

**United Nations  
Human Rights Council**

**United Nations  
High Commissioner for  
Human Rights**



# A report on the rights of Indigenous Peoples



**Easy  
Read**

# Easy Read



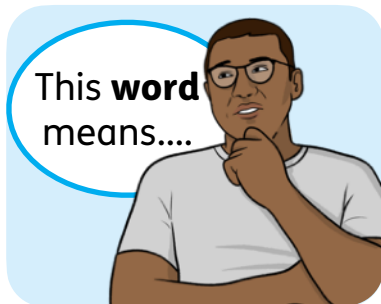
This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



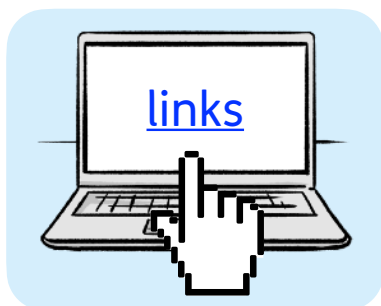
This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker. These are important words in the booklet.



Sometimes if a bold word is hard to understand, we will explain what it means.



Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

# What is in this booklet

About this report.....	4
Living a good life.....	5
Speaking up.....	8
Land rights.....	10
The environment.....	13
Justice.....	17
Indigenous human rights defenders.....	19
Indigenous women and girls.....	21
Indigenous children and young people.....	24
Indigenous languages and knowledge.....	26
The UN and Indigenous Peoples.....	28
What should change.....	30

# About this report



The **United Nations (UN)** is an organisation made up of many countries from all over the world. It works to make the world a safer and better place.



We have written this report about the rights of **Indigenous Peoples**.

**Indigenous Peoples** have a special relationship with the area their family comes from and have lived in for a very long time.

This report explains:



- The good and bad things happening to Indigenous Peoples around the world.



- What the United Nations is doing to help Indigenous Peoples.

# Living a good life



**Rights** are things that everyone should have by law, like the right to vote or make choices for yourself.



All people have the right to have water, be healthy, earn money, get a job and live a good life.



But some Indigenous Peoples have a hard time getting the rights that they should have.



Indigenous Peoples are often treated badly and left out.

This can mean Indigenous Peoples:



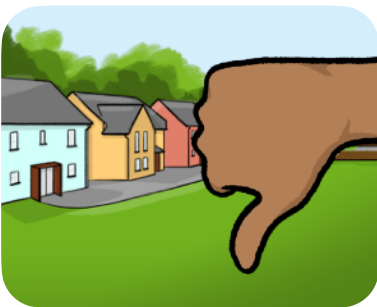
- Do not have enough money to pay for the things they need to live.



- Are not able to read.



- Are treated unfairly.



Indigenous Peoples might also not be able to get jobs, homes or good health care.



Sometimes, they might not be taught about their history and culture in school.



Human rights experts check that people around the world get their rights.



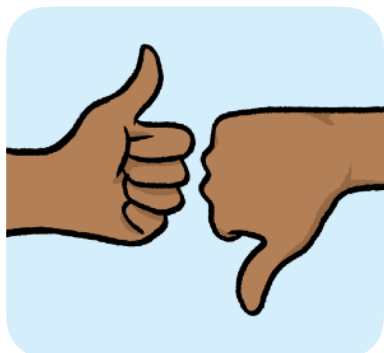
They told us that we need to get better at collecting information about Indigenous Peoples.



We have done some work to help Indigenous people around the world to get their rights to live a good life.

This includes projects in countries like Guyana, Mexico, Russia and Thailand.

# Speaking up



Indigenous Peoples should be able to say yes or no to things that affect them, like big projects.

This is called **‘free, prior and informed consent’**.



Human rights experts are worried that some countries do not allow Indigenous Peoples to say yes or no.

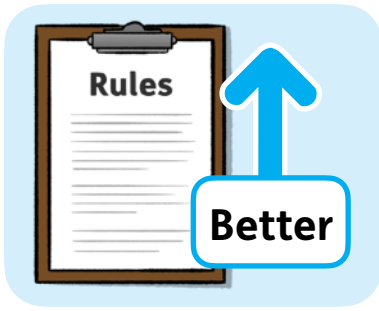


Indigenous Peoples can also have problems taking part because they are not allowed to speak for themselves.

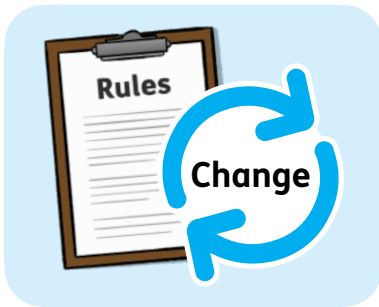


We saw reports that Indigenous Peoples were not asked first when big businesses or armies wanted to do something in their lands.





There need to be better rules for when countries and businesses ask Indigenous Peoples what they think.



We have helped some countries change their rules and ways of doing things, to make sure that they ask Indigenous Peoples.



We have helped Indigenous Peoples around the world to be able to speak up.



We have also helped them to write their own rules for working with businesses and governments.

# Land rights

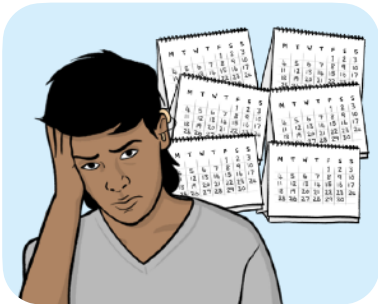


Indigenous Peoples have **land rights**.

This means they have the right to use and own the land, and the things on it, that they have always used.



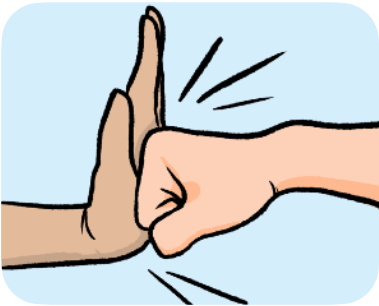
But Indigenous Peoples often have problems with their land rights.



It can be hard, and take a long time, to make sure that the Indigenous Peoples have land rights.



Indigenous Peoples can have problems trying to keep their land.



Sometimes, people force Indigenous Peoples to leave their land.



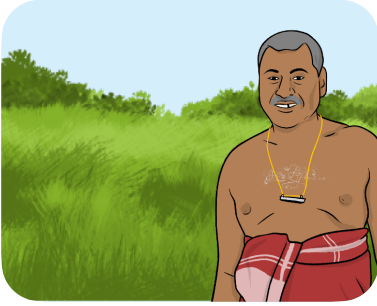
Sometimes, the police hurt Indigenous Peoples when they make them leave their land.



Businesses sometimes do not respect Indigenous Peoples' land rights.



Businesses sometimes do not ask Indigenous Peoples first before starting their projects.



Some Indigenous Peoples choose to live away from other people.



But sometimes businesses do not respect their right to live away from other people and invade their lands.



Sometimes, Indigenous Peoples are not asked about rules that protect the **environment** - this causes different problems, including problems with land rights.

The **environment** is where we live. It includes the land, the sea, the air and everything that lives in and on it. For example, plants, animals and fish.



We have worked in countries including Chile, Guatemala, Honduras and Tanzania to help Indigenous Peoples protect their land rights.

# The environment



Indigenous Peoples have a right to a clean, healthy environment that is not going to get worse in the future.



But some people are worried about businesses and projects that hurt the environment where Indigenous Peoples live.



This can hurt Indigenous Peoples' health, and make it harder for them to live a good life.

These projects can:



- Make the air and water dirty.



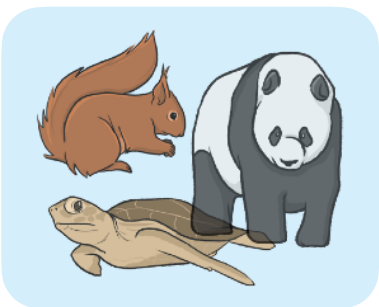
- Move rivers and cause problems with water.



- Put chemicals in the environment that can harm people.



- Cut down forests.



- Hurt animals and plants.



Some companies keep hurting the environment, even when they are told to stop.

Problems for Indigenous Peoples include:



- Not enough good rules about protecting the environment.



- Not giving Indigenous Peoples enough information about the environment.



- New laws that might make things worse for Indigenous Peoples.



There need to be checks on projects that could hurt the environment, to see if they will affect Indigenous Peoples.



We have done a lot of things to help Indigenous Peoples to protect their right to a clean, healthy environment.

We have worked with people in Cambodia, Cameroon, Honduras and Peru.

We also helped in Ecuador, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Thailand and Venezuela.



# Justice



**Justice** means being treated fairly by the law, including police and courts.



We are working hard to make sure that Indigenous Peoples get justice in the right way.

Sometimes, Indigenous Peoples do not get justice, because:



- The police and courts in their country are slow or do not work well.



- People who do bad things to Indigenous Peoples do not get punished for it.

Some Indigenous Peoples do not get justice because:



- People who defend the rights of Indigenous Peoples are treated badly.



- Indigenous Peoples are put in jail unfairly.



- There are not enough services in Indigenous languages, so Indigenous Peoples cannot understand them.



We have worked in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras to help Indigenous Peoples get justice.

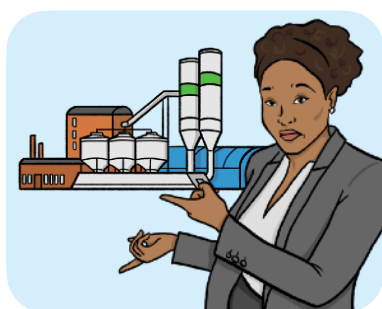
# Indigenous human rights defenders



Indigenous **human rights defenders** work to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.



We have heard about bad things happening to Indigenous human rights defenders. This includes threats, being hurt and even being killed.



This often happens when they speak out against projects that harm Indigenous Peoples.



The police in some countries have used too much force against Indigenous Peoples who speak up for their rights.



Sometimes, Indigenous people who try to work with the UN are treated badly.



At least 42 Indigenous human rights defenders were killed in 2023.



We have worked to help Indigenous human rights defenders in different countries, like Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela.

# Indigenous women and girls



Indigenous women and girls are often not treated fairly.



They do not get the same chances as other people to go to school, get jobs, and stay healthy.



Indigenous women and girls can be particularly hurt by:

- Projects that make the environment worse.



- Being treated badly because they are women. This can happen at home and in their community.



- Being forced to leave their homes.



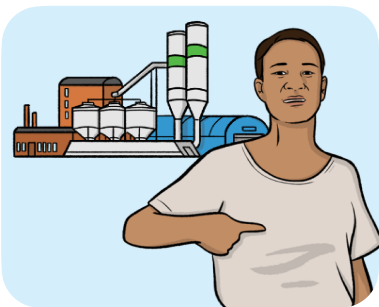
People often try to hurt Indigenous women who work to make things better for Indigenous Peoples.



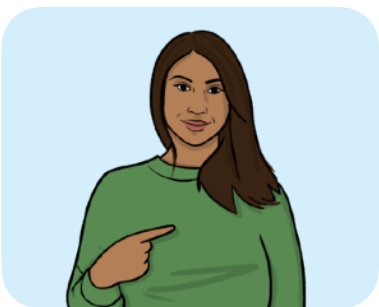
There are not enough Indigenous women in charge.



In September 2023, the UN held a meeting about the rights of Indigenous Peoples.



It was about how big projects affect Indigenous Peoples' rights.



The meeting mostly looked at how these projects affect Indigenous women.

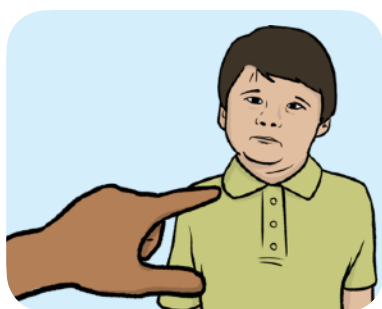


The UN has also worked in Cambodia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Malaysia and Peru on projects to help Indigenous women and girls.

# Indigenous children and young people



Indigenous children and young people do not always get the same rights as other children.



They are sometimes treated badly, and not given the same chances as other children.



We have worked with Indigenous children and young people in different countries, including Burundi, El Salvador, Guatemala and Russia.

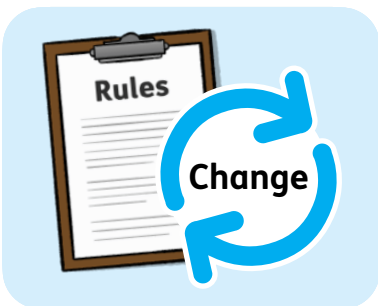




Some experts have visited countries like Denmark, Greenland, Canada and Australia to see how Indigenous children and young people are treated there.



They said that in some countries, Indigenous children have been taken away from their families and communities.



Some countries have changed their rules to stop this from happening.

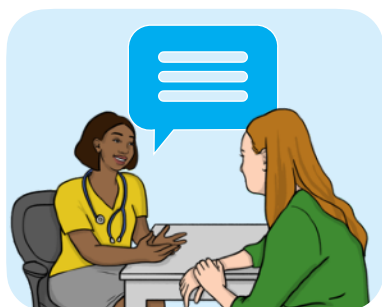
# Indigenous languages and knowledge



Countries should do more to protect the languages of Indigenous Peoples.



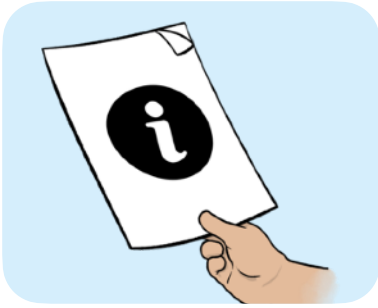
They should be able to protect and speak their own language. This helps them to take part in their own traditions and culture.



Indigenous Peoples should also be able to use their own language when they use services, like schools and hospitals.



We have given countries advice about how to protect these languages.



We have written some information in Indigenous languages.



We have helped people in different places to teach others about Indigenous languages and traditions, and protect them.

# The UN and Indigenous Peoples



We want to help Indigenous Peoples to take part in our work. We have done a lot to help this happen, including:



- The UN Indigenous Fellowship Programme. This is a project that helps Indigenous Peoples learn about the UN.

In 2023, 47 Indigenous persons from 30 countries joined the project.



- We hired 15 Indigenous persons who had joined the Fellowship Programme in the past.

They work in the UN and across the world.

We also:

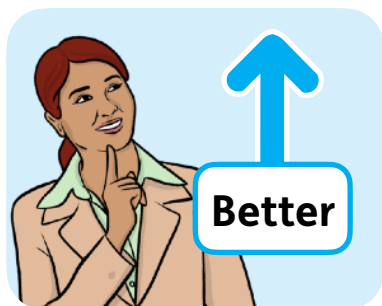


- Helped 126 Indigenous persons take part in 14 UN meetings.



- Helped Indigenous Peoples when talking with the UN in countries like Bolivia, Cambodia, Chile, El Salvador, Guyana and Mexico.

# What should change

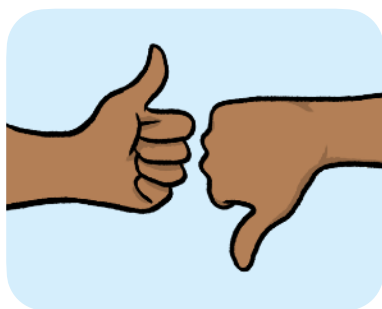


We have some ideas for what countries can do to better support Indigenous Peoples.

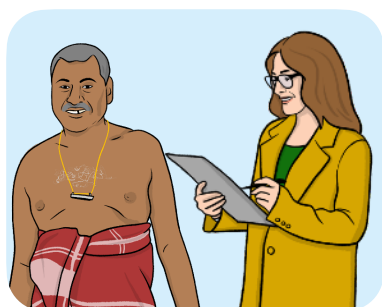
These ideas are:



- Make sure that Indigenous Peoples get land rights.



- Make sure that Indigenous Peoples can say yes or no to things that might affect them.



- Before countries and businesses start projects, they should check to see how things might affect Indigenous Peoples.

Countries should also:



- Let Indigenous Peoples be part of making decisions that affect them, including decisions about the environment.



- Protect Indigenous human rights defenders who speak up about their rights.



- Write rules to make sure that Indigenous women and young people get their rights.



- Help Indigenous Peoples take part in the United Nations.

The booklet includes images licensed from Photosymbols & Shutterstock.