

MDG Reports and Indigenous Peoples: *A Desk Review*

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Introduction

“Wild rice is at the core of our being...For us, rice is a source of food and also wisdom. For the globalizers, it is just a commodity to be exploited for profit. The paradigms are at loggerheads...That philosophical, spiritual, and cultural dialogue needs to be deepened in our own communities, because it's in our hands to determine the future.”

Winona LaDuke
(Anishinaabeg) United States¹

“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.”

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Art. 20.1

This desk review aims to analyze recent achievements and challenges of indigenous peoples by examining available data contained in a diverse selection of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) country reports.

Building upon similar analyses previously undertaken by the Secretariat,² a total of ten country reports were reviewed this year from a broad range of countries in which indigenous peoples live. The reports reviewed are the latest available for each of the following countries, ranging in date of publication from 2004 to 2007: Guyana (2007), Kenya (2005), Myanmar (2005), Nepal (2005), Russian Federation (2005), South Africa (2005), Suriname (2005), Thailand (2004), Vietnam (2005), and Zimbabwe (2004).³

Methodology

Each MDG report is addressed separately, following a standard format of a) a brief introduction to the country's indigenous peoples and any relevant comments on the particular report, b) description of any available disaggregated information from the report that relates to indigenous peoples, organized per Goal, and c) brief concluding remarks. Throughout the text, concluding observations appear in bold.

The desk review is guided by the following questions:

1. Are indigenous peoples taken into account in the context of the overall MDG report? If so, to what extent are they discussed?
2. Are indigenous peoples addressed sectorally, meaning each goal has specific data and/or benchmarks for addressing indigenous peoples, throughout the report?
3. Does the report discuss the participation of indigenous peoples in the process of developing interventions and programmes in order to meet the goals? Is there evidence of indigenous peoples' organizations participating or being consulted in the preparation process of the report?

¹ From *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization*, Jerry Mander and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, eds. Sierra Club and International Forum on Globalization (2006), pg. 25.

² Two previous desk reviews are available through the UNPFII's website, see <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/mdgs.html>

³ The reports are available on the United Nations Development Group website at www.undg.org.

4. Are any proposals being made to address indigenous peoples while implementing policies to reach the MDGs in each country? If so, what types of proposals are being discussed?

Background

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires specific methods of inclusion of indigenous peoples into the development processes, such as ensuring that their right to free, prior, and informed consent⁴ applies to development initiatives that concern them. Therefore, including indigenous peoples in the MDG context requires a culturally sensitive approach, based on respect for and inclusion of indigenous peoples' world-views, perspectives, experiences, and concepts of development. As the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues stated during its fourth session:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to benefit from the Millennium Development Goals and from other goals and aspirations contained in the Millennium Declaration to the same extent as all others. Indigenous and tribal peoples are lagging behind other parts of the population in the achievement of the goals in most, if not all, the countries in which they live, and indigenous and tribal women commonly face additional gender-based disadvantages and discrimination.”⁵

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) has repeatedly called for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in designing, implementing and monitoring MDG-related programmes and projects that concern them or may affect them. At its 2005 and 2006 sessions, the UNPFII undertook specific examination of MDGs and indigenous peoples and highlighted elements for their greater inclusion.⁶ In addition, the 2005 World Summit expressed its commitment to including indigenous peoples in the development process, stating that the sustainable development of indigenous peoples is crucial to the fight against hunger and poverty.⁷

It is in this spirit, then, that the Secretariat of the UNPFII carries out annual desk reviews of national MDG reports to assist the Permanent Forum in assessing to what degree indigenous issues are considered in these reports and whether indigenous peoples participate in the MDG processes at the national level, and to promote enhanced methodologies in that respect.

⁴ Indigenous peoples' right to free, prior, and informed consent has been affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, (A/RES/61/295) esp. Article 19.

⁵ UNPFII (2005), Report on the Fourth Session (E/C.19/2005/9).

⁶ The fourth session of the UNPFII (2005) addressed MDG1 and MDG 2 within the context of indigenous peoples' issues and its fifth session (2006) was devoted to the special theme “The Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples: Redefining the Goals.” See the UNPFII Report of the Fourth Session (E/C.19/2005/9), Chapter 1, Section B, paras. 4-57 and the UNPFII Report to the Fifth Session (E/C.19/2006/11), Chapter 1, Section B, paras. 4-43. See also the UNPFII reports from four Meetings on Indigenous Peoples and Indicators of Well-Being (E/C.19/2006/CRP.3, E/C.19/2007/CRP.2, E/C.19/2007/CRP.3, and E/C.19/2007/CRP.10; the global synthesis report will be submitted as a document for the seventh session of the UNPFII). See also the Report of the International Expert Group Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, Indigenous Participation, and Good Governance (E/C.19/2006/7), and the statement adopted by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues regarding indigenous peoples and the MDGs, contained as an annex in the Report on its 2004 session (E/C.19/2005/2).

⁷ See the World Summit Outcome (A/Res/60/1), paras. 46 and 56.

Guyana: Commentary on MDG Country Report

Indigenous peoples in Guyana are 9.2% percent of the total population, which stands below one million.⁸ Indigenous peoples are more commonly referred to as Amerindians; there are nine main Amerindian communities: the Lokono Arawaks, Makushi/Pemon, Wapishana, Akawaio/Kapon, Arekuna/Pemon, Patamona/Kapon, Karinya (Caribs), Warau, and Waiwai. The vast majority of Amerindians live in the hinterland region, where they make up about 90% of the population, and it is therefore the hinterland region that will be the focus of this MDG report review. There are also indigenous Amerindian communities living along the coast and rivers. The majority of Amerindians are outside of the cash economy and are dependent on a subsistence way of life, and are disproportionately classified among the country's poorest when compared with other groups.⁹

The Guyana country report was prepared by the government of Guyana, with support from UNDP, donors and civil society organizations. It is not indicated if indigenous peoples' organizations were consulted for the report.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

The percentage of people living below the national poverty line decreased from 43% in 1993 to 35% in 1999. The percent of people living in extreme poverty decreased from 29% to 19% during this time period.

Indigenous peoples are not directly mentioned in this section. The report notes briefly, however, that there is a hot meals program in the "depressed" hinterlands area, which, as stated, is primarily home to indigenous peoples.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

The net enrollment rate at the primary level was 95% for boys and 93% for girls in 2002.

It is stated that achieving education equity is a priority, such as for those in the "remote hinterland and riverain" areas. Because the hinterland areas are the poorest, the government has devised special programs to bring 40% of hinterland areas on par with the national standards. The government response to target the hinterland areas where indigenous peoples live demonstrates that these areas are lagging behind the national averages and thus have become the focus of special attention.

⁸ Guyana Population and Housing Census (2002), Chapter 2.1.1. Available from the Guyana Bureau of Statistics website: www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy.

⁹ As of 1996, 85% of Amerindians in Guyana were classified as "poor." United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Guyana Human Development Report (1996), Chapter 5.2. Available at <http://www.sdn.org.gy/ghdr/index.html>.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Guyana nearly experiences gender parity at the primary and secondary levels, but there may be declining rates of women at the tertiary level. The proportion of women holding seats in national parliament has risen from 18.5% in 1992 to 29% in 2006.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

The child mortality rate is unclear, as the data varies greatly by source. By a Ministry of Health report, Guyana has already met its child mortality targets and the under age five mortality rate was 26 per 1,000 live births in 2004.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section, but it is stated that the hinterland regions have child mortality rates higher than the national average. The report notes that Cuban doctors have been brought to these regions to fill vacant posts.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

The maternal mortality ratio decreased from 140.1 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 113.0 in 2006.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 6: Halt and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

The UNDP estimates that 2.4% of the population is living with HIV/AIDS, and it was ranked as the third leading cause of death in 2004. Malaria is not a health risk for 80% of the population. Tuberculosis is considered one of the leading causes of death, although most indicators point to a downward rate of mortality.

The percentage of women using contraception was much lower in the interior regions (where indigenous peoples mostly live), at 29 percent. Malaria is also reported to have the highest infection rate in the interior regions, and that those infected mostly visit the coastal regions for treatment. Nine percent of the population is high risk for malaria, and the interior regions experience most of this threat. These regions are, the report states, “predominately of Amerindian ethnicity with large families and are generally considered to be vulnerable groups with higher levels of malnutrition and lower education.” Since indigenous peoples disproportionately bear the onslaught of the spread of malaria, it is especially significant to provide further data on that target group in Guyana’s future MDG reports.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental stability

Since Guyana is mostly covered by tropical rainforest area (76%), the report identifies programmes to protect the distinct environment.

Indigenous peoples are briefly mentioned as one of the multiple stakeholders that affect the way Guyana’s land and resources are governed and regulated. It is also stated that the hinterland areas (which are mostly home to indigenous peoples) recorded the lowest improvement in access to safe drinking water. Therefore, the Government has targeted the hinterlands with a safe water program. Protected land areas are currently being

expanded, and though it is stated that protected areas management will be defined, it is not indicated in this section if indigenous peoples are affected or will be consulted.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Guyana does not yet receive its targeted level of donor assistance, but its debt relief has improved over the past several years.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

In conclusion, the MDG report by Guyana makes little direct mention of indigenous peoples, “Amerindians.” There is also no indication of consultations with indigenous peoples’ organizations in the making of the report or in the development projects that are described. It is recognized, however, that the hinterland regions lag behind the national averages on almost every target, and that they therefore pose special challenges to national development. It is also recognized that Amerindians are the majority in these areas. Therefore it would be beneficial for future reporting in Guyana to provide further disaggregation of data on this target group and more detailed reporting on Amerindian-focused policies.

Kenya: Commentary on MDG Country Report

Indigenous peoples in Kenya are hunter-gatherer and pastoralist communities; they are the Awer, Boni, Borana, Burgi, Elmolo, Endorois, Ilchamus, Gaaljecel, Gabra, Maasai, Malakote, Munyayaya, Ogiek, Orma, Pokot, Rendille, Sabaot, Sakuye, Samburu, Sengwer, Somali, Talai, Turkana, Watta, Munyayaya and Yakuu.¹⁰ Most of these indigenous peoples live in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) which make up more than 80 per cent of the land mass and are home to more than 25 per cent of the national population, and include almost the majority of wildlife parks and reserves and protected forests.¹¹ Some of the main areas of pastoralist indigenous peoples are the Narok and Kajiado districts bordering Tanzania in the south, and, for forest people, the Mau forests in the Narok district and Mt. Elgon, the Cherangany Hills, and Kapolet Forest areas in the Trans-Nzoia, Marakwet, and West-Pokot districts.

All together, the areas inhabited by indigenous peoples present the highest incidences of poverty and the lowest level of access to basic services in the country; 60 per cent indigenous peoples live below the poverty line, which is above the average of 50 per cent nationwide.¹² Indigenous peoples, across districts, face similar grievances to land dispossession and ecological degradation and routinely call upon the government for restitution of lands that were either due to colonial-era dispossession or more recent gazetting of traditional lands into national parks.¹³ Though ‘indigenous’ is not a common term at the national level for the hunter-gatherer and pastoralist groups (‘minorities,’ ‘marginalized’ or ‘vulnerable’ groups are more common descriptions), the Government has begun to note their distinct situations and consider the promotion and protection of these communities in their activities.¹⁴

The Kenya MDG report was prepared by an inter-agency MDG Committee and Secretariat, the Ministry of Planning and National Development, with support and input from UNDP-Kenya. The country report disaggregates data by province, and so the review examines the North Eastern, Coast, Eastern and Rift Valley provinces that are home to the majority of hunter-gatherer and pastoralist communities.

¹⁰ Report of the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Mission to Kenya, (A/HRC/4/32/Add.3), 26 February 2007, pg. 7.

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ *ibid*, and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) *The Indigenous World*, 2006, pgs. 439-447.

¹⁴ For instance, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs have considered hunter-gatherer and pastoralist communities as a cross-cutting issue in their National Action Plan and Policy on Human Rights, among other activities, in Report of the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Mission to Kenya, (A/HRC/4/32/Add.3), 26 February 2007pg. 8.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

The report indicates that Kenya struggles to meet the MDG target; the number of people living below the poverty line has risen from 44.7% in 1992 to 52% in 1997 and 56% in 2002, with 82% of the impoverished living in rural areas.

Regarding indigenous peoples, the report does not offer statistics, but does note that “Pastoralists are a major vulnerable group as they are always susceptible to droughts and have poor resource endowment.” The report’s indication of the urban-rural poverty gap as well as its particular mention of the situation of pastoralist communities serves to briefly highlight that indigenous communities are disproportionately among the poorest in Kenya, though there is no further discussion of this point.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

The Government has introduced free primary education, and the net enrollment rates for primary schooling rose from about 68.8 in 1999 to 82.1% in 2004.

The report disaggregates the data by province, and among those four provinces where many indigenous peoples are concentrated there are two that meet the national average and two that fall well below it: the Eastern and Rift Valley provinces meet the national average of primary school enrollment, but the Coast and North Eastern provinces do not. The North Eastern province in particular had approximately a 19% enrollment in 2004 compared to the national average of 82.1%. The report also briefly notes that the overcrowding of ASAL areas is a challenge to meeting the MDG target, and that the Government has implemented a school feeding program that targets children in the ASAL areas. These ASAL areas are areas where indigenous peoples are most often found.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

The national enrollment average for girls at the primary school level has achieved gender parity. At the secondary school level, as of 2004 the national average for girls was 27.6% enrollment compared to 32.1% for boys.

Again, of the four provinces with a heavy concentration of indigenous peoples, the Eastern and Rift Valley provinces are near or above the national average, but the Coast and North Eastern provinces are below in female enrollment. The North Eastern province in particular is below in both female and male enrollment at the secondary school level; the enrollment rate was 3.0% of girls and 6.0% of boys in 2004. The MDG report indicates that the highest female illiteracy levels are in the North Eastern Province.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

The national child mortality rate rose from 89 per 1000 in 1989 for under age 5 to 115 per 1000 in 2003.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

The national maternal mortality rate dropped from 670 per 100,000 in 1990 to 414 per 100,000 in 2003.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The report notes that there is an apparent decline in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Though indigenous peoples live in rural areas, and it is noted that rural areas have the highest prevalence rate for HIV (over 60% of those infected), there is no mention of indigenous peoples in this section.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

The report indicates a number of challenges to meeting the MDG, such as the high levels of poverty that negatively impact the environment, and also presents several government initiatives that are aimed at reversing the environmental degradation and improving environmental management.

Though the section frequently mentions the rural poor as a whole, and also protected forest areas, it does not discuss indigenous peoples in particular or highlight how they are included in the sustainable development policies at the country level. Twice, the report also lists as an environmental challenge the “repossession of irregularly acquired forest land,” though it is unclear whether indigenous peoples of the forests are adversely affected by this repossession. However, it is clear that the livelihoods and subsistence strategies of indigenous peoples in the rural areas are highly vulnerable to the environmental challenges described in the report. For instance, in its analysis of access to safe water and sanitation, the report indicates that the Wajir District—which, though it is not mentioned in the report, is predominately a pastoralist area—is the most underserved area, with only 15.3% of its population able to access improved sanitation.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The section presents measures that the Government has taken to improve governance, emphasize relief from the debt burden and unfair trading practices, and to reform its trade system.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

In conclusion, the MDG report for Kenya offers no direct description of the situation of indigenous communities. It does, however, sometimes disaggregate the data at the provincial level, making it possible to highlight the areas where indigenous peoples are concentrated. The report also at times indicates that ASAL areas and pastoralist communities are particularly marginalized, though there is little or no elaboration. While the report is especially thorough in providing a wide scope of the challenges in meeting each MDG, and presenting the proposed interventions to address the challenges, it would have been desirable to include the role of indigenous peoples especially in the sections on environmental sustainability and sustainable development.

Myanmar: Commentary on MDG Country Report

The majority of Myanmar's population of 50 million people is from one group, representing some 68% of the population.¹⁵ It is usually the other ethnic groups or "ethnic nationalities" that are considered Myanmar's indigenous peoples. They are the Shan, Karen, Rakhine (or Arakan), Chin, Kachin and Mon. The country is divided geographically into seven ethnic states, and these states are along the remote and border regions. The Thailand-Myanmar border to the east is particularly a fragile area, as it is embroiled in the civil war in Myanmar that has been running for more than 50 years. The border regions involved in the conflict are the areas that are home to most of the country's indigenous peoples.¹⁶

The Myanmar country report was prepared by the Government of Myanmar and it is the country's first report. For several of the goals, insufficient national data hampered the reporting process. However, the report states that in 2004 a major comprehensive household survey was conducted by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development with the assistance of UNDP and an international consultancy firm. The data from the report is being collected and analyzed and is not part of the current report, although the results will greatly impact future reporting on meeting the MDGs. Also, because the survey sample included all states and the ethnic divisions, the data will be especially significant and will be able to provide better reporting on indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are not directly included in the current report.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

The data is insufficient to compare the poverty rate over time, but a 2001 Government survey found that the poverty rate was 20.7% for urban and 28.4% for rural areas. For hunger, the percentage of malnourished in Myanmar has declined from 42% in 1988 to 31% in 1994, although more current figures are not yet available.

Indigenous peoples are not directly mentioned in this section, although it is noted that poverty poses the greatest challenge in the remote and border regions, which is where the vast majority of indigenous peoples live. It is also noted that the Government began a Border Area Development Plan in 1989 to target "nationalities residing in remote and border areas," although the impact and data from this plan is not discussed in the report.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Net enrollment in primary education was 65.7% in 1990 and has increased to 84.5% in 2005. The literacy rate has also risen from 80.9% in 1990 to 96.5% in 2004. Myanmar expects to reach to 100% target by 2015.

Indigenous peoples are mentioned briefly in this section, when noting the disparity of access to education. The Government will increase the number of schools in the border areas, since there had been a low number of schools because of the civil war. The report

¹⁵ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) *The Indigenous World*, 2006, pg. 347.

¹⁶ *ibid*

notes that people in the remote and rural areas therefore need special attention to ensure that there is equal development for the “national races in the border areas.”

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Myanmar reports that there is no significant gender disparity, in education or in political and social spheres.

Indigenous peoples are not directly discussed in the context of this MDG. However, it is significant to note that the section presents data on the representation for the National Convention, which will lead to the emergence of a State Constitution. The table demonstrates that 65 of the 1016 delegates attending the Convention are women. Notably, the majority of the women that are attending are part of the social strata “Delegates of National Races,” of which there are 633 delegates (more than half of the total delegates at the Convention). Although the section does not discuss this point further, it is notable that the “national races” or indigenous peoples are highly represented at the Convention.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

The under-five mortality rate has declined from 130 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 66.6 per 1,000 in 2003, and the target is 38.5 in 1,000 by 2015. The infant mortality rate has also declined.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

There is insufficient data for this section. It is stated that based upon a 1999 National Mortality Survey, the Maternal Morality Ratio was 1.78 in urban areas and 2.81 in rural areas per 1,000 live births.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 6: Halt and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

There is also insufficient data for this section. It is stated based upon the Ministry of Health findings that HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years declined from 2.71% in 1992 to 1.20% in 2003. The report presents the Government’s AIDS control program. The prevalence of malaria has declined from 24.4% in 1990 to 13.5% in 2003. Malaria is a priority for Myanmar, as 70% of the population lives in malaria areas.

Though indigenous peoples are not directly mentioned in this section, the report notes that the highest malaria morbidity rate was in the Chin and Kayah States, both places where there were more than 40 cases per 1,000 compared to the national average of 13 per 1,000. The Chin and Kayah States are home to the indigenous Chin and Karen peoples. Malaria mortality rates were also highest in these areas. Because of this, future reporting should examine indigenous peoples more fully for this Goal.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental stability

Myanmar forest policy advises that the Reserved and Protected Public Forests should be 30% of the total land area of the country; as of 2004 it was 22.75%.

The report lists many states and divisions that are part of its national plan to expand the protected areas. Of those listed, several are in the Kachin, Chin, and Shan states that are home to majority indigenous populations. It is not known from the report what role the indigenous peoples will have in the management of the protected areas.

The Government has taken steps since 2001 to ensure a safe drinking water supply and has given priority in its programmes to villages without adequate supplies; it is estimated that access to safe drinking water has risen from 32% in 1990 to 72% in 2000.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in the section on water supply. However, the report demonstrates the water supply programme that was undertaken between 2001 and 2006, and in an analysis of the data it does not appear that the states with majority indigenous populations (such as Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhin, and the Shan states) are significantly higher than the others.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The data is insufficient in this section. The report notes that the Government has established a revolving drugs fund in all townships, and the proportion of the population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis was about 60% in 2004.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

The annex to the report is a table listing the progress in development activities in the border areas of Myanmar, which, though it is not stated, is a conflict area and also home to a majority of indigenous peoples or ethnic nationalities. The data is not sufficiently offered for other areas, so it is not possible to make a comparison across these areas to the rest of the country. Nonetheless, it is significant to note that the country has taken a particular effort to promote development activities in these areas, and to report on the progress. Further data would be useful in demonstrating how indigenous peoples are included in the development activities that are mentioned.

In conclusion, the MDG report by Myanmar overall lacks sufficient data to gain a full picture of its progress to the goals, and the country reports that the results of its recent comprehensive survey will be useful in future reporting. From the current report, though, it appears that indigenous peoples are not directly addressed in the context of the development goals. There is also no indication of participation from indigenous peoples' organizations in the report or related development programmes and projects. The report does recognize that the regions that lag behind developmentally are in the border region, and at times there is recognition of specific areas in those regions, though no mention is made as to the ethnic groups in those areas who are indigenous peoples. The report would benefit from greater disaggregation of data by ethnic state and in reporting on how indigenous peoples or "national races" are consulted in the development process, and in reporting on Goals which seem disproportionately to affect them, such as the spread of malaria.

Nepal: Commentary on MDG Country Report

As the MDG report states, Nepal is well known for its diversity. It is home to some 100 ethnicities, 92 languages, and nine religions. Indigenous peoples in Nepal, often called indigenous nationalities or *adivasi-janajatis*, consist of at least 59 nationalities that have been officially recorded by the Government, and it is believed that many more exist. Together, they are 37.2% of Nepal's population of 23.4 million.¹⁷ Indigenous peoples live across varied ecological zones in the mountains, hills, and lowlands areas—the Himalayas, the hill regions, and the terai and inner terai.¹⁸

The 2005 MDG report from Nepal was prepared by the Government with assistance from the UN country team.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

The poverty rate only slightly declined since 1996 to stand at 41% in 2003-4. Of the poor, 95% live in rural areas.

Regarding indigenous peoples, the report indicates that ethnicity and caste are important factors in the poverty rate. Those of lower castes have poverty rates above the national average. The *dalits*, the “untouchable” caste, have a poverty incidence of 46%, the indigenous *janajatis* have 43%, and Muslim communities have 41%.

It is positive that the report includes data on indigenous peoples in this goal and recognizes that indigenous peoples, as ethnic communities, as a whole face higher poverty rates. Though it is not evident in the report, it is likely that because the Government has taken note of the particular situation of people who are disadvantaged by caste or ethnicity, including indigenous peoples, they will tailor their policies according to these facts.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Nepal is unlikely to achieve universal primary education by 2015. The national enrollment rate increased from 69% in 1995 to 84% in 2004. However, the attendance rate is likely lower, at 72%.

It is acknowledged in the report that the attainment of the national education goal is highly dependent upon the progress made by “disadvantaged and marginalized groups” such as dalits, ethnic communities, and women. Citing a 2004 UNDP study, the report notes that out of 100 ethnic groups, thirty indigenous groups fall below the national average in literacy and attainment. The report notes that the explanation for most of the children who are not attending school is because of a lack of teaching in the mother tongue, caste, cultural differences, and people's ability to pay. Policies such as scholarships and school welcome programs are far less effective in advancing the attendance of children from the disadvantaged groups.

¹⁷ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), *The Indigenous World*, 2006, pg. 374.

¹⁸ Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), a local umbrella organization consisting of 54 indigenous member organizations, www.nefin.org.

It is positive that the MDG report includes data on indigenous peoples and recognizes their marginalization in the area of education. Several strategies are suggested to approach the disadvantaged groups, however none of the strategies included in the report include culturally-based approaches such as instruction in the mother tongue. The strategies overall appear to be cognizant of the fact that disadvantaged peoples, including indigenous peoples, are in need of particular attention and advancement in order for the nation to progress as a whole and meet the target. However, it is not stated what consultation will occur with the “disadvantaged peoples” in the development policymaking process.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

There are no major gender disparities at the primary education level, however there are greater gender disparities at higher levels. The goal for gender parity is likely to be met by 2015 at the primary and secondary level, but not tertiary. There is a 25% gender gap in literacy for girls and boys in the 6 years and older age group.

There is no mention of gender disparities in relation to indigenous peoples. However, there is one reference that a policy of “affirmative discrimination” will be enacted to give greater political representation to women, dalits, and ethnic groups in the public administration. The point is not elaborated upon further.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

The infant mortality rate has been reduced from 200 per 1,000 in the 1970s to 64 in 1,000 in 2001. It is expected that the target will be reached for 2015.

The report notes that differences exist across geographical area and by group. Children in the mountain areas are twice as likely to die as children in other areas; the mountain areas, though it is not stated in the report, is a region where indigenous peoples often live. The report also states that ethnic disparities are suggested by the data, particularly for disadvantaged groups. Indigenous peoples are mentioned once, when discussing the barriers posed by the high cost of health care to the country’s poorest people; the report notes the danger that “patients may turn to quacks and other untrained indigenous healers” and not receive an acceptable level of care. There is no further discussion on this point.

Though the report does not elaborate on the data presented in relation to indigenous peoples, it is positive that some efforts are being made to demonstrate ethnic disparities in meeting the goal for child mortality. The disaggregation of the data by ethnic group and geographic area suggests that government policies and programs may then be targeted to the disadvantaged groups, including indigenous peoples.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

The report offers no precise conclusions on the progress towards meeting the maternal mortality ratio. However, it can be noted that the percent of births delivered by a skilled attendant rose from 7.4% in 1990 to 19.8% in 2004.

One indigenous community, the Tharu, are mentioned in this section as an example of community empowerment and mobilization. A Tharu community leader has organized

that a cart pulled by bulls can serve as a regular ambulance to bring pregnant women to the clinic.

Though there is no data presented for indigenous peoples in this section, it is positive that an example was offered about community empowerment among an indigenous community. The fact that the Government notes the benefits of such initiatives is a sign that it may encourage similar projects. However, more data on indigenous peoples beyond singular anecdotes is needed in future reporting.

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The estimated prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS is 0.5% nationally, but some segments of the population are higher and the situation is therefore considered a ‘concentrated epidemic.’

The report notes that sex workers in 16 Terai highway districts, which is an area where many indigenous peoples live, have 3% HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. Indigenous peoples are not mentioned, so it is not possible to know if they are affected or not. In the strategies section, the report indicates that public health campaigns should develop messages based upon the social, cultural, and behavioral norms of the youth, including poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized groups. It is not clear but can be inferred that indigenous peoples are among the marginalized and that perhaps their distinct situations will be borne in mind in public health efforts.

Indigenous peoples are not listed as one of the groups where HIV/AIDS is most widespread, and are not listed in the sections on malaria and tuberculosis.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Though the country is heavily forested, it has seen an overall decline in forest area since 1978.

Regarding indigenous peoples, the report notes that Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM) regimes that actively involve local and indigenous peoples in land and resource management have shown good results in maintaining forest cover and biodiversity richness. The section recommends the use of community forestry. It acknowledges that a challenge is in ensuring the traditional rights of “indigenous, poor, and socially disadvantaged groups” over natural resources in the buffer zones and protected areas of Nepal. The section mentions that though the current focus is on community forest management, that “fair and equitable benefit sharing of genetic resources” is a goal in the medium-term. It further states with regards to preserving local knowledge and rights that “access to the Genetic Resources Act should be approved to ensure a benefit sharing mechanism for Nepal’s biological resources and indigenous knowledge.”

This section of the report strongly includes indigenous peoples and their positive role in environmental sustainability. It highlights their role in land use management and their knowledge of biodiversity, and recommends future action in the area of access and benefit sharing.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

This section discusses the challenges Nepal faces as a landlocked developing country. It emphasizes the need for debt relief and development cooperation through more effective aid from Nepal's development partners. It is estimated that almost double the amount of external aid is required.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

In conclusion, the MDG report for Nepal includes some mention of indigenous peoples throughout the sections. The role of indigenous peoples in ensuring Goal 7, environmental stability, is particularly emphasized. Elsewhere, the data is disaggregated in a way that provides a picture of the situation of indigenous peoples. Recognizing the ethnic disparities statistically is a crucial first step in then developing targeted policies, so it is a positive step that Nepal has presented some indication of this in the MDG report. There is no indication, however, of participation from indigenous peoples' organizations in the report.

Russian Federation: Commentary on MDG Country Report

Indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation are often referred to as “numerically small” to distinguish them from larger ethnic groups. Small-numbered groups are viewed as those numbering fewer than 50,000 people; there are between 41-60 groups in the Russian North, Siberia, and the Far East, constituting about 250,000 people.¹⁹ The 41 officially recognized groups have specific rights and are protected by national legislation.²⁰

What is considered the 2006-7 MDG report by the Russian Federation is contained within its more comprehensive National Human Development Report, which aims to adapt the MDGs to the Russian situation. The report, the country’s tenth, was prepared by a team of national experts and consultants. It appears that the consultants include some specialists on indigenous issues, at least from the Baikal region. Due to the massive scale of the country and the diversity across regions, the MDG report writers have selected a smaller sample of representative regions to include in the report and the MDGs are thus discussed only for these regions.

The density of the discussion on each region in the report makes it impossible to provide an overview of each regional section, and statistics are not consistently provided in the report for each MDG at the national level. This review will thus examine only the regions included in the report that are home to indigenous “small-numbered” peoples, and only provide relevant highlights for each where indigenous peoples are mentioned. For instance, some areas that are included in the report and that have high populations of indigenous peoples are the North-Western Federal District (particularly the Nenets Autonomous District and Komi Republic), the Southern Federal District (specifically the Republic of Dagestan), the Ural Federal District (particularly the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District and Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District), Siberian Federal District, and the Far Eastern Federal District (especially the Kamchatka Region and Chukotka Autonomous District).

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Nationally, a poverty rate is not provided.

The report notes that in the Nenets autonomous district, extreme poverty appears to be ethnically-based, and that the indigenous populations of Nenets and Komi constitute most of the agricultural workforce and therefore earn 2.5 to 3 times lower income than the regional average. It is also noted that life expectancy for men in rural Nenets district is low, at 50-51 years, and that this area is mostly “small indigenous ethnic groups.” In the Komi Republic, home to many indigenous peoples, a sixth of the population live below the subsistence level despite the fact that the area is rich in oil and gas.

¹⁹ International Work Group of Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) *The Indigenous World*, 2006, pg. 51, and Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples Of the North (RAIPON), www.raipon.org.

²⁰ For instance, see the Federal Law of 30 April 1999, No. 82-FZ, “Guarantees of Rights of Indigenous Minority Peoples of the Russian Federation.”

The section of the MDG report on the Southern Federal District describes the socio-economic divide between the southern territories and regions and the southern “ethnic republics” of Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan. The ethnic republics lag below the national average across many indicators. It is mentioned in the MDG report that Dagestan in particular is home to 60 ethnic groups and indigenous peoples speaking over 30 languages. Dagestan “has problems in all spheres of its economy;” for example, about 70% of people depend on welfare and the unemployment rate in rural areas is almost six times the national average. The percentage of people with incomes below the subsistence level has, however, declined from 72.6% in 2000 to 22.01% in 2005.

“Indigenous ethnic groups” are mentioned in the section on the autonomous districts of the Tyumen Region as a primary reason for the unchanging poverty rate in that area despite its richness in oil.

For the section on Siberia, extreme poverty is not explicitly measured, but a series of development indicators are provided for autonomous districts in the region, which are home to many indigenous groups. Siberia continues to lag behind the rest of Russia and overall, the living conditions situation is summed up as “a significant part of Siberia has barely emerged from the 19th century.”

For the Far Eastern district, the report mentions that extreme poverty is not declining as rapidly as the overall poverty levels, since the region has a “high concentration of people living on the margin of life styles,” including “people from indigenous ethnic groups with no steady source of income.”

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Nationally, the enrollment rate for those aged 7-24 remained steady at almost 74% in 2003 and 2004 and the literacy rate was 99%.

This target is not included in the MDG report for all sections. In the discussion on the Republic of Dagestan, home to many indigenous groups, it mentions that the Government has targeted the Republic and that it has higher rates of education than other regions.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

There is not sufficient national data provided for this section.

The Komi Republic, home to many indigenous peoples, experiences higher unemployment rates for women than men (13% to 9%), whereas other regions show higher unemployment rates for men. Women also account for over 80% of low-paid employees in the public sector, and the share of women in top executive government jobs is “negligible.”

In the Dagestan Republic, also home to many indigenous peoples, the share of women in government is low, at around 10%. The MDG report describes, however, the work of civil society groups in this region that are working to promote gender equality.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

There is not sufficient national data provided for this section. The life expectancy at birth was 65.3 years in 2004, slightly higher than the previous year.

Infant and child mortality in the Nenets Autonomous District is 1.5–1.8 times higher than the national average, “due not only to harsh climatic conditions, but also to high child mortality among small indigenous ethnic groups. The causes are alcoholism and limited access to medical services in remote villages and among the reindeer herders who wander over the tundra.”

In the Komi Republic, the infant mortality rate declined from 13.0 percent in 2000 to 8.6% in 2005.

The section on the Ural Federal District notes that while infant mortality is relatively low in towns of the Yamal district (about 9 deaths per 1,000 live births), it is as high as 25-30 per 1,000 live births among “small northern indigenous ethnic groups.” Short life expectancy overall is a problem in rural areas of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District, because of “high rates of alcoholism and tuberculosis among indigenous ethnic groups.”

The section of the MDG report on Siberia comments that “In almost all of the republics and autonomous districts, child mortality rates for children under 5 are 40-80% higher than the Russian average, due to grossly underdeveloped health care systems and low living standards of indigenous peoples.”

For the Far East, the report notes that infant mortality is a problem, especially in the autonomous districts where “alcoholism is combined with high birth rates among the indigenous population.” Beyond infant mortality, it is also mentioned in the section on the Far East that “social problems are concentrated among indigenous peoples,” for instance, in the Koryak Autonomous District where life expectancy for men has declined to 46 years (the lowest in Russia) and to 49 years in rural areas of Chukotka. Life expectancy for women in the two autonomous districts is also the lowest in Russia, ten years less than the national average. The report explains that this is because of a “long-standing problem of alcoholism and social maladaptation of indigenous peoples (both men and women) in the autonomous districts.”

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

There is not sufficient national data provided for this section.

None of the regions featured in the report that are home to many indigenous peoples and that also discuss this MDG include direct mention of indigenous peoples.

Goal 6: Halt and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

There is not sufficient national data provided for this section.

In the Far East region, the report notes that tuberculosis is particularly frequent among “small indigenous ethnic groups in the North:” the Koryak Autonomous District, with a population of only 18,000 has five times more cases relative to its population than the rest

of the country and the tuberculosis mortality rate is more than three times higher than the national average.

In the Republic of Dagestan, home to many indigenous peoples, the active tuberculosis prevalence rate has risen to 62.2 per 100,000 in 2006 from 57.8 per 100,000 in 2004.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental stability

There is not sufficient national data provided for this section.

Only one of the regions featured in the report that are home to many indigenous peoples and that discuss this MDG include direct mention of indigenous peoples. The section on the Far East mentions indigenous peoples in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) as being different from the rest of the country, and highlights how the “way of life of indigenous peoples” has always depended on hunting, fishing, and reindeer breeding that are now threatened by development projects in the area. The section recommends greater attention to environmental issues and “respect and consideration for lifestyles of the indigenous population.”

The Republic of Dagestan faces serious environmental problems despite an abundance of conservation regions. Its water ecosystems are polluted, and only 40% of the territory has sewage systems. About half of inhabitants do not have access to safe drinking water.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

There is not sufficient national data provided for this section.

None of the regions featured in the report that are home to many indigenous peoples and that also discuss this MDG include direct mention of indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, the MDG report by the Russian Federation includes some mention of indigenous or small-numbered peoples when the data is examined by the regions where indigenous peoples live. The report is especially strong in its recognition that indigenous communities experience lower living standards. However, it would be beneficial if indigenous peoples were consistently highlighted throughout the report, as the snapshot provided by the report remains unclear as to their situation and their inclusion in the development process. Beyond an acknowledgement of the poverty, for example, it is unclear if the education systems reflect indigenous cultures or if the conservation systems described involve management by indigenous peoples. It is also not completely evident if indigenous peoples were consulted in the preparation of the report.

South Africa: Commentary on MDG Country Report

The three San communities of South Africa are those most often referred to as indigenous; they are the !Xun, the Khwe, and the Khomani San, amounting to some 4,300 people or less than 0.02% of the population.²¹ The three San communities live in rural areas in the Northern Cape Province. It should also be noted that the Nama, Griqua, and Koranna communities, who tend to have a comparatively higher socio-economic standing than the San, also have asserted their identity as indigenous peoples.

Locally, the term *Khoe-San* is more popularly used, to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of peoples included under the general San categorization. The Government usually does not talk about the San as “indigenous peoples” in the national context, but does tend to recognize the existence of the San as indigenous peoples with increasing frequency at the international level. For instance, in 2005 the Government invited the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples to visit, and it appointed a Khoe-San representative expert to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and has referred to the distinct situation of the San at international forums.²²

It is not indicated by whom or how the MDG report was prepared.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

South Africa is classified as a middle-income country. The MDG report states that the proportion of the population living below the poverty line of US \$1/day was 11.3% in 2000, and the target of halving this to 5.7% 2015 is attainable.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

South Africa has increased from 88% primary school enrollment in 1996 for children aged 7-13 to 96 % in 2004, and is on track to reach its 100% target by 2015.

Though it is acknowledged that South Africa continues to have a differentiated public schooling system with poor learning conditions in schools in previously disadvantaged parts of the country, there is no reference made to indigenous peoples. Though literacy rates are presented, it is not differentiated which languages are spoken and if San languages, which are not part of the 11 official languages of the country, are included or not in the school systems.

²¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Mission to South Africa (E/CN.4/2005/78/Add.2), 15 December 2005.

²² For instance, the South African Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, in an address to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in August 2006 in Geneva, referred to the Khoi-San as a minority with different languages and culture that is in need of protection. See B. S. Mabandla statement, contained in the 69th session of CERD consideration of state reports: www.ohchr.org.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

There are no major gender disparities reported in the education system. Women remain behind in the number of seats held in Parliament and in their wage earning compared to men in the non-agricultural sector.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

It is concluded that the child mortality rate has remained relatively constant since 1998, and that the 2015 targets are potentially attainable taking into account South Africa's free primary health care access.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

The maternal mortality ratio reduced from 150 per 100,000 live births in 1998 to 123.7 per 100,000 in 2003, and the government estimates it is "slowly" reaching its target ratio of 75 per 100,000 by 2015.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The Department of Health reports that the HIV prevalence rate has stabilized across several categories, and details its comprehensive HIV and AIDS management care and treatment plan. Tuberculosis has not reached the national target of 85% cure rate. Malaria deaths in 2001 were 74% less than in 2000.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

South Africa approaches environmental issues as a socio-political issue, bringing together human rights, access to natural resources, social justice, equity, and sustainability. It has focused on providing housing units, clean water, and sanitation to "slum dwellers."

Though the ambiguities in differentiating between urban and rural "slums" (more often called "informal settlements") is discussed, no reference is made to the situation of indigenous peoples.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

In conclusion, South Africa's MDG report contains no mention of indigenous peoples and the data is not disaggregated at the regional or provincial levels to allow for inferences to be made. There is also no disaggregation of the data by ethnic group at the national level, which may allow for a better picture of the situation. There is no indication of participation from indigenous peoples' organizations in the preparation of the report.

Suriname: Commentary on MDG Country Report

Suriname is home to about 50,000 indigenous peoples, representing around ten percent of the total population. They live in over 50 villages in the interior region of the country, and others live along the rivers in the east—they are groups of Maroons (Ndyuka or Aukaner, Saramaka, Paramaka, Aluku or Boni, Matawai, and Kwinti) as well as the Wayana, Carib, Arawaks and Trio.²³

The Suriname country report was prepared by the Government of Suriname with the support of the UN country team. The report is described as a “baseline” report rather than a full MDG report because of a lack of data needed to fully report on the goals.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

By the country’s own poverty index, the poverty gap (the percentage of those living under the poverty line) was 28% in 2000. More recent figures are not yet available for comparison.

The section mentions that non-governmental organizations have important work to do with regards to “grassroots action planning” especially in the “Maroon and indigenous communities in the hinterland,” although this idea is not more fully explained.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

The enrollment rates for pre-primary and primary education are 90%.

Although indigenous peoples are not explicitly mentioned, it is stated that the hinterland of Suriname is estimated to be behind the rest of the country for this MDG target. The hinterland is where some indigenous communities live. The report does not discuss the Maroons of the hinterland in this section as an indigenous community, but states that because the hinterlands are more remote and less accessible they have less access to quality education than the three urban areas along the coast where most people live.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Contrary to the MDG target, in Suriname there are more females than males enrolled at most levels of education. It is found, however, that generally women fill the lower-ranking positions in their professions and that the top spots across professions are filled by males. Also women face higher rates of unemployment and are the minority in technical fields.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

The under-five mortality rate decreased from 31% in 1999 to 21.7% in 2001. Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section, although more basic health care is recommended, especially in the hinterlands, which is where many indigenous peoples live.

²³ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) *The Indigenous World*, 2006, pg. 154.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Although there are questions about the accuracy of the data, an official survey of the 1991-1994 period shows a fluctuating maternal mortality rate of between 6.4 and 12.2 deaths per 100,000. The actual rate is thought to be much higher.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section, although it is briefly mentioned that the contraceptive use rate in the hinterland areas is 17% compared to the national average of 42.1%. The hinterland area, which is home to many indigenous communities, again lags behind in access to healthcare opportunities.

Goal 6: Halt and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is estimated to be between 1.3 and 1.7% as of 2003.

The report states that the responsibility for family planning and education for sexually transmitted diseases for the hinterland region was transferred from the Ministry of Public Health to a non-governmental organization called Medical Mission. The majority of the patients served by the organization are stated to be Maroons and indigenous peoples. The organization found that the primary problems in the hinterland areas are malaria, anemia, pregnancy-related problems, sexually communicable diseases, problems regarding hygiene, restricted access to sanitary facilities, and safe drinking water. Nutritionally, the organization reported that vegetables are mostly lacking in the diet of the people from the hinterland and that “meat and fish are not always available to poor communities because of seasonality or traditional ways of hunting and fishing.”

Goal 7: Ensure environmental stability

The Government has established ten percent of the country as a land reserve as a step toward conservation. Pollution of soil and surface water from poor farming methods remains a problem.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section, and it is stated that this section is particularly lacking in data.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The section is brief and emphasizes that public health and access to new technologies are critical to overall development and that therefore these areas are government priorities.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

In conclusion, the MDG report by Suriname is overall considerably lacking in data and it is considered a snapshot or “baseline” report in preparation for a more comprehensive report in the future. In the current report, indigenous peoples are not adequately included, although it is recognized that the hinterland areas where many Maroons and indigenous peoples live is behind the national average of most targets. There is also no indication of consultations with indigenous peoples’ organizations in the making of the report or in the development projects that are described, although it is recognized once that such organizations are active in Suriname.

Thailand: Commentary on MDG Country Report

Indigenous peoples in Thailand, more popularly referred to as tribal peoples or ethnic minorities, consist of fisher peoples in the south of the country and highland peoples living in 20 provinces in the north and northwest. Indigenous peoples very often live across national borders. Nine indigenous peoples in the highlands, called “hill tribes,” are recognized by the Government—the Hmong, Karen, Lisu, Mien, Akha, Lahu, Lua, Thin, and Kham. The hill tribe population was 923,257 as of an official survey in 2002.²⁴

The 2004 MDG report from Thailand was prepared with broad consultation from the government agencies, the National Economic and Social Development Board, the UN country team, World Bank, UNDP, and many NGO and national consultants. The report indicates that Thailand successfully met most of the MDGs ahead of schedule, and so it set for itself a series of targets that were more rigorous than the MDGs, called MDG Plus. The report notes at the outset that even though the country has quickly reached its goals early on, a major challenge has been in addressing disparities amongst regions and groups, including “marginalized and vulnerable” groups. It also notes that the highland areas in the North do not experience the same rate of development as the rest of the country and are home to ethnic minorities. In this way, the MDG report demonstrates some recognition of the situation of indigenous peoples, and their lack of full inclusion in the development process.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Poverty has been reduced by two-thirds since 1990. The proportion of underweight children has been reduced by nearly half.

The MDG Plus target, however, sets a goal to reduce the poverty rate to less than 4% by 2009 for selected areas, namely, the northeast and southernmost provinces. The report explains that, given that incidences of poverty are higher by region, since the 1980s the Government has taken a region-based poverty-targeting approach. It also acknowledges that poverty-alleviation programmes from the past few years had in some cases allocated budgets disproportionately by region; the northeast had received 3.7% less than the national average. The report notes that some people, classified as “ultra poor,” are often excluded from the benefits of economic activities, and that one of the subgroups of the ultra poor are ethnic minorities. About the ethnic minorities, the report states that there were 900,000 ethnic minority people living in 1,600 villages as of 2002, particularly in the highland areas in the north, and acknowledges that often these people were the poorest and were in remote areas beyond the government’s outreach assistance programmes.

Overall, the region-based approach to reducing poverty is positive for indigenous peoples in that it means that those areas with indigenous peoples have been targeted the most—the northeast and southernmost. It is also positive that the Government recognizes that the ethnic minority population is disproportionately among the poorest in the country. Recognizing and reporting on the distinct situation of the indigenous communities, as the

²⁴ International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) *The Indigenous World*, 2006, pg. 315.

report indicates that the government has done, is the first step towards targeting them with appropriate poverty-reduction development programmes that are culturally appropriate.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

The gross enrollment rate and the retention rate indicate that universal access to education will likely be achieved in a few years.

The report states that a 2001 survey found 140,000 school-aged children had trouble staying in school, and that most of them were from the highland areas.

Again, although it is not stated, the highland area that is identified is the area where indigenous peoples are concentrated. There is no further elaboration of this point, but it is significant that the government recognizes the disparity in the indigenous areas.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Gender equality in schools has been reached, and often girls outnumber boys at the secondary school level. The report states that this is across regions, including the poorer north.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

The report considers this goal not applicable, as there was already a low starting point for the issue at the start of the MDG process.

The MDG Plus target, however, sets a goal to cut the under-five child mortality rate in half between 2000 and 2015 for children in selected areas, namely, the highland areas and selected northern and southernmost provinces. Though indigenous peoples are not directly mentioned, the report states that the Ministry of Public Health is building the capacity to monitor the situation of high risk groups, which it identifies as highland children and children in the northern and southern provinces.

Again, although it is not stated, the highland children that are identified are nearly all from indigenous communities. It is therefore positive that the Government would take special effort to study and report on the situation of these areas.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

The report also considers this goal not applicable, as there was already a low starting point for the issue at the start of the MDG process.

The MDG Plus target, however, sets a goal to cut the maternal mortality rate in half between 2000 and 2015 for women in selected areas, namely, the highland areas and selected northern and southernmost provinces. It explains that the terrain of the mountainous areas makes it difficult for women to reach health facilities, and that in the southernmost provinces, “complexities based on gender, culture, religion, and language make access to or use of primary health care difficult.”

While the section does not clearly elaborate on indigenous peoples, it indicates that two regions where indigenous peoples tend to reside—the mountain areas and the southernmost—are of special concern. It is unclear whether the reference to the southernmost area is referring to the indigenous fisher peoples or not. Overall it is positive that the report notes the particular challenges faced in certain regions and that the strategy is to target higher-risk areas suitable for each area and/or population group, as this often will include indigenous peoples.

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Malaria is no longer a problem, and new HIV infections have been reduced by almost 80% since 1991.

Indigenous peoples are not directly mentioned in this section. However, in presenting the HIV infection rates by vulnerable population groups and regions, it does not appear that indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected. The north and southernmost regions where indigenous peoples are concentrated are among other regions that have had high prevalence rates. Fisher peoples, who are often indigenous peoples, are identified as an HIV high-risk group along with sex workers and others. For malaria, the border areas are identified as problem areas, but it is not described further whether indigenous peoples living along the borders are included. It is positive, however, that the government is taking regional approaches to combating malaria, as this will likely include indigenous peoples along the border.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

The report indicates that principles of sustainable development, partnership, and public participation have been integrated into country policies and programmes, and that the greatest challenge is reversing the loss of environmental resources. Sanitation and drinking water are nearly universally available and there are no regional disparities. It is also noted that Thailand has focused more on participatory approaches, and that local communities and forest conservation networks play a more active role in the management of forests and natural resources.

Overall it is positive that the Government recognizes the value of participatory approaches to land use management. However, the section does not elaborate on the specifics of the participatory approaches to the land management, so it is unclear if indigenous peoples are considered the ‘local communities’ that are participating.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The report presents a range of regional and subregional initiatives that Thailand is engaging in, all with the common aim of promoting development and achieving the MDGs in cooperation.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

In conclusion, the MDG report for Thailand at times presents data on the highland areas and notes that these areas are predominately home to so-called ethnic minorities. It also presents data at the regional and sub-regional level, which then allows for a greater understanding of the situation in areas where indigenous peoples live, in the north, northeast, and the fishing areas in the south. Although indigenous peoples are not fully included in the report, there is indication that the Government recognizes some of the particular challenges that they face in meeting the MDGs. There is no indication of participation from indigenous peoples' organizations in the report.

Vietnam: Commentary on MDG Country Report

The Vietnam MDG country report states that there are 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam. The Kinh or Viet are the majority group of Vietnam's population of 82 million; the other ethnic groups are 14% of the population.²⁵ Ethnic groups include the Hoa, Chinese groups mainly around large cities, and the Khmer, Cambodian groups in the Mekong Delta area. The other minority ethnic groups are those that are usually considered indigenous. Some of the larger groups are the Thai, Tay, Nhung, Hmong, and Dao in the Northern Mountains. Other smaller groups live in the plateaus of the Central Highlands to the South.²⁶ It is these groups and regions that are the focus of this review.

The Vietnam country report was prepared by the Government of Vietnam and it is the country's fourth MDG report. The report describes the government's efforts to meet both the MDG targets as well as its own set of targets, Vietnam's Development Goals (VDGs).

Indigenous peoples are included in the report as "ethnic minority" groups and are usually referred to as disadvantaged peoples living in remote, mountainous, or border areas.

The VDGs are similar to the MDGs and often they address ethnic minorities in a cross-cutting way. As part of the VDGs, the Government reports that it has identified 1,919 communes as the most disadvantaged, and that these were mostly ethnic minority peoples. By the end of 2004, almost 90% of these communes had roads to communal centers. Each commune has a health center, 70% have post offices and cultural centers, 90% have primary schools, nursery schools and kindergartens, 36% have improved permanent marketplaces, over 70% of the communes are connected to telephone networks, 90% have broadcasting stations, 65% have clean water supplies, and more than 70% of households have sufficient water.

Another VDG explicitly is aimed at indigenous peoples, it is to "Improve living standards, preserve, and develop ethnic minority culture." Under this section, the report describes that the number of ethnic minorities working as public servants has increased. There are 86 National Assembly deputies of ethnic minority origin from 32 groups, representing some 17% of the total number of deputies. The Provincial Peoples' Committees have similar representation of minority groups. Thirty ethnic groups have written scripts, ethnic language training is offered in 25 provinces, and the government publishes textbooks in eight ethnic languages. Under the VDG target "Reduce vulnerability," the report indicates that each year more than three million "poor and ethnic minority students" are exempted from paying or pay reduced school tuition fees. The Government provided over 5,000 hectares to about 10,500 ethnic minority households by mid-2003.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

The proportion of poor households in Vietnam has decreased from 58.1% in 1993 to 31.7% in 1994 and has therefore achieved the target.

²⁵ International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) *The Indigenous World*, 2006, pg. 330.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

The section states that 2,374 “most difficult communes” in mountainous and remote areas were targeted to improve conditions for ethnic minorities. The ethnic minority groups achieved 17.1% poverty reduction during 1993-2002. The poverty rate for the ethnic groups was three times higher than for the Kinh. The section provides disaggregation of the poverty target by ethnic group and by region, demonstrating that indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities in the remote and mountainous regions are disproportionately among the poorest in Vietnam. The report notes that despite the significant disparities between ethnic minorities and the Kinh majority, and its efforts to address this in its policy framework, the poverty incidence for the ethnic minority groups remained the highest and the pace of poverty reduction was the slowest.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

By 2000, Vietnam nearly achieved universal primary education. The enrollment rate increased from 90% in the 1990s to 94.4% in 2003.

The report notes that ethnic minority languages are increasingly being used in schools in order to reduce illiteracy rates among ethnic minority groups; currently eight minority languages are taught. It also notes that special programs are in place to ensure equal access to education for ethnic minority students. The report notes the difficulties faced by students in the remote areas, and especially by ethnic minority students because of language. The section demonstrates that ethnic minority children have lower rates of school enrollment and higher drop-out rates. It is recommended that the school hours be increased for ethnic minority students.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Gender parity has nearly been reached at the primary school level and in literacy rates. Females make up 27% of representatives in the National Assembly.

The report notes that the province with the highest rates of female deputies (33%) is Tuyen Quang, a remote and mountainous area made up of 22 ethnic groups. The section says that a challenge for the country is in achieving gender parity for girls and women in ethnic minority groups in mountainous, remote, and isolated areas; girls in these areas often must work for their families, often do not enroll in boarding school, and experience early marriage customs that limit their education. A Government proposal is to empower women with advocacy materials, including in ethnic minority languages, that will be disseminated in remote and isolated areas.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

The under-five mortality rate dropped from 58% in 1990 to 31.4% in 2004.

The report notes that resource allocation is different across rich and poor regions, and that therefore child mortality rates in remote and mountainous areas remains high.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

The maternal mortality rate decreased from 120 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 85 per 100,000 in 2004.

The report notes that antenatal care was lowest in the North East, North West, and Central Highlands areas, and these areas are mostly home to indigenous peoples. It also describes how overall maternal healthcare services have improved, but not equally among areas; the remote and mountainous areas remain behind.

Goal 6: Halt and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

The section reports that HIV/AIDS cases have been found every province, and then describes the government strategy to prevent HIV/AIDS and states that most provinces and cities have treatment facilities for those with HIV/AIDS. Malaria prevalence rates decreased from 900 per 100,000 in 1994 to less than 200 per 100,000 in 2004. Malaria and tuberculosis are both seen to be under control.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in the discussion of HIV/AIDS. For the sections on malaria and tuberculosis, people living in remote and border areas are listed as a vulnerable group. Indigenous peoples are often the people residing in these areas.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental stability

The percentage of people with access to clean water has increased from 26.2% in 1993 to 70% in 2004. Natural preservation and biodiversity programs have increased.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section and it is therefore not clear if they are consulted as part of the environmental management programs that are described. However, as stated, earlier in the report it was mentioned that the Government had provided 5,000 hectares of land to ethnic minority communities as part of the VDGs.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Vietnam has signed more than 80 bilateral trade and investment agreements and established cooperative economic arrangements with over 170 countries and territories.

Indigenous peoples are not mentioned in this section.

In conclusion, the MDG report by Vietnam establishes widely that across all development indicators, there is a disparity between rich and poor, and that the poorest are disproportionately in the remote, rural, and isolated areas where indigenous peoples or “ethnic minorities” live. The report is therefore strong in its disaggregation of data by region and ethnic group in a way that allows for inclusion of the situation of indigenous peoples in the reporting. Indigenous peoples are especially discussed in the context of the country’s own set of development indicators, the VDGs. The report would benefit from reporting on how indigenous peoples or “national races” are consulted in the development process that is described. There is no indication of participation from indigenous peoples’ organizations in the preparation of the report.

Zimbabwe: Commentary on MDG Country Report

There are an estimated 2,500 Tyua San peoples living in the western border area of Zimbabwe.²⁷ They live near the Hwanke National Park, from which they were relocated in the 1920s and 30s.²⁸ Their subsistence is based upon a mix of both pastoralism and foraging. Even though the San in Zimbabwe are numerically very small,²⁹ their ties to distinct culture and their shared heritage with San across the southern African region render them significant far beyond their population size. The San in Zimbabwe are represented regionally in the organization Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), a group that aims to advance their promotion and protection.

Zimbabwe's 2004 MDG report was its first, and was prepared by the government with support from UNDP Zimbabwe.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

The report states that Zimbabwe is predominately an agricultural economy based upon subsistence agriculture, and that the current massive food shortage has led to widespread malnutrition and vulnerability of the population. The government estimates that the goal of cutting the percent of Zimbabweans living below the poverty line in half will not be achieved by 2015, but it can be realistically achieved by 2020.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Primary school enrollment has increased from 81.9% in 1994 to 93.0% in 2002 due to a universal primary education policy that was adopted after independence. However, during the same time period the primary school completion rate dropped, and Zimbabwe faces challenges in meeting the MDG target.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

The government estimates that the goal of achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2015 is achievable. The government strategy to empower women includes countrywide advocacy campaigns to eliminate negative cultural attitudes and discriminatory practices.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

Zimbabwe struggles to lessen the child mortality rate due to high poverty levels and the direct and indirect impact of HIV/AIDS. In the 1990s, the infant mortality rate rose from

²⁷ "The Indigenous Peoples of Southern Africa: An Overview," in *Indigenous Peoples Rights in Southern Africa*, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), pg. 30.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ According to the MDG report, the population of Zimbabwe was 11.6 million in 2002.

40 to 65 per 1,000. The rates of child mortality in the rural areas are substantially higher than in urban areas.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Similar to the previous goal, the government points to poverty and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS as concomitant factors leading to the high rates of maternal mortality. The maternal mortality rates have escalated from 283 to 695 per 1,000 in the 1990s. Again, the rural areas face the highest mortality rates and lowest level of maternal care.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The incidence of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and diarrheal diseases has increased in the past 10 years. The target is to reduce HIV prevalence to 16% by 2015 in the 15-24 age group.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

The report indicates that the country has improved its overall environmental management policies with regards to environmental conservation, reforestation, and land reclamation. Rapid urbanization hampers the efforts to provide adequate water and sanitation, but important gains have been made in biodiversity and in management practices.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The report describes Zimbabwe's unstable macroeconomic environment, poor competitiveness, and sharp declines in investment. The goal is to create and implement a pro-poor macroeconomic policy framework as a means to turning the situation around and achieving stability.

There is no mention of the San community in this section.

In conclusion, the MDG report for Zimbabwe does not include analysis of the indigenous Tyua San community. In addition to a lack of direct discussion, there is also no disaggregation of data by ethnic group or by region that would allow for inferences to be made about the situation of the San. Though the country faces many major economic stability challenges, and the San are a numerically small community, their distinct culture is particularly vulnerable and it would have been beneficial to include at least some discussion of them within this report on the development process. The biodiversity targets of the MDGs, for example, are especially critical for the San and they warrant particular attention as holders of traditional knowledge. There is no indication of participation from indigenous peoples' organizations in the report.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This review underscores the importance of the recommendations of the 2005 and 2006 sessions of the UNPFII, which undertook specific examination of MDGs and indigenous peoples and highlighted elements for their greater inclusion.³⁰ The Secretariat of the UNPFII, under a recommendation of the Forum at its fifth session,³¹ undertook this review of country reports on the Millennium Development Goals to analyze how they address indigenous issues. A total of ten country reports were reviewed from a broad range of countries in which there are substantial populations of indigenous peoples.³²

The country reports were examined in order to identify elements for inclusion of indigenous issues, general trends and progress achieved, as well as to identify opportunities and challenges for further integrating elements for inclusion of indigenous issues into the MDG process. Scant reference was made in the reports explicitly to “indigenous peoples,” but the review considered more broadly any local terminology used that could be interpreted to refer to indigenous peoples.³³ The current review has built upon the conclusions of previous reviews.³⁴

Conclusions and recommendations of the review include the following:

1. Twenty percent of the MDG reports reviewed sufficiently include indigenous peoples by consistently reporting on their situation (Nepal and Vietnam). Another 50% address indigenous issues to varying degrees (Guyana, Myanmar, Russian Federation, Suriname, Thailand), while the remaining 30% do not include any mention of indigenous peoples (Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe).
2. None of the country reports under review indicate that they were prepared with consultation from indigenous peoples’ organizations.
3. None of the MDG reports provide disaggregated data for indigenous peoples in a consistent manner, for every goal. **Guided by the recommendations of the**

³⁰ The fourth session of the UNPFII (2005) addressed MDG1 and MDG 2 within the context of indigenous peoples’ issues and its fifth session (2006) was devoted to the special theme “The Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples: Redefining the Goals.” See the UNPFII Report of the Fourth Session (E/C.19/2005/9), Chapter 1, Section B, paras. 4- 57 and the UNPFII Report to the Fifth Session (E/C.19/2006/11), Chapter 1, Section B, paras. 4-43.

³¹ See paragraph 152 of the fifth session report (E/2006/043).

³² The reports reviewed are the latest available for each of the following countries, ranging in date of publication from 2004 to 2007: Guyana (2007), Kenya (2005), Myanmar (2005), Nepal (2005), Russian Federation (2005), South Africa (2005), Suriname (2005), Thailand (2004), Vietnam (2005), and Zimbabwe (2004). The reports are available on the United Nations Development Group website at www.undg.org.

³³ For example, reports used terminology such as “ethnic minorities” or “ethnic nationalities” and often paired these terms with mention of what region these populations live in, such as remote and border areas.

³⁴ Two previous desk reviews are available through the UNPFII’s website, see <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/mdgs.html>

Fourth and Fifth Sessions of the UNPFII,³⁵ this review reiterates that the improved disaggregation of data on indigenous peoples is necessary to effectively monitor progress towards MDG achievement, and that this should be a key priority for Governments and the UN System.

4. The two most positive examples of reporting on indigenous peoples (Nepal and Vietnam) most consistently include data on indigenous peoples in the context of the MDGs and recognize that certain groups, including indigenous peoples, are the most disadvantaged and marginalized in the country. At times, they offer mention of specific mechanisms or policies that target the communities. Other reports may include examples of best practices or refer to social challenges faced by indigenous peoples (such as the report of the Russian Federation), but the reporting is not consistent across the MDGs.
5. While most of the reports include at least some mention of disproportionate development, they are most likely to describe the situation by providing data and examples by provincial, regional, or rural/urban disparities. **In these descriptions of disproportionate development, the reports often fail to explicitly acknowledge when the regions or areas that are disproportionately affected correspond to the areas where indigenous peoples live. This omission is problematic and does not provide a clear picture of the situation of indigenous peoples.**
6. When the reports do mention indigenous peoples, they most often do so in the context of poverty, education, and mortality rates (MDGs 1, 2, 4, and 6). They usually mention that indigenous peoples live in remote areas that lack access to the same services as other groups, and are thus disadvantaged or are considered vulnerable groups. For the reports where the data allows for some analysis of indigenous peoples and mortality rates, (Guyana, Myanmar, Nepal, Russian Federation, Thailand, Vietnam), mortality rates for indigenous peoples are significantly higher than the national averages.
7. The situation of indigenous women (in the context of MDGs 3 and 5) is rarely mentioned. The only report that made any more than a passing reference to indigenous peoples in the context of these Goals was the report by Vietnam, which discussed the social challenges in achieving gender parity for indigenous women.
8. Several of the reports (Guyana, Nepal, Russian Federation) included at least some mention of indigenous peoples in the context of environmental stability (MDG 7). The report by Nepal, in particular, highlights the positive role of indigenous peoples in environmental sustainability, provides an example of their role in land use management, and recommends future action to secure access and benefit

³⁵ See the UNPFII Report of the Fourth Session (E/C.19/2005/9), Chapter 1, Section B, paras. 4-57 and the UNPFII Report to the Fifth Session (E/C.19/2006/11), Chapter 1, Section B, paras. 4-43.

sharing to genetic resources. None of the reports mentioned indigenous peoples in the context of establishing a global partnership for development (MDG 8).

9. **In future reporting the countries should undertake to include indigenous peoples in the context of meeting each and every Goal. Guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this review recommends that the free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous peoples should be sought in all development initiatives focused upon improving their lives, and countries should comment on this clearly in their MDG reports.**
10. **Finally, this review reiterates the previous recommendation of similar reviews, as follows: Governments should a) include indigenous peoples in the context of the overall report, including its planning; b) include indigenous peoples in the context of meeting each specific Goal; c) include indigenous peoples' effective participation in the planning process of future interventions, as well as in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects that will directly or indirectly affect them; and d) improve the collection and disaggregation of data regarding indigenous peoples.**