

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

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Voices of the South on Globalization is a monthly newsletter intended to inspire a meaningful North-South Dialogue by raising awareness for global interdependences and by offering a forum for voices from the South in the globalization debate. Each edition will present short analyses or commentaries from a Southern perspective on one particular issue of the globalization process.

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Treat Indigenous Peoples as Government Entities

While preparations begin for a midterm review of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005-2014), critical evaluation of human rights initiatives, including the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, shows that these have avoided direct recognition of indigenous peoples.

According to the 'Indian Country Today' (ICT) – an award-winning multimedia publisher of news, information, and imagery relevant to the Indigenous people of the Americas, most nation-states in the world do not give formal recognition to indigenous peoples. Of those that do, some often do not support their recognition with agreements that enable indigenous peoples to exercise political, territorial, or cultural rights.

Most indigenous peoples are recognized as citizens of nation-states, who are then recognized to have the same rights and obligations of all other citizens. Since most nation-states do not recognize indigenous peoples as collective entities, how can nation-states identify indigenous people so they can exercise or plead their rights under the Declaration, asks Leeanne Root in a column carried in the ICT on March 19.

Furthermore, many, if not most, indigenous peoples are not citizens by consent. Their citizenship was declared by the nation-state, often without consultation or agreement with indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples do not share the same legal and political institutions as nation-states, and usually do not share the same values and political systems. The collective human rights position imposes the culture, political authority and citizenship of the nation-states upon indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples usually do not want to challenge nation-states, but at the same time want to recover democratic and consensual relations with nation-states that will uphold indigenous exercise of political, cultural and territorial autonomy.

Without formal nation-state recognition of indigenous peoples, says Root, it is difficult for indigenous peoples to exercise their rights, and they are forced to engage in, or decline to engage in, the legal and political processes of collective citizens. Recognizing indigenous peoples can be a slippery slope. In the United States, the government determines who is an indigenous nation. The determination of indigenous recognition is not done by consent or consultation with indigenous peoples, and tends to impose U.S. interpretations of tribal organization.

Root is of the view that the difficult issues of recognizing indigenous peoples who will have the protections of indigenous human rights should not be embedded within the sole power of nation-states. "Indigenous peoples need international and nation-state recognition that empowers them to maintain government-to-government relations. Such recognition will identify indigenous political relations and provide better understanding of which groups should exercise indigenous rights," Root points out.

From the beginning, nation-states need to address indigenous peoples as government entities, rather than as citizens, or collective citizen groups, adds Root. Because if nation-states and human rights initiatives do not recognize indigenous rights as government-to-government rights, then indigenous peoples will continue to suffer political, cultural and territorial suppression. Human rights initiatives and contemporary democratic states will not have found a consensual way to understand and include indigenous peoples. There will be no truly democratic nations until indigenous peoples are recognized and empowered to exercise their rights. ☑

Of Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change and Rural Poverty

They constitute some four percent of the global population. They are spread around the world in 70 countries, from the Arctic to the South Pacific. Their numbers add up to somewhere between 300 and 370 million, equal to or outnumbering the inhabitants of the United States of America.

They are the indigenous peoples comprising at least 5,000 different groups the world over. They live in the Americas – the Lakota in the USA, the Mayas in Guatemala or the Aymaras in Bolivia – as well the Inuit and Aleutians of the circumpolar region, the Saami of northern Europe, the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia and the Maori of New Zealand. 70 percent of them live in Asia.

They are different in many ways from the other about 6.4 billion human beings presently hosted by the planet Earth. And they play a tremendous price for being different.

They are among the poorest of the world and often the most marginalized and disadvantaged in their countries. Their situation is exacerbated by the fact that they are often the minority group living under national laws that do not address their unique circumstances.

These are important reasons to focus on the indigenous peoples, says Vicky Tauli Corpuz, who chairs the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), on the margins of the Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on 'Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change and Rural Poverty: Promoting Innovative Approaches and Solutions' on March 25-26, 2010 in Manila.

The seminar was organised by the Bangkok-based Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and the Philippine Legislative Committee on Population and Development Foundation (PLCPD) with funding from the Rome-based International Funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The establishment of the Permanent Forum was preceded by a long-drawn process initiated in 1993, when the proposal for such a Forum, stemming from indigenous peoples, found its way into the final document of the World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna, she recalls. Seven years later, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decided to establish the UNPFII.

UNPFII serves as an advisory body to ECOSOC with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights, make recommendations to the United Nations system, raise awareness about indigenous issues, promote the integration and coordination of indigenous issues in the United Nations system and produce relevant material.

The Permanent Forum is unique in at least two ways. First, both States and indigenous experts sit alongside each other in the deliberations. This is regarded as quite innovative since traditionally the United Nations has been a forum reserved only for States or State-nominated experts.

Secondly, the process allows indigenous peoples to highlight issues that exist in their countries and affect their lives as well as make policy recommendations on how to address many challenges. These recommendations eventually transform themselves into policy recommendations of the UNPFII.

The snail-like process of history was manifested in the fact, when seven years after the establishment of the Permanent Forum – in 2007 – the General Assembly adopted the United

Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a seminal document in the struggles of indigenous peoples for social justice and human rights and a tangible proof of their partnership with the United Nations. Article 42 explicitly mentions the United Nations Permanent Forum, thus creating a new mandate for the Forum:

"The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including at the country level, and States, shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration."

The indigenous peoples "suffer the most from and have contributed the least to climate change", says Tauli-Corpuz, who shepherded the Declaration, and has for many years been the voice of indigenous people around the world striving to bring all of them together in policy-making and global advocacy.

She is also the Executive Director of TEBTEBBA (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education), Philippines. Since 1993, she has been a Co-Chair of the Indigenous Caucus of the UN Commission of Sustainable Development NGO Steering Committee and is also a Board Member of the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) and the Vice President of the International Training Center of Indigenous Peoples (ITCIP).

Because of the way indigenous peoples live in close proximity to and harmony with nature, and the simplicity of what could be called their lifestyle, she says, indigenous peoples "have the smallest carbon footprint" and yet, when the consequences of climate change, such as rising sea levels, drought and forest degradation occur, it is their communities that are hit first and worst.

This is the view she has been insistently putting across at the UN climate change conferences that are have yet to do away with "climate injustice and inequities" that include the mitigation and adaptation challenges for indigenous peoples.

Though the UN has not adopted an official definition of "indigenous", the widely accepted view is that indigenous peoples are those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

Against that backdrop innovative solutions are required to tackle the predicament of indigenous people in the context of climate change and rural poverty – a view that Asian parliamentarians and UN organizations funding programmes for uplifting of the rural poor and for the benefit of the indigenous people are doing.

The Asian Forum of Parliaments for Population and Development will complete 30 years in 2011 and has 26 countries as members that include Australia, Japan, New Zealand as well as some of the Central Asian republics. Participants in the Manila conference included parliamentarians from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. ☑

Parliamentarians Vow Support for Indigenous Peoples

The concerns of the indigenous peoples, at the heart of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), are considered of vital significance by parliamentarians of the countries of Asia-Pacific. The region hosts some 70 percent of the indigenous peoples, who are among the poorest of the world and often the most marginalized and disadvantaged in their countries.

Asia-Pacific parliamentarians therefore intend to set up a 'Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples' within the Bangkok-based Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD).

In a statement at a two-day gathering in Manila, they said the Standing Committee would ensure the well-being of the indigenous peoples and see to it that policies and programmes concerning their rights are implemented.

They called upon fellow parliamentarians in Asia-Pacific to support them in seeking and organizing dialogues with indigenous peoples in their own countries and communities.

The Manila gathering concluded March 26, 2010. Officially called the Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change and Rural Poverty, it was joined by UNPFII chairperson Vicky Tauli Corpuz and India's minister of state for rural development, Agatha Sangma.

Parliamentarians from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam participated.

A close look at the Manila 'statement of commitment' indicates that the proposed Standing Committee of parliamentarians would provide decisive flanking support to Corpuz in achieving the objectives the UNPFII is tasked with.

The proposed Standing Committee will be the third within the AFPPD, which already hosts the standing committees on 'the status of women' and on 'population and food security'.

Based in the Thai capital, AFPPD is a coordinating body of national committees of parliamentarians on population and development and parliamentary committees dealing with population and development issues.

In the eight-point Manila statement, the parliamentarians agreed to encourage other parliamentarians in Asia-Pacific to promote the effective implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted after insistent spadework in 2007, and other international human rights instruments.

Of vital significance to the indigenous peoples are also multi-lateral environmental agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The statement rightly points out that the indigenous peoples are not just victims of climate change but can also provide some of the solutions to climate change because of their traditional knowledge systems and practices on maintaining the integrity of the diverse ecosystems in their territories.

However, it is necessary to introduce policy reforms and draft legislations so that the indigenous peoples' rights are respected and conditions are created for their full participation in tackling climate change as well in decision-making processes aimed at reducing poverty.

In view of this, the parliamentarians committed themselves not only to draft new legislation where necessary but also to

implement existing "policies and regulations which will lead towards the empowerment of indigenous peoples, help build their capacities and to respect and promote their individual and collective rights and their development with culture and identity."

The rationale behind the commitment is that the indigenous peoples comprise around 370 million of the world's total population, and many of them still live in the most fragile ecosystems and are highly dependent on nature for their survival, cultures and identities.

Besides, out of the world's remaining 6,000 languages, 4,000 are spoken by indigenous peoples, thus providing significant contribution to the cultural diversity of in the face of globalization that is making menacing inroads into the cultural identities around the world.

Against this backdrop, the Manila statement affirms that the indigenous peoples are "equal to all others". It highly appreciates the contributions of the diversity and richness of their civilizations and cultures as well their values of mutual reciprocity, harmony with nature, collectivity and solidarity and their indigenous knowledge systems and practices on natural resource management.

The regional seminar in Manila was co-organized by the Philippine Legislative Committee on Population and Development Foundation (PLCPD) with funding from the Rome-based International Funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations.

The statement not only acknowledged IFAD's support but also welcomed the adoption of the IFAD policy of engagement with indigenous peoples which, it said, should be used as a base guideline for designing and implementing development projects with the indigenous peoples.

IFAD's strategic framework identifies indigenous peoples as an important target group because they face economic, social, political and cultural marginalization in the societies in which they live, resulting in extreme poverty and vulnerability for a disproportionate number of them.

To reach them requires tailored approaches that respect their values and build upon their strengths.

According to Farhana Haque-Rahman, chief of IFAD's media relations, special events and programmes, the Fund's targeted and participatory approach to grass-roots rural development and its experience in empowering poor people and communities, give it a comparative advantage in working with indigenous peoples, even in the most remote rural areas.

AFPPD director Shiv Khare said the impulse to focus on the indigenous peoples had been given by IFAD. The Forum is tasked with informing, educating and motivating parliamentarians on the linkages between increasing population and issues such as reproductive health, family planning, food security, water resources, sustainable development, environment, ageing, urbanization, migration, HIV/AIDS, and gender equality. ☑

A Youthful Minister from India's Garo Hills

She can easily pass off as a university student. Not only because she is rather young-looking and unpretentious but also because she is dressed so simple that you would not associate her with the keynote speaker at the opening of the Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on 'Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change and Rural Poverty'.

But she is indeed Agatha Sangma, minister of state for rural development in the Government of India, headed by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

While you feel embarrassed for not recognizing her, she is unruffled and says: "I am used to it." Indeed she is – since she entered the lower house of parliament (Lok Sabha) in May 2008 at the age of 27 in a bye-election from her father's constituency of Tura in the West Garo hills in the small northeastern state of Meghalaya, literally meaning the 'Abode of Clouds'.

Her father, Purno Agitok Sangma – a veteran political leader – remained a member of the Lok Sabha for eight terms spanning some 40 years. He held several important ministerial posts in the Government of India, and was Lok Sabha Speaker – president of the lower house of parliament – before deciding to quit national politics.

Agatha Sangma was re-elected to the Lok Sabha in the April-May 2009 countrywide polls.

Her brothers James and Conrad are also in state politics; her sister Christie is the only one who has not entered politics.

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (AFPPD) invited her as a keynote speaker because she belongs to the scheduled tribes as recognized in India's Constitution, and holds the portfolio of rural development in India's union cabinet – both qualifying her to speak about indigenous peoples and alleviating poverty in rural areas.

Agatha Sangma grew up in an intensely political atmosphere – like Indira Gandhi, the daughter of the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, though in post-Independence India.

Indira Gandhi served as prime minister for a total of 15 years – three consecutive terms from 1966 to 1977 and for a fourth term from 1980 until her assassination in 1984. She was India's first, and to date only, female prime minister.

Agatha Sangma does not see any parallels between herself and Indira Gandhi.

Though, a gentle pride creeps in, when in her keynote address she refers a couple of times to "my government", a phrase that one would not expect to hear from a minister of state, elaborating the government's policy and actions for the benefit of the indigenous peoples or scheduled tribes.

Agatha Sangma holds M.A. degree in Environmental Management from Nottingham University in the UK, Diploma in Cyber Laws; Diploma in Corporate Laws, Diploma in Human Rights Laws, and Diploma in Securities and Investment Laws.

She is a keen student of Machiavelli – a sixteenth century Italian philosopher and writer, who is considered one of the main founders of modern political science. Like the versatile Leonardo da Vinci, renowned as painter and sculptor, Machiavelli is on the one hand considered a good example of the 'Renaissance Man' whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas.

On the other, however, one would tend to link Machiavelli with his political treatise 'The Prince' which, rightly or wrongly, has come to symbolize the methodical exercise of punishment-and-reward tactics in politics to preserve power and status quo.



Time will tell where and how Agatha Sangma will deploy the tactics of 'The Prince'. But the fact is that she knows how to bring to bear her point of view from behind the scene.

When the Asia-Pacific parliamentarians discussed the 'draft statement of

commitment' on March 26, the second day of the AFPPD regional seminar in the Philippine capital, she saw to it that the "Adivasi, scheduled tribes, hill tribes, national minorities, among others" were not referred to as "other names" by which the indigenous peoples around the world are known.

Agatha Sangma has a point there. Though the UN has not adopted an official definition of "indigenous", the widely accepted view is that indigenous peoples are those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

This, she says, is not the case in India. But there are about 82 million people in India "who are among the most vulnerable and are known as Scheduled Tribes" of which she is a part. She belongs to the Garo tribe.

Most of the scheduled tribes reside in forested areas and about half of them live below poverty line. They are grouped into about 700 tribes. Among these tribes there are some still at pre-agricultural stage, and are known as 'Primitive Tribe Groups' (PTGs). Now they have been identified 'Most Vulnerable Tribal Groups' (MVTGs). Like in other parts of the world, these tribes are dependent on forest based natural resources for their survival.

"In India, we respect their culture, traditions and ethos," she tells Asia-Pacific parliamentarians and media. She points out – in a tender rhetorical style – that since the days of India's first Prime Minister Nehru, "we have adopted the 'Panchsheel principle' which basically means development of these tribes as per their own wisdom and ethics, without imposition of outside culture and influence".

That Agatha Sangma should evoke Nehru who died sixteen years before she was born, is far from self-evident. In fact, there is a growing tendency among those in her age-group to ignore at best a critical phase of post-Independence India through which Nehru skillfully steered the country.

Others, however, criticize Nehru for representing, to some extent, the moral conscience of thinking humanity, and aspirations of the newly independent countries without being in a position to back these up with the necessary strength that neither India nor other Asian countries possessed in a world caught in the fever of the cold war. – Ramesh Jaura ☑

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - A Brief History

The formulation of a Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples first began in 1983 within the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. For almost a decade the Working Group devoted a large part of its time to drafting this text. Representatives of indigenous peoples, government delegations and experts on the subject participated very actively in this process.

In 1993, the Working Group adopted the text of the Declaration and sent it to its superior body, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which, in turn, adopted the text in 1994 and sent it to the Commission on Human Rights for its consideration.

The establishment of the Working Group on the Draft Declaration

In 1995, the Commission on Human Rights considered the text submitted by the Sub-Commission and decided to establish an Inter-sessional Working Group (Resolution of the Commission on Human Rights 1995 / 32, 3 March 1995) with the mandate to consider the text presented and draw up a draft Declaration for its consideration and adoption by the UN General Assembly within the framework of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004). The Commission also set up a procedure that made it possible for indigenous peoples' organisations to participate actively in the drafting work at the Commission level. That meant that indigenous peoples' organisations without consultative status with the Economic and Social Council were allowed to help draft the Declaration. Those entitled to vote within this Working Group are the member governments of the Commission on Human Rights. Governments that are not members of the Commission, NGOs with consultative status and indigenous organisations with special accreditation have observer status.

Since its establishment in 1995, the Working Group on the Draft Declaration has met annually but although the adaptation of the draft Declaration was recommended in the First International Decade's programme of activities, this did not happen. In 2005 the mandate of the Working Group was renewed but the continued lack of progress in adopting the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a cause of great concern.

Background to the Declaration

One of the United Nations' most important initiatives for indigenous peoples is the development of a United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Adoption of this instrument will give the clearest indication yet that the international community is committing itself to the protection of the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples. While this Declaration will not be legally binding on States, and will not, therefore, impose legal obligations on governments, the declaration will carry considerable moral force.

Content

The Declaration is a long and complex document with a preamble and 46 articles.

The text recognises the wide range of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples. Among these are the right to unrestricted self-determination, an inalienable collective right to the ownership, use and control of lands, territories and other natural resources, their rights in terms of maintaining and developing their own political, religious, cultural

and educational institutions along with the protection of their cultural and intellectual property. The Declaration highlights the requirement for prior and informed consultation, participation and consent in activities of any kind that impact on indigenous peoples, their property or territories. It also establishes the requirement for fair and adequate compensation for violation of the rights recognised in the Declaration and establishes guarantees against ethnocide and genocide.

The Declaration also provides for fair and mutually acceptable procedures to resolve conflicts between indigenous peoples and States, including procedures such as negotiations, mediation, arbitration, national courts and international and regional mechanisms for denouncing and examining human rights violations.

The Special Rapporteur on the Situation of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People

On 28 September 2007, the Human Rights Council, during its sixth session, decided to renew for an additional period of three years, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People.

Professor Rodolfo Stavenhagen was the first United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People. He was appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2001.

Undoubtedly, the Special Rapporteur's mandate has been a crucial instrument for making the situation of indigenous peoples more visible in the work of human rights bodies and international agencies, and has opened spaces for dialogue among indigenous peoples, states and international organizations.

Reinforcement of the mandate

The Council's resolution reaffirms and reinforces the Special Rapporteur's mandate as described in previous resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights, in areas such as the Special Rapporteur's official visits, communications, and annual reporting.

The Council's resolution further includes a number of important innovations in relationship to previous resolutions, including the following:

The resolution entrusts the Special Rapporteur with the follow-up of the recently adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, along with other relevant international standards.

The resolution invites the Special Rapporteur to work in close cooperation with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and to participate in its annual session.

The resolution invites the Special Rapporteur to identify, exchange and promote best practices in the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

The resolution calls the Special Rapporteur to pay a particular attention to the situation of indigenous women and children, and to apply a gender perspective in his/her work. ☑

The Effects of Climate Change on Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, due to their dependence upon, and close relationship, with the environment and its resources. Climate change exacerbates the difficulties already faced by indigenous communities including political and economic marginalization, loss of land and resources, human rights violations, discrimination and unemployment. Examples include:

Indigenous peoples in Africa's Kalahari Desert are forced to live around government drilled bores for water and depend on government support for their survival due to rising temperatures, dune expansion and increased wind speeds which have resulted in a loss of vegetation, and negatively impacted traditional cattle and goat farming practices.

In the high altitude regions of the Himalayas, glacial melts affecting hundreds of millions of rural dwellers who depend on the seasonal flow of water is resulting in more water in the short term, but less in the long run as glaciers and snow cover shrink.

In the Amazon, the effects of climate change include deforestation and forest fragmentation and consequently, more carbon is released into the atmosphere exacerbating and creating further changes. Droughts in 2005 resulted in fires in the western Amazon region and this is likely to occur again as rainforest is replaced by savannas thus, having a huge affect of the livelihoods of the indigenous peoples in the region.

Indigenous peoples in the Arctic region depend on hunting for polar bears, walrus, seals and caribou, herding reindeer, fishing and gathering not only for food to support the local economy, but also as the basis for their cultural and social identity. Some of the concerns facing indigenous peoples in the region include the change in species and availability of traditional food sources, perceived reduction in weather predictions and the safety of traveling in changing ice and weather conditions, posing serious challenges to human health and food security.

In Finland, Norway and Sweden, rain and mild weather during the winter season often prevents reindeer from accessing lichen, which is a vital food source. This has caused massive loss of reindeers, which are vital to the culture, subsistence and economy of Saami communities. Reindeer herders are being forced to feed their herds with fodder, which is expensive and not economically viable in the long term.

Responding to climate change

Climate change poses threats and dangers to the survival of indigenous communities worldwide, even though indigenous peoples contribute the least to greenhouse emissions. In fact, indigenous peoples are vital to, and active in, the many ecosystems that inhabit their lands and territories and may therefore help enhance the resilience of these ecosystems. In addition, indigenous peoples interpret and react to the impacts of climate change in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions which may help society at large to cope with impending changes. Examples include:

In Bangladesh, villagers are creating floating vegetable gardens to protect their livelihoods from flooding, while in Vietnam, communities are helping to plant dense mangroves along the coast to diffuse tropical-storm waves.

Indigenous peoples in the Central, South American and Caribbean regions are shifting their agricultural activities and their

settlements to new locations which are less susceptible to adverse climate conditions. For example, indigenous peoples in Guyana are moving from their savannah homes to forest areas during droughts and have started planting cassava, their main staple crop, on moist floodplains which are normally too wet for other crops.

In North America, some indigenous groups are striving to cope with climate change by focusing on the economic opportunities that it may create. For example, the increased demand for renewable energy using wind and solar power could make tribal lands an important resource for such energy, replacing fossil fuel-derived energy and limiting greenhouse gas emissions. The Great Plains could provide a tremendous wind resource and its development could help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as alleviate the management problem of the Missouri River hydropower, helping to maintain water levels for power generation, navigation, and recreation. In addition, there may be opportunities for carbon sequestration.

Drawbacks and difficulties of responding to climate change

The potential threat of climate change to indigenous peoples' very existence combined with various legal and institutional barriers, which affect their ability to cope with and adapt to climate change, makes climate change an issue of human rights and inequality to indigenous peoples.

It is also important to note that enhancing and supporting the adaptive capacity of indigenous peoples will only be successful if it is integrated with other strategies such as disaster preparation, land-use planning, environmental conservation and national plans for sustainable development.

In many instances, adaptation to new conditions requires additional financial resources and the transfer of technological capacity that most indigenous communities do not possess. While short-term adaptation activities are underway, resource and capacity constraints are limiting the implementation of long-term adaptive strategies.

Some mitigation measures may have undesirable direct and indirect consequences for indigenous communities. For instance, biofuel initiatives are a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions may lead to an increase in monoculture crops and plantations and an associated decline in biodiversity and food security. The full and effective participation of indigenous communities is crucial to the elaboration of State-developed mitigation measures to ensure that such schemes do not negatively affect vulnerable communities.

Indigenous peoples who choose or are forced to migrate away from their traditional lands often face double discrimination as both migrants and as indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples may be more vulnerable to irregular migration such as trafficking and smuggling due to sudden displacement by a climactic event, limited legal migration options and limited opportunities to make informed choices. Deforestation is pushing indigenous families to migrate to cities, in urban slums. ✓