

Addressing Rural Poverty

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Poverty today remains a pressing issue, especially in countries affected by political upheaval and conflict, as well as in low-income countries. The issue is specifically addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals, including No Poverty (SDG 1), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). Poverty is typically measured by comparing household income with set thresholds or poverty lines. In 2022 the international poverty line was changed from \$1.09 to \$2.15, meaning anyone living on less than \$2.15 per day is considered to be living in poverty. In 2022, 9 percent of the world's population – some 713 million people – was living in extreme poverty. At the same time, 83.7 percent (1.1 billion people) of people in poverty are living in rural areas, and 70.7 percent of all poor people are located in the rural areas of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.¹

Causes of Rural Poverty

Rural poverty is caused by several factors, including political instability and civil conflict, as well as discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or caste. The factors contributing to rural poverty are intricate and multifaceted. They encompass various elements, including culture, climate, gender, markets, and public policy. Additionally, the rural poor are diverse, facing different challenges and requiring multiple potential solutions. Strong economic stability, competitive markets, and public investment in physical and social infrastructure are widely acknowledged as crucial for fostering sustained economic growth and reducing rural poverty. Poverty disparities intersect with factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, location (rural vs. urban), and sources of income. Within households, children and women typically experience

¹ United Nations Development Program, Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2024,

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-10/mpireport2024en.pdf>

more significant hardship than men. In communities, minority ethnic or religious groups tend to face more challenges than majority groups, and the rural poor often struggle more than their urban counterparts.²

Furthermore within rural areas, inequalities in school attendance and child health are persistent. If the head of a wealthy rural household is well educated then they are typically almost as well off as an average urban household but if a rural household is in the bottom end of the wealth spectrum and uneducated then they are significantly worse off.³ Distorted government policies, including penalizing the agricultural sector and neglecting rural social and physical infrastructure, have significantly contributed to rural and urban poverty. Absolute poverty can be alleviated if two key conditions are fulfilled: first, there must be sustained economic growth or a consistent increase in mean income; second, this economic growth should be neutral regarding income distribution or actively reduce income inequality.

Additionally, weak property rights and unfair enforcement regarding agricultural land make things worse. The concentration of land ownership and imbalanced rental agreements add to the issue, along with corrupt politicians and inefficient public services. Economic policies often leave the rural poor out of the development process, worsening their situation.⁴ Social exclusion is also an important factor to consider when looking at rural poverty as the progressive aging of a population makes social ties significantly weaker which endangers any chance of economic growth and risks amplifying territorial gaps. In addition, large families with high dependency ratios, market issues due to unequal land ownership, and external shocks like

² Mahmood Hasan Khan, International Monetary Fund, “Rural Poverty in Developing Countries: Implications for Public Policy” <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues/issues26/>

³ United Nations High Level Committee on Programmes, “Tackling inequalities in public service coverage to “build forward better” for the rural poor <https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/HLCP%20ITT%20Policy%20Brief%20Rural%20Inequalities%202021.pdf>

⁴ Mahmood Hasan Khan, International Monetary Fund, “Rural Poverty in Developing Countries: Implications for Public Policy” <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues/issues26/>

climate change and global economic shifts all contribute to ongoing rural poverty. For example, there are rural areas suffering from droughts, flash floods, tornados, tsunamis and fires that prior to climate change were free of those circumstances.

Addressing Rural Poverty

The United Nations and other international organizations have taken strong steps to address poverty and in particular rural poverty. In 2019, the General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RRES/74/237, “Eradicating rural poverty to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” which focuses on formulating a plan to eliminate rural poverty globally for sustainable development and to meet the 2030 deadline.⁵ A key part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which was created to end poverty and hunger by promoting inclusive economic growth, protecting the environment, and promoting social inclusion.⁶ The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) – the only UN agency that works exclusively to transform agriculture, food systems, and rural economy and specifically targets poor small-scale food producers located in rural areas – plays a key role in efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.⁷

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, often referred to as the World Bank) have worked together to publish Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), which replaced Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) as the main adjustment vehicle in 2001.⁸ PRSPs are comprehensive development frameworks prepared by low-income countries in collaboration with international financial

⁵ United Nations General Assembly, “Eradicating rural poverty to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” A/RES/74/237, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/437/58/pdf/n1943758.pdf>

⁶ United Nations General Assembly, “Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development” https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2051AAAA_Outcome.pdf

⁷ International Fund for Agricultural Development, “Our Vision” <https://www.ifad.org/en/our-vision>

⁸ Sam Bartlett, “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and their contribution to health: An Analysis of Three Countries” McGill Journal of Medicine, 2011, June; 13 (2):22 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3371744/>

institutions.⁹ These documents outline national strategies aimed at reducing poverty and promoting sustainable economic growth, with a strong focus on inclusive, participatory processes. PRSPs are often required for countries to qualify for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and for countries seeking concessional loans from the IMF and the World Bank. PRSPs work with Member States to ensure that development programs funded by international institutions align with the country's own poverty reduction goals and are in line with SDGs, and align with inclusive growth and emphasize the involvement of vulnerable and marginalized groups.¹⁰ Burundi's PRSP, for example, focused on rural development, social services, governance, and post-conflict recovery. Rwanda's PRSP addressed poverty through investments in agriculture, education, and health, and strengthened local governance, and Ghana's aimed at boosting economic growth through private sector development and improving access to education and health services. Other PRSPs are targeted to specific countries' needs.

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Experience has demonstrated that when countries establish incentive structures and make complementary investments to connect improved health and education with higher incomes, the poor can benefit in two ways: through increased current consumption and enhanced future earnings. On one side, traditional growth approaches that are capital-intensive, prioritize import substitution, and focus on urban development—driven by government policies on pricing, trade, and public expenditure—have largely not succeeded in reducing poverty.

Conversely, agricultural growth, which features a low concentration of land ownership and employs labor-intensive technologies, has nearly always played a significant role in alleviating poverty. The rural poor primarily rely on agriculture, fishing, forestry, and associated

⁹ International Monetary Fund, “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – Status and Next Steps,” <https://www.imf.org/external/np/pdr/prsp/status.htm>

¹⁰ International Monetary Fund, “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP),” <https://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.aspx>

¹¹ Ibid, np.

small-scale industries and services. A key means to categorize the rural poor is by their access to agricultural land: cultivators include small landowners and tenants, while non-cultivators are landless, unskilled workers. Cultivators, who make up the majority of the rural poor in developing countries, are actively involved in the production and management of crops and livestock. Non-Cultivators rely on seasonal labor demands in agriculture as well as in informal, small-scale industries and services in rural areas. Landless rural workers are particularly susceptible to changes in labor demand, wage rates, and food prices.

To create effective policies that assist the rural poor, attention should be directed toward four key groups: small landowners who cultivate their own land, landless tenants working on others' properties, landless laborers who depend on casual or long-term employment in agriculture or other sectors, and women, who may belong to any of these three categories. One of the key strategies for reducing rural poverty is to achieve agricultural growth through the adoption of new technologies. Rural areas within developed countries have been greatly evolving since World War II specifically because of growth in the agriculture sector. In high income countries, public policy regarding rural areas follows several stages with the first being centered upon improving agricultural productivity, supply of basic infrastructures, and increasing farm household income and extension services. However, the effectiveness of these efforts for the rural poor hinges on initial conditions, the structure of relevant institutions, and the incentives in place. Research indicates that agricultural stagnation has negatively affected the rural poor in sub-Saharan Africa by leading to food shortages and increased prices, which have diminished their ability to purchase food and secure employment.¹²

¹² United Nations Economic Commission for Africa , “OVERVIEW OF INCOME AND NON-INCOME RURAL POVERTY IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES”

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/bertolini-Overview-rural-poverty-developed-countries-1.pdf>

E-commerce is proving to be a helpful tool when it comes to addressing rural poverty by assisting small firms' integration into local, national, and global supply chains. It allows rural producers to connect to consumers, sell their products, and reduce inventory. By improving commercialization there'll be less food loss from post-harvest loss and poor distribution systems which accounts for around one third of all the food grown in the world every year. A successful example is E-Farmers Hub, a platform created by the Syngenta Foundation, that allows entrepreneurs and farmers in developing countries to track agricultural inputs and outputs. It provides real time access to data, location tracking, and assessment of the agricultural value chain's overall performance. As of 2018, the project encompassed 45 Farmers' Hubs and served 30,000 farming households by connecting them to buyers.¹³

Case: Burundi

The Republic of Burundi ranks among the poorest nations in the world. With a Gross National Income (GNI) of \$702.03, a life expectancy of 61.89 years, and an average expected schooling of just 3.31 years, Burundi has a Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.42%.¹⁴ 87% of Burundi's population lives on less than \$1.90 a day making Burundi one of the most impoverished countries globally. 80-90% of the population relies on subsistence farming, limiting productivity and leaving countless households vulnerable to food insecurity and climate-related shocks. Youth unemployment rates stand at 65% reflecting the country's inability to generate sufficient employment opportunities as economic growth remains slower than the rapidly expanding labor force. To attract foreign direct investments (FDI) the Government of Burundi (GOB) is working towards tackling challenges such as corruption, exchange rate instability, financial controls, limited infrastructure, (only 12% of the country has electricity), and

¹³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Social Report 2021" <https://www.un.org/en/desa/world-social-report-2021>

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, "Burundi" <https://data.undp.org/countries-and-territories/BDI>

a lack of economic data. GOB's efforts to modernize its agricultural sector aim to expand production beyond coffee and tea, and infrastructure projects such as photovoltaic plants, hydroelectric power, road construction, and regional railways, are underway to improve trade and reduce transport costs.¹⁵ In 2006, the government completed its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and, in collaboration with development partners, it formulated a Priority Action Plan for 2007–2010 to guide the strategy's implementation.

In November 2011 the Burundi government launched the National Agricultural Investment Programme to align its National Agricultural Strategy with an initiative targeting the root causes of rural poverty. IFAD has contributed to nine programs and projects in Burundi with a total investment of \$141 million. The current country program includes four operations, two of which are the Transitional Programme of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction developed to respond to potential crises, and the Livestock Sector Rehabilitation Support Project which focuses on community development to help rebuild conflict-affected areas.¹⁶ IFAD-funded programs specifically in Burundi emphasize community development committees, agricultural productivity, capacity building, and decentralization and aim to promote long-term stability.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Poverty remains a critical global challenge, particularly in rural areas impacted by political instability and economic inequality. The recent adjustments to the international poverty line highlight the urgent need to address extreme poverty, which affects more than 713 million individuals worldwide. As outlined by the Sustainable Development Goals, strategies such as

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “2022 Investment Climate Statements: Burundi”
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-investment-climate-statements/burundi/#:~:text=Burundi%20is%20one%20of%20the%20world%27s%20most%20impoverished%20countries%2C%20with.rate%20of%20about%2065%20percent.>

¹⁶ International Fund for Agricultural Development, “Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty in Burundi”
https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/investing-in-rural-people-in-burundi_e-pdf

promoting decent work, fostering economic growth, and reducing inequalities are essential for creating a more equitable future. Efforts to eradicate rural poverty must consider the multifaceted nature of its causes, including cultural, social, and economic factors. By focusing on sustainable agricultural growth, improving access to education and healthcare, and leveraging technology like e-commerce, countries can empower rural populations and enhance their livelihoods. The success of initiatives like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) illustrates the importance of tailored, participatory approaches in development.

Questions to Consider

1. Does the distribution of poverty differ between rural and urban areas in your country?
2. If yes, what factors contribute to the rural poverty, and how do these factors intersect with issues like gender and ethnicity?
3. Has your country focused on agricultural growth to contribute to reducing rural poverty, and what role does technology play in this process?
4. Do government policies and external shocks, such as climate change, impact the lives of the rural poor in your country?
5. Does your country work with or support international organizations, such as the World Bank and IMF, to influence rural development strategies?
6. What best practices can be shared by your country to improve access to education and healthcare for rural populations?

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United Nations Development Programme, "Burundi" <https://data.undp.org/countries-and-territories/BDI>

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "OVERVIEW OF INCOME AND NON-INCOME RURAL POVERTY IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES" <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/03/berolini-Overview-rural-poverty-developed-countries-1.pdf>

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U.S. Department of State, "2022 Investment Climate Statements: Burundi" <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-investment-climate-statements/burundi/#:~:text=Burundi%20is%20one%20of%20the%20world%27s%20most%20impoverished%20countries%2C%20with,rate%20of%20about%2065%20percent.>

Protecting the Rights of Indigenous People

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The protection of the rights of Indigenous People has been an ongoing battle on the global stage within the United Nations since the 1970s when discrimination against Indigenous People was first recognized during the first Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.¹⁷ Since then, many groups and different working systems within the United Nations have taken step to fully protecting Indigenous People's rights.¹⁸ In 1982 a working group within the United Nations was established to articulate the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples. The International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples was established in 1995 by the General Assembly to increase the UN's commitment to protecting indigenous peoples.¹⁹ During this time, UN agencies worked with indigenous peoples on projects related to health, education, housing, employment, development, and the environment. 2007 was a giant leap towards advancing the progress of establishing protected rights for Indigenous Peoples. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,²⁰ which applies human rights to indigenous peoples and their situations. The declaration was the result of decades of negotiations between states and indigenous peoples, and by 2010, it was supported by the vast majority of UN Member States. In 2015, all United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and created 17 world Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals aim for peace and

¹⁷ United Nations "World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination 14-25 August 1978, Geneva" <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/racism/geneva1978>

¹⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Indigenous Peoples" <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples>

¹⁹ United Nations "First International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004)" <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/second-international-decade-of-the-worlds-indigenous-people/7276-2.html>

²⁰ United Nations "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

prosperity for the people and the planet. Protecting Indigenous People's rights falls under 5 of 17 SDGs covering quality education, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, peace, justice, and strong institutions, and partnership for the goals.²¹

The concerning issues of today's world with protecting the rights of Indigenous People include encroachment on their self-determination, trespassing on their right to cultural land, the impact of climate change, green colonialism, and the blocking of healthcare and other public services. Many of these issues are linked together and have cause and effect with one another but each has specific arguments and definitions. For example, in today's day and age, many Indigenous People are denied the right to freely choose their government or political systems. This falls under the umbrella term of self-determination meaning that Indigenous people are not being given the legal right to decide their destiny in the international order. This includes

- Pursuing economic, social, and cultural development without outside interference,
- Freely disposing of natural resources without prejudice to international law,
- Determining their political status,
- Forming their own state, or freely associating with an existing state.²²

The term self-determination is a legally bound term embedded in legal instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.²³ In conjunction with Indigenous people having their self-determination infringed upon, they are also facing trespassing on their rights to cultural lands. Indigenous People's land ownership rights are widely abused but while being under international law, states cannot relocate Indigenous Peoples without their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and without offering them adequate compensation. Many Indigenous People are still uprooted from their land due to discriminatory policies or armed conflict. They are regularly cut off from resources and traditions that are vital to their identity, well-being, and

²¹ United Nations, *THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development*. (n.d.). Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved October 14, 2024, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

²² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

²³ United Nations "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

survival. However, Indigenous Peoples' lands are home to over 80% of our planet's biodiversity and often rich in natural resources, such as oil, gas, and minerals are routinely appropriated, sold, leased, or simply plundered and polluted by governments and private companies.²⁴

This leasing of cultural land to governments and private companies has led to Indigenous People being greatly affected by climate change and also how they are affected by green colonialism. Indigenous people are the most likely to face direct consequences from the effects of climate change because their intimate relationship with the natural environment means that climate change poses a unique danger to their way of life. Indigenous Peoples are also disproportionately impacted by fossil fuel exploration and extraction because political marginalization makes it harder for them to oppose it.

Green colonialism is a newer term coming to light and is also known as green grabbing. It is the practice of taking land and resources abroad for environmental purposes, resulting in unjust development. It's a type of green imperialism that involves governments, corporations, and Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), and can have a variety of purposes. It also explains how 'Big Green' conservation NGOs from the Global North are operating, with funding from their governments, in a way that reinforces colonial power over Indigenous Peoples. These organizations fail to effectively address biodiversity loss because they do not work with Indigenous Peoples or benefit from their centuries-old scientific knowledge of nature and conservation.

The increase in the effect of climate change has sparked resistance from Indigenous people across the globe through protest and legal prosecution. This resistance has sparked a new conflict of attacks on Indigenous people and environmental activists. Environmental activists are at the forefront of the struggle for climate justice, particularly in the Americas the

²⁴ Anna Fleck, "Indigenous Communities Protect 80% of All Biodiversity", July 19, 2022
<https://www.statista.com/chart/27805/indigenous-communities-protect-biodiversity/>

world's deadliest region for those defending land, territory, and the environment. In 2022, according to Global Witness, 177 people were killed for defending the environment at a rate of one every other day with almost 88% of the killings taking place in the Americas. Colombia was the deadliest country for environmental activists, with 60 murders, with Brazil, Mexico, and Honduras also in the top five. Of those killed across the year, 34% were Indigenous people.²⁵

Alongside the stealing of their cultural lands and their right to self-determination, many Indigenous people are facing lack of healthcare and other public services. More specifically Indigenous women are facing higher rates of healthcare blocking, which is leading to Indigenous women having higher rates of maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases and are more likely to suffer violence. Indigenous women are less likely to have access to healthcare facilities when pregnant because of discrimination and mistreatment; and so, they are more likely to die giving birth.²⁶ Indigenous Peoples are at even greater risk during public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁷ A lack of access to health care and public information, as well as essential services including sanitation and clean water, means that the pandemic disproportionately impacted Indigenous Peoples.

Another public service that Indigenous people have a greater risk of not having access to is education. An education gap between Indigenous children and their peers persists on a worldwide scale. Education systems often fail to cater to the particular needs of Indigenous Peoples, with obstacles including a lack of teachers who speak Indigenous languages. This is compounded by Indigenous Peoples' lower levels of access to computers and the internet the so-called 'digital divide'.²⁸

²⁵ Global Witness, "Standing Firm: The Land and Environmental Defenders on the frontlines of the climate crisis" September 15, 2023, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/standing-firm/>

²⁶ Amnesty International, *Indigenous Peoples' rights*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2024, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/>

²⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "COVID-19 and Indigenous Peoples" <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/covid-19-and-indigenous-peoples>

²⁸ Amnesty International, *Indigenous Peoples' rights*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2024, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/>

In a case study focusing on the native Argentinian Kolla people who are having their lands threatened by the mining of a large quantity amount of lithium that their ancestral lands sit on top of. This large amount of lithium is a part of the “lithium triangle” a region spanning Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia native communities sit upon a treasure trove of an estimated trillion dollars in lithium. The threat of mass mining threatens the native people's access to water and their culture that is tied in with their lands. More than 30 companies are officially seeking permission to mine the water in the two salt flats and mass protests from the Kola people and environmental activists have been on the rise. Things came to a head last summer when the local government, eager for the profits from the mines, changed its constitution, making it easier to waive certain Indigenous land rights and limiting the ability to protest against the expansion of mining. This case shows that while we have Indigenous protection rights in place, local governments can find loopholes within the protection in place to still achieve what they want.²⁹

While the Kolla people faced adversaries to their cultural lands, right to self-determination, and violence against them over protesting. Another area that is consistently overlooked is the blocking or declining aid of healthcare towards Indigenous people more specifically Indigenous women who are facing higher rates of maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases and are more likely to suffer sexual violence. A case study that shows this adversary is the Australian, Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander mothers are up to three times more likely to die during childbirth, and their babies are nearly twice as likely to die in their first year of life. Conditions relating to premature birth or

²⁹ Megan Janetsky, M., V.R. Caivano, & R. Abd, (2024, March 13), *Native groups sit on a treasure trove of lithium. Now mines threaten their water; culture and wealth.* AP News.
<https://apnews.com/article/lithium-water-mining-indigenous-cb2f5b1580c12f8ba1b19223648069b7>

complications during pregnancy are the major cause of infant morbidity and mortality in First Nations communities in Australia.³⁰

Studies have shown that in 2021, preterm birth rates were 14.1% for babies born to First Nations women compared with 7.9% among non-Indigenous Australians, statistics that have changed little in over a decade. It reflects broader gaps in the health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This all stems from high levels of discrimination, unemployment, poor quality housing, and poor education among Indigenous Australians. It can also be difficult to access healthcare in the first place as many First Nations communities face traveling long distances to see a doctor, dentist, or midwife. Many Indigenous women live in remote areas, meaning they have to travel far from their homes to the nearest city hospitals to give birth, which can not only be expensive but also leave them feeling isolated and distressed leading to higher complications during childbirth.³¹

Something that is being done to combat these complications is the program Birthing in Our Community (BiOC), a multi-agency service operating in Queensland and New South Wales. Since launching in 2003, over 1,000 women have used BiOC services, which Mater Mothers' Hospital runs in South Brisbane, and two First Nations community-controlled health services: the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Brisbane. Together they offer a system of maternal care that depends on a skilled First Nations workforce, multi-agency partnerships (community organizations, health practitioners, social workers), and a community hub or center where these services are delivered. Owing to fewer interventions and procedures along with lower levels of neonatal admissions, Birthing on Country models is less expensive than standard maternal care.

³⁰ Cat Woods, *Indigenous mothers are being 'failed' in Australia – so they are taking measures into their own hands*. (2024, April 29). BBC. Retrieved October 14, 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240429-indigenous-mothers-are-being-failed-in-australia-so-they-are-taking-measures-into-their-own-hands>

³¹ Ibid.

In a comparison of First Nations mothers experiencing standard care in a Brisbane maternal hospital versus community-led Birthing on Country, there was a 5.34% reduction in preterm births for Indigenous families and a saving to the health system. So far, Birthing on Country projects collaborative partnerships between Indigenous community organizations and hospitals have been established in New South Wales, Queensland, and the Northern Territory. From this case study, we can get an idea of what Indigenous women across the globe face in everyday life while trying to receive access to proper healthcare for themselves and their children. While the United Nations wasn't directly involved in aiding the Aboriginal women programs such as Birthing on Country it is these types of programs that inspire the United Nations to give more aid or support to these programs or draft a similar program through their systems to further aid indigenous women in receiving proper healthcare.³²

Protecting the Rights of Indigenous People

In response to these concerning issues relating to protecting the rights of Indigenous People the United Nations and the Third Committee have been diligently working on passing resolutions and agreements amongst Member States. The United Nations has also made SDG4 - Quality of Education. The most impactful resolution to be passed on the General Assembly was the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.³³ This momentous resolution was passed in 2007 bringing rights and protection to Indigenous people worldwide. This resolution covers a multitude of topics but some of the key ones written in were the rights to self-determination, cultural rights, Subsistence rights, and Participation in key decision-making. Another noted resolution to pass on the General Assembly floor was the Report A/78/162 "Tourism and the rights of Indigenous Peoples" resolution. This resolution

³² Ibid.

³³ United Nations "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples"
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

analyzed best practices and challenges in the promotion and respect of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to achieve positive community-based sustainable tourism outcomes.³⁴

While the General Assembly has passed very impactful resolutions on a more specific level the General Assembly Third Committee has also worked on many impactful resolutions and agreements that have allowed Indigenous People to continually have protected rights. Many Reports and Notes have been published on the circumstances Indigenous Peoples face such as the General Assembly including the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” in its agenda as well as the Report (A/77/460). This Report focused on the stresses that Indigenous Peoples, including those who are in voluntary isolation or initial contact, have the right of self-determination, and can choose to live according to their traditions. It also encourages the active engagement of Indigenous Peoples in implementing the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and invites the General Assembly to consider holding a Follow-Up World Conference on Indigenous Peoples to follow up on implementing the outcome document.³⁵

After looking at the history of the protection of the rights of Indigenous People, the issues concerning today with protecting their rights, and what has already been done to protect the rights of Indigenous People both through the United Nations, but also more specifically the General Assembly Third Committee, we can look further into the next steps for protecting Indigenous People's rights with the approval of resolutions that reemphasize the right to self-determination and encourage Member States to adopt national action plans to preserve, revitalize, and promote Indigenous languages. We can also encourage Member States and the private sector to ensure more sustainable, environment-friendly, and responsible corporate

³⁴ United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, “The Indigenous World 2024” <https://www.iwgia.org/en/un-special-rapporteur-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/5416-iw-2024-unsrip.html>

³⁵ United Nations General Assembly, “General Assembly Adopts Annual Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/news/2022/12/general-assembly-adopts-annual-resolution-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples-2/>.

behavior that addresses the well-being and the adverse environmental impact on the lands and territories traditionally inhabited by Indigenous Peoples.

In conclusion, the protection of Indigenous People's rights is a continuous battle to ensure that they can keep rights to their cultural lands and traditional culture and allow them to pass these on to the next generation. While we have made impactful steps toward the right direction of ensuring the rights of Indigenous people with The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the multiple resolutions and agreements continue to strengthen the rights laid out. We are still having to face an uphill battle to continuously ensure that Indigenous People are given the same protected rights as any other person. The protection of rights for Indigenous People will be a battle for generations unless we strive for a permanent solution that ensures permanent protection and ensures that the next generation can be allowed to grow up without persecution and with full rights to their lands, homes, health and culture.

Questions to Consider

1. What was your country's stance on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?
2. Does your country have Indigenous people? If so, does your country have protections to ensure their rights? Do they face inequalities or discrimination?
3. What actions or measures has your country taken to improve protected rights for Indigenous people?
4. What agreements and or resolutions have your country signed concerning the Rights of Indigenous People?
5. What efforts has your country taken to ensure the process of working on the SDGs and putting into effect policies and procedures to ensure their effect?

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