of the United Nations dedicated to abolish poverty and hunger. it sponsors many activities for indigenous peoples, with more than 22 % of its annual lending having been devoted to supporting initiatives for indigenous peoples since 2003. It also administers the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility, which helps develop indigenous peoples’ micro projects that strengthen their culture, and intellectual-property and human rights[[17]](#footnote-16).
* ***The World Bank:*** is an international financial institution that provides loans to countries of the world for capital projects. It continues to deepen its understanding of Indigenous Peoples’ priorities, needs, and issues through interactions with Indigenous Peoples’ organizations at the global, regional, and national levels. Through analytical studies, they implement projects and programs that involve participation of Indigenous Peoples.[[18]](#footnote-17)

1. **UN involvement :**

The United Nations have recognized the issues that Indigenous peoples face, and sought to reach solutions to apply them in international law.

Initially, the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities reported a Study in which he addressed the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations. It offered a definition of “indigenous communities, peoples and nations”.

Then, in 1982 the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) was established as a subsidiary organ to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. It provided an opportunity for indigenous peoples to share their experiences and raise their concerns at the UN.

Proceedingly, The ILO (The International Labour Organization) has been engaged with indigenous and tribal peoples’ issues. It is responsible for the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989 . They offer access to decent work that enables indigenous adults to use their potential to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.

In addition, the UN General Assembly adopted resolutions[[19]](#footnote-18) and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established in July 2000 as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, with an obligation to discuss indigenous issues.

Also, the Commission on Human Rights decided to assign in 2001 a Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples in selected countries, to offer efficient solutions. Moreover, The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) was established by the UN Human Rights Council, in 2007 as a subsidiary body of the Council. It provides advice, in the form of studies and research on the rights of indigenous peoples while suggesting proposals to the Council.

Consequently, The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007 with 144 votes in favour, 11 abstentions and four States against. Since then, a number of States have changed their position. It details the rights of indigenous peoples in international law and policy. While not consistently implemented, it guides States with indigenous peoples to develop laws and policies that abide by the standards for the recognition, protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples

Lastly, UN DESA division for Inclusive Social Development, Indigenous Peoples was founded focusing on achieving social inclusions and decrease any sort of discrimination to attain the 2030 Agenda.

1. **Possible Solutions :**

* Territorial distribution is prioritised to allow indigenous people their right of possessing land
* Treaties that are put in place to protect indigenous peoples’ rights are applied in all countries.
* Public awareness on the subject is to be built.

1. **Guiding questions :**
2. What are the main problems that indigenous people face ?
3. What have the organisations done until now to solve the issue? How have those efforts improved the situations?
4. Has your country done any efforts concerning the problem? If Yes, what are those efforts?
5. What are the solutions that could solve the problem from its roots?
6. Are there national laws in your country protecting aboriginal peoples?
7. How do indigenous peoples affect your country's status?
8. **Useful links:**

* Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Human Rights System. Available on: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/fs9Rev.2.pdf>
* Indigenous Peoples at the UN. Available on: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>
* The state of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. Available on: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP/press%20package/sowip-press-package-en.pdf>

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* The IFAD’s Mission. Available on : [www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/index.htm](http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/index.htm)
* Country Report of the Research Project by the International Labour Organization and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the constitutional and legislative protection of the rights of indigenous peoples: Kenya. Available on: <http://www.chr.up.ac.za/chr_old/indigenous/country_reports/Country_reports_Kenya.pdf>
* The state of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. Available on: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP/press%20package/sowip-press-package-en.pdf>
* What defines an Indigenous people. Available on: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/indigenous-peoples-and-minorities/Sami-people/midtspalte/What-Defines-an-Indigenous-People/id451320/>
* Indigenous Peoples. Available on: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>
* Indigenous Peoples at the UN. Available on: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>
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3. Definition of Rights. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/rights?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Meaning of “inheritor” in the English dictionary. Available on: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/inheritor> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Definition of Practitioner. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/practitioner> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Definition of Intolerance. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/intolerance?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Definition of Rapporteur. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/rapporteur?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Definition of Ancestral. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/ancestral?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Definition of Expertise. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/expertise?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Definition of Marginalise. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/marginalized?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Definition of Recognition. Available on: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/recognition?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
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