

Minar Forward on Indigenous Peoples (Draft June 2)

Bringing insight into the Millennium Development Goals as they are experienced through the lives of nearly three-hundred seventy million Indigenous Peoples found in thousands of cultural bubbles throughout the globe, the ***Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples*** report provides a primer for improvements in the planning of MDG development strategies.

Clusters of Indigenous Peoples around the world are characterised by a stark disparity from majority populations in levels of financial income and aid, access and enrolment in culturally pluralistic education, sustained availability of clean water, basic medical services, and just representation in political bodies. Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples correctly notes, that at things now stand, this segment of the population will not be among the fifty-percent lifted out of extreme poverty unless a course correction is made. In making a course correction the focus of the report, an Indigenous Rights-Based justification for inclusion, is brought to the forefront as a necessary base upon which to formulate a solution. A solution comprised of an agreed shift to MDG development strategies consistent with full, meaningful, and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples.

Providing a thoroughly clear picture of the UN stance on Indigenous Rights, with in-depth mention of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the grounds by which this shift has been agreed upon is solidified. Prioritizing matters in terms not of fundamental power imbalances but to that of Human Rights.

With Indigenous Peoples and MDGs, the issue is not about the numbers attending schools, a lower than average level of health, and destruction of environmental resources. It is about recognition now that to improve their conditions and achieve the MDGs, development plans which affect these communities must take account of truths such as Indigenous cultures and traditions are unrepresented in curriculums both in terms of sharing of history and passing on of traditions and knowledge. Internal national colonization destroys Spiritual health not only culture, having a “deleterious” impact on the population. Environmental destruction and climate change has a frontline and it is Indigenous Peoples who are at the frontlines of environmental degradation, are earliest and hardest hit, and whose perspectives are vital as such a loss is not linked to resources but rather culture.

Needed are approaches similar to that of the Philippines who are leading the way with integrated programmes focusing on ancestral domains and resources, indigenous governance and justice, and peace-building. Such approaches account for holistic elements found within Indigenous methods of participation and in the understanding of community bonds.

Less than five years now remain. Realization of each of the MDGs requires a realization of Indigenous Rights, their shared stake in its accomplishment, and in that accomplishment the necessity of their involvement in its development towards actuality.

We must not allow their suffering to be indistinguishable or concealed.

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