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RIGHT TO FOOD AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous peoples are among the world's most vulnerable groups and poorest socio-ethnic populations. They make up a significant percentage of the food insecure, often facing chronic hunger and malnutrition. Paradoxically, due to a growing dependency on fast food, obesity is also on the rise among some groups.

Human Rights

Individuals belonging to indigenous peoples have the same human rights as other individuals. In reality, however, they often suffer from extreme marginalization. Equality and non-discrimination are therefore two of the most important rights in the indigenous peoples context. Equality does not mean being treated identically to others. True equality involves recognizing differences and treating diverse groups differently. Positive measures should be implemented to eliminate existing discrimination and establish equal opportunities. Traditionally, human rights are considered to be individual rights even though they are often exercised in community with others. Many indigenous peoples view their human rights as collective rights. In fact, indigenous peoples do enjoy certain rights as a group; these rights relate to indigenous peoples traditional way of living and the special relationship they enjoy with their land and natural resources. In this regard, land rights are of crucial importance and so is the right to enjoy one's culture.

Indigenous Peoples' Right to Food

Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, recognizes the right of everyone including indigenous peoples to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food... The right to food of indigenous peoples is closely linked to cultural rights with regard to food choices, food preparation and food acquisition. In an effort to have the right to food recognized as a collective right, indigenous peoples groups met at the 2002 Global Consultation and signed the Declaration of Atitlán, stating that they were: ... in agreement that the content of the right to food of indigenous peoples is a collective right. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007, is a key instrument and tool for raising awareness on indigenous peoples situations and indigenous peoples rights. It contains provisions on land, natural resources and subsistence activities relevant for the realization of their right to food. The Declaration is the result of collaboration among indigenous peoples, individual experts and governments. It recognizes indigenous collective rights and stresses their cultural rights.

The Right to Food Guidelines* refer to indigenous communities in the context of access to resources and assets. In addition, provisions relating to vulnerable groups and disaggregation of data are of particular relevance to indigenous peoples.

