

Affects of Globalization on Indigenous Communities

There are more than 5,000 indigenous societies struggling to exist. Throughout history, native populations have been decimated through colonization and imperialism. Indigenous people today face aggressive efforts by global corporations and governments, that seek to exploit their resources. Resources such as forests, minerals, oil, fish and wildlife, are all essential for native traditional livelihoods. The most significant impacts are caused by the development of giant infrastructures, for example, pipelines, dams, waterways, ports and roads. These kinds of projects have been encouraged and financed by institutions like the World Bank, WTO, or development banks and export credit agencies. Indigenous peoples are losing control over their lands and resources, and their efforts to defend themselves against this exploitation have been largely ignored by mass media. There must be an immediate action taken in the international community to reverse this negative process.

The exploitation continues due to the issue of sovereignty over their territory and complexity of land ownership. Indigenous people's rights of hunting and gathering have come into question as national governments become connected to new global economic treaties. New trade and investment agreements are opening up new territories to industrial extraction of natural resources.

Additionally, another issue aroused over the new rules pertaining to patenting of genetic resources. The WTO has made the privatization of indigenous peoples' genomes possible, which jeopardizes the native's food security and has potential to disrupt biodiversity by allowing it to be corporately controlled. Currently native communities are not included in conversations that determine decisions on export development strategies or international trade and investment.

Indigenous communities can be strong examples of sustainable societies, which have evolved in diverse ecosystems over thousands of years. Indigenous people occupy the few pristine places on earth. The reality remains that without rapid action,

these native communities may be wiped out, taking with them ancient knowledge, rich culture and a simpler, more holistic way of life for future generations. Preserving the natural world is crucial; the international community must work with indigenous peoples around the world. The impacts are the most extreme in places where native peoples have little contact with outsiders and live in areas where resources like biodiversity and medicines are still in great abundance. Globalization directly affects "sovereign" societies, and forces them to adapt to corporate development and resource raiding.

There are examples of indigenous devastation in every continent. First, the Bayaka in Central African Republic, whose homeland is being destroyed by logging. In addition, the Dinka and Nuer in Sudan, where oil reserves have taken precedence over their existence. The Wichí in Argentina fall into the same category, and they are currently fighting the development of a major highway through their territory. Also, the Jharkhand tribal community, now dislocated due to giant dam project in India. Other examples are industrial plantations, destroying tropical forests on which the Dayak people of Indonesia depend upon, the export coffee plantations evicting Montangards from their homeland in Vietnam, and the uranium mining, creating toxic waste that has contaminated the ecosystem on which the Dene and Cree in Canada rely. Overfishing is jeopardizing survival of Chukchi and Inuit in Russia. These problems are widespread and very little is done to protect the people and their land.

The International Forum on Globalization (IFG) began the Indigenous Peoples and Globalization program. The IFG organized a conference among globalization experts and some 25 leading native activists. The IFG conference developed two very important new documents—a map and a report, which explains the impacts globalization has on indigenous communities. The IFG states, “The map is a first-ever visual representation of over 250 places in the world where global corporations impact native communities.” Secondly the IFG released, *Paradigm Wars - Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Economic Globalization*. The report discusses the clash of world views between indigenous and westernized societies. It examines the details of

bioprospecting, industrial development, contamination from GMOs, oil, water privatization, ecotourism, mining, role of trade agreements and bureaucracies. The IFG has provided the data of where these ecological and humanitarian crises are occurring.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established to create an extensive dialogue among six United Nations agencies, to provide information received from the United Nations as well as other intergovernmental organizations. In 2007, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The declaration urges, “States to take all necessary measures to implement the rights of indigenous peoples in accordance with international human rights instruments with out discrimination...” (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Outcome document of the Durban Review Conference*, 24 April 2009, para. 73.) The report focuses on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). UNDP engages with indigenous peoples to stimulate conversations among international and native communities.

The UNDP initiated the Global Human Rights Strengthening Program and the UNDP-Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Community-Based Adaptation project. These programs have integrated indigenous peoples issues into their efforts based on past recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The UNDP Human Development Report 2007/2008 recommends that, in addressing climate change, governance structures for overseeing shared goals have to extend beyond conservation and emissions targets to environmental and human development concerns, including respect for the human rights of indigenous peoples. Since issuance of the report, the UNDP Regional Initiative on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and Development in Asia and the Pacific has organized global, regional and community dialogues in 2008.

We are able to see the many ways indigenous people and their environment are negatively affected by globalization. It is important to consider the rights of natives to

control the resources of the land on which they live. How can the UN help protect the sovereignty of indigenous communities? Also, what measures can be taken to prevent corporate exploitation? Natives are the best suited stewards of their land, but, how else are they valuable in the global community? Lastly, what can be done by countries that consume the products which harm indigenous populations (such as coffee, tea, chocolate)?

Bibliography

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