briefing

Minorities, indigenous peoples and the post-2015 framework

Key findings

- Minorities and indigenous peoples have continued to experience discrimination and inequalities throughout the Millennium Development period. There must therefore be greater attention to the specific needs of these groups in the post-2015 framework, with a stronger focus on rights rather than targets, directed investment and fully disaggregated data, if these gaps are to be narrowed in the next 15 years.

- Though the draft SDGs contain limited references to indigenous peoples, these do not go far enough in recognizing the deep-seated marginalization that they and religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities experience. As inequalities in health, education, livelihoods and other areas are interconnected, there needs to be a systematic focus on minority and indigenous inequality across all sectors of development.

- Without a clear focus on discrimination, it is unlikely that the situation of many minority and indigenous communities will improve in future. This is because the barriers to participation and service access often extend beyond resource limitations or weak governance. In this context, it is possible for countries to achieve rapid progress at a national level without any positive change for its most marginalized populations.

- There is now growing awareness of the contribution that minority and indigenous knowledge can play in environmental conservation, local economies and other priority areas of the SDGs. Ensuring greater equality for minorities and indigenous peoples will therefore not only benefit these communities, but also further the general progress of countries in their realization of more sustainable development outcomes.

MRO (MRU) WOMAN IN HER VILLAGE IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS, BANDARBAN DISTRICT, BANGLADESH. *CREDIT: G.M.B. AKASH / PANOS*

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Foreword: Why minorities and indigenous peoples must not be sidelined in the post-2015 framework

Gay McDougall

Introduction: the limitations of the Millennium Development Goals

The international community has been engaged in a historic discourse about the reduction of poverty and inequality both within and between countries. These discussions have been framed by the experiences of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the last 15 years, as well as the global imperative to address climate change and the increasingly vocal demands around the world for human rights and dignity.

Though the MDGs have produced many notable successes, there is no doubt that many countries have failed in achieving some if not all of their targets. More fundamentally, however, there is a growing sense that the MDGs are flawed in themselves and that their completion in 2015 presents an important opportunity to rethink our development priorities. For minorities and indigenous peoples, who were largely invisible within the MDG framework, this presents a unique opportunity to bring greater attention to issues of rights, discrimination and inequality that conventional approaches often overlook or fail to address.

There are compelling reasons why, over the coming 15 years, there must be greater focus given to the poverty facing disadvantaged minority groups and indigenous peoples. They tend to be the poorest of the poor world-wide, and are trapped in a cycle of exclusion and underdevelopment from which they cannot break free without targeted interventions. The relationship between inequality, discrimination and poverty, and its impact on minority groups and indigenous peoples, cannot be ignored or underestimated.

Their poverty involves even more than just a lack of income or a daily struggle for basic sustenance. Besides facing discrimination and social exclusion against their communities, often entrenched over generations, their poverty is reinforced by structural inequalities. Poor minority and indigenous communities are less able to participate effectively in political decision-making, and they suffer from unequal access to education, health care, employment and land. Stateless persons and others lacking citizenship are also more likely to belong to minorities or indigenous peoples, often resulting in their total exclusion from development and human rights initiatives. These circumstances defy 'one-size-fits-all' solutions.

At present, in many countries minorities and indigenous peoples may find themselves marginalized even in a context of rapid development and poverty reduction. Uganda, for example, more than halved its levels of absolute poverty during the MDG period.[1] Yet against this success must be set the experience of the country's Karomaja population: while national poverty rates have fallen to 31 per cent, their poverty levels remain as high as 80 per cent.[2] Troublingly, real and sustained progress can take place at a country level without any change in the situation of its most excluded minorities and indigenous communities.

Also, in many cases national development plans have left minorities and indigenous peoples actively worse off. The environmental impacts of mineral and extractive industries, such as oil spillages and other forms of pollution, have destroyed the well-being, livelihoods and ancestral lands of countless communities world-wide, even if they have generated considerable economic revenues for other sections of the population. Yet even measures that at one level appear to protect local environments – for example, bans on the use of forest goods and resources – can have negative effects if they fail to accommodate the traditional rights and sustainable practices of indigenous communities.

Education is another area where minorities and indigenous peoples are often most disadvantaged. This is because of a range of factors – low household income, state exclusion, stigmatization at school, a lack of culturally appropriate instruction – but the common result is lower enrolment rates, higher dropout rates and poorer life prospects. Survey data among some Afro-Peruvian communities has suggested that only 16 per cent of children finish primary school,[3] despite national completion rates exceeding 90 per cent.[4] This leaves a legacy of not only illiteracy but also a broader sense of exclusion, and usually ensures that the disenfranchisement of one generation is passed on almost intact to the next.

As for health, minorities and indigenous peoples often have not only the highest incidence of ill health but also the lowest access to essential services. Whole communities, for example, may find themselves afflicted with disease or chronic illness through poverty, environment, stress and stigmatization, yet also excluded from adequate health care as a result of geography, cultural barriers, low income and direct discrimination. Breaking that cycle requires targeted interventions, including in developed countries such as the United States. For example, some estimates suggest that more than a quarter of the Hispanic population in the US lack health insurance – more than double the proportion of whites without coverage.[5]

The opportunities of the SDG Framework

The areas where the MDGs have actively recognized discrimination and inequality in their indicators, such as gender, arguably number among their more successful legacies. Though we still have a long way to go, the last 15 years have seen a major shift in the global recognition of the constraints and injustices that women experience on a daily basis. In the coming years, we could build on this achievement by focusing our attention on the particular challenges experienced by minority and indigenous women. In many countries some of the most pressing issues surrounding gender, such as political exclusion or lack of access to services, are closely related to ethnic or religious discrimination. This is also the case with sexual assault: from Canada's indigenous population to India's Dalits, minority and indigenous women typically face a higher risk of rape and murder. We therefore need to develop a better sense of how outreach and protection programmes can actively target these groups.

For nearly two years, there have been unprecedented consultations with stakeholder groups around the world – global civil society, economists, development specialists, climate scientists, human rights experts and politicians – on how to shape the upcoming 15-year global development plan. Outreach to over a million stakeholders has been ongoing in numerous forums, both virtual and actual. These varied voices and expert opinions have now been distilled into 17 draft SDGs by UN member states ahead of the UN summit on 25-27 September 2015.

Significantly, there is an SDG that focuses attention on 'inequality within and among countries'.[6] This provision targets the bottom 40 per cent of the population for special measures to accelerate their income growth faster than the norm. The political inclusion of marginalized groups is highlighted, with the requirement that by 2030 countries should 'empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of … race, ethnicity, origin, religion … or other status'. In addition, it notes the need to 'ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including through eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices'.[7] Wage and social protection issues are also addressed, while other SDGs deal with social disparities in areas such as health, malnutrition and education.

It is clear that if inequality and discrimination towards a particular community are entrenched, then standardized approaches to development and poverty reduction may prove ineffective in benefitting the most marginalized.

Instead, governments and international agencies must ensure that programmes are designed with specific elements that actively engage these groups. This means culturally appropriate, locally accessible systems of support that focus on rights, not targets, with accountable funding and monitoring systems in place to assess whether the situation of particular minorities or indigenous peoples has improved.

Looking forward: realizing equitable development for all

To achieve more equitable outcomes, we will need a much clearer evidence base on the disparities and developmental gaps between different groups. The danger of failing to adequately disaggregate data when evaluating development outcomes is that it can conceal the poverty and exclusion of marginalized groups. The tentative steps made with the MDGs to incorporate issues such as gender and the rural/urban divide should be taken further so that the most disadvantaged groups – including religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples – are visible and acknowledged. Without solid data, as we have seen throughout the last 15 years, the main barriers that minorities and indigenous peoples confront when attempting to access basic rights and services can easily remain unaddressed. Acknowledging the special realities of minorities and indigenous peoples through indicators that reflect these issues of discrimination and inequality will help to ensure that they receive greater attention in the coming 15 years.

In conclusion, as the international community moves forward on the SDGs, it is hoped that future development will be informed by a stronger minority and indigenous perspective. Despite many challenges, the opportunities to deliver real change to these communities are encouraging. There is widespread recognition in the new framework that averages and percentages tell only part of the story and that development, to be sustainable, must be inclusive. For example, evidence suggests that cities with a culture of tolerance and diversity are more likely to prosper,[8] while ensuring the security of ethnic and religious minorities can help prevent a broader slide into civil conflict. Similarly, respecting indigenous territorial rights also supports the preservation of sound environmental stewardship.[9] Recognizing and addressing minority and indigenous discrimination will therefore not only benefit members of those communities, but also support progress towards better developmental outcomes for the entire population.

1. Livelihoods

Electra Babouri

Globally, lack of employment opportunities particularly affects minorities and indigenous peoples: In the UK, the unemployment rate for young people from black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities is more than double that of white jobseekers in the same age group.[10]

Wages for minority and indigenous workers are frequently lower: The gap is especially acute when combined with gender inequalities. In the United States, for example, salaries for Hispanic and Latina women are almost half (54 per cent) those of white men.[11]

Minorities and indigenous peoples are disproportionately employed in menial or dangerous jobs: In Lahore, due to decades of discrimination against the community, Christians make up the majority of the city's sanitation workforce – a fact that contributes to their continued stigmatization.

Traditional livelihoods are increasingly threatened by land grabbing: In Guatemala, for instance, hundreds of Maya Q'eqchi' families have been displaced to accommodate large sugar cane plantations, leaving them without farmland to grow their crops.

'Better job opportunities' were voted the third most important priority out of a total of 16 in the recent UN My World global survey tying in with the post-2015 development agenda.[12] The need for decent work is further highlighted by the ever increasing income inequalities, the growing pressure on natural resources and the continued impact of conflict on work stability. For minority and indigenous workers across the world, these challenges may be especially acute due to discrimination and lack of developmental opportunities. In Vietnam, Indonesia and China, for example, indigenous peoples tend 'to occupy marginal livelihoods in remote locations, largely beyond the reach of otherwise growing economies'.[13] In India, Dalits are presented as 'untouchable' and as a result 17 per cent of the population are 'largely exiled from mainstream society' due to work restrictions and other barriers.[14]

The post-2015 agenda has been framed as one that should 'leave no one behind'. Encouragingly, the *Synthesis Report* of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for 'inclusive growth, built on decent jobs, livelihoods and rising real incomes for all and measured in ways that go beyond gross domestic product (GDP) and account for human well-being, sustainability and equity'.[15] In this

regard, representatives of minority and indigenous communities have highlighted how development is repeatedly framed in terms of market-based economic growth, overlooking traditional livelihoods, collective ownership and the role cultural identity can play in economic life. For example, some communities view being forced to join the market economy as a hindrance, and prioritize security of land rights over increased income as a measure of improvement to their livelihood.

Minority and indigenous people experience high levels of unemployment and lack of opportunities due to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, often reinforced by other challenges such as denial of citizenship or lack of relevant identification forms. Those from poor and rural backgrounds are especially disadvantaged in their ability to access education and vocational training. Furthermore, many speak their mother tongue rather than the dominant national language and so face barriers to accessing better work opportunities. Monolingualism is often particularly prevalent among women: in Bolivia, for example, '43 per cent of indigenous women speak only their native language, compared to 28 per cent of the men'.[16]

Many minority and indigenous girls miss out on education because of their perceived role within and beyond their community, promotion of early marriage, having children at a young age and having to travel too far to access schooling. These factors limit their occupational choices and perpetuate their vulnerability, dependence and impoverishment. For instance, in Bangladesh, indigenous women are ostracized and even physically harassed for wearing their colourful traditional dress in public, seriously undermining their freedom of movement and, by extension, available work opportunities.[17]

The global economic crisis has put further pressures on employment opportunities: already marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, who face 'employment problems even in good economic conditions', in recession 'are pushed further to the margins'.[18] Youth unemployment, in particular, has vastly increased, reaching alarming levels in some developed countries among minority and indigenous populations.

Like the gender pay gap, wage inequality between minority and non-minority groups is well documented across the world. For example, there are instances in Cotopaxi in Ecuador where indigenous people working as labourers on large estates 'live in conditions reminiscent of the worst periods of slavery, being paid US $ 2–3 for a 20-hour workday'.[19] For minority and indigenous women, wage inequality is further accentuated when gender norms

and stereotypes that prevail within and outside their communities prevent them from being adequately remunerated for their work. For example, research with indigenous women from the Atlantic Coast in Nicaragua has highlighted how they see themselves as unemployed even though they raise animals and grow crops for sale – activities they regard not as work but as 'part of their family obligations'.[20]

Globally, precarious and vulnerable work is common, with more than half of workers in developing countries working in the informal sector, and indigenous women disproportionately represented.[21] In Bolivia, where 90 per cent of the female labour force is engaged in domestic services, 70 per cent of these workers are indigenous.[22] Many minority and indigenous people have to work long hours, in unsafe conditions and with non-existent labour rights. Even where there is a legal framework to safeguard them, relevant laws are often flouted due to social norms or local practices. For example, in Nepal indigenous women working in carpet factories do 11-hour daily shifts, with many doing six-day weeks because they are remunerated according to a 'piece-rate' system and are on short-term contracts.[23]

Nor is there a level playing field for minority and indigenous workers engaged in small enterprises and informal livelihoods, as they can still face barriers in accessing essential goods and services. Lack of secure tenure and dispossession of indigenous territory has an immense impact in rural communities that rely heavily on their land agriculture for their livelihoods. Their location in remote areas can also hamper their ability to support themselves in alternative ways. For example, in Laos some estimates put poverty levels among minority communities at around 90 per cent, due in part to their lack of access to markets or local infrastructure.[24]

Many minorities and indigenous people require close links to the land and its resources to sustain their traditional livelihoods, such as small subsistence farming, hunter gathering, herding, pastoralism and fishing. Climate change, natural disasters, large-scale development, forestry, agribusiness, extractive industries and even inappropriately designed conservation projects have an immense impact on their income. This is heightened by unequal access to land and the limited recognition of collective land rights in indigenous territories. As minorities and indigenous peoples are prevented from determining how they develop, they are often forced to abandon their local knowledge, culture and other elements of their identity, in turn leading to the erosion of their traditional occupations. For example, the Wayeyi, Hambukushu and San tribes in Botswana's Okavango Delta, because they are unrecognized by the Botswana constitution, 'have lost their historical rights to their farmland and homes, resulting in poverty, homelessness and state dependence'.[25]

Pressures such as conflict, natural disasters, lack of livelihood opportunities and discrimination push many from minority and indigenous communities to migrate.

There are more than 232 million international migrants, with this figure increasing to almost 1 billion when internal migrants are factored in.[26] Many minority and indigenous migrants find in their new environments that their traditional knowledge is not validated and they lack relevant skills for other work. In many cases they are not afforded the same protections or documentation as other citizens, pushing them into unskilled, poorly paid and exploitative labour. Female minority and indigenous migrants face even greater risks, as they often can only find work in unregulated sectors where the threat of abuse or exploitation is high. Often, too, the process of migration in itself creates new minorities, with individuals who do not belong to minority groups in their country of origin finding themselves a minority in their new location.

Consequently, a full transformation of the global labour landscape for the poorest and most marginalized will require a substantial emphasis in the coming years on the discrimination and exclusion that continue to sideline minorities and indigenous peoples. Significant issues include limited educational opportunities, dispossession of land, stigmatization in the workplace and the frequent failure of economic development to accommodate the traditional skills or knowledge of these communities. To achieve this, however, there will need to be a serious reworking of existing assumptions about how development is defined to create, in line with the stated aims of the SDGs, a more holistic and sustainable model in which minorities and indigenous peoples can be included.

The Mekong River: Work, livelihoods and the environment
Electra Babouri

The Mekong River is one of the largest in the world, running from the Tibetan Plateau and China through Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, and is considered the world's greatest inland fishery. Over 55 million people live in the Lower Mekong Basin, with more than 70 per cent based in rural areas. This includes a diverse range of ethnic minorities: in Laos, for example, ethnic minorities make up over 60 per cent of the population.

Evidence highlights how the Mekong's ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples are heavily reliant on the river to support their income and livelihoods, such as farming, fishing, plant collection and boat repairing. In addition, the river is also used as a route that enables communities to trade among themselves. A large percentage of income in these riparian communities comes from outside the formal monetary economy. For example, women and children are [26] usually those who collect aquatic

fauna and flora: this work is not viewed as an occupation, even though surpluses often are sold for cash.

The importance of the river to sustaining livelihoods is heightened as many of these communities, besides experiencing high levels of disadvantage and poverty, are also more exposed to the deterioration of these local resources. In the north-east of Cambodia, for example, the Cham – a Muslim Khmer minority – are largely reliant on local fisheries and have developed a sophisticated system of knowledge around this. Beyond traditional occupations, when transitioning to new economies local minorities and indigenous peoples face barriers such as lack of access to arable land, limited information and little or no available credit. These challenges are especially acute for minority and indigenous women.

A number of dams have been established along the Mekong River and its tributaries to harness hydropower, help with flood prevention and support irrigation, but have drawn criticism due to their adverse impact on the natural environment and related communities. For example, in China dams have displaced more than 100,000 people, the majority of whom are ethnic minorities. In 2010, many of the 40,000 people who were displaced by the construction of the Xiaowan Dam were still struggling to maintain their livelihoods due to lack of access to natural resources. Often groups have to resettle much further away than originally expected: in Vietnam, Muong from the north-western highlands had to relocate to the Central Highlands after unsuccessful efforts to maintain their traditional livelihoods nearer the reservoir.

Changes caused by dams to the river's ecosystem have a severe impact on livelihoods, too. This can be seen in the villages of Phi and Ka Tang by the Sesan River, a Mekong River tributary in the north-east of Cambodia. Both communities are predominantly made up from the Jarai indigenous group. In addition to collecting non-timber forest products, the villagers' income and subsistence is supported by the river. Rice is cultivated in small wetland plots; crops such as chilies and mangoes are grown in riverbank farms; wild vegetation, which grows along the banks, is collected; fishing is carried out, with the catch often sold to middlemen. However, villagers interviewed for a recent study on the transboundary impact of a dam built in Vietnam highlighted that unusual fluctuations in water levels and flooding had pushed locals into clearing forests further inland in less productive areas. Field yields had also declined due to increased sedimentation.

There are at least 11 further dams being planned for the Lower Mekong River, with minority groups among those most vulnerable to the impacts. For example, it is estimated that 43 per cent of those affected by the Xayaburi Dam in Laos are ethnic Lao Theung. It is feared that, besides displacing tens of thousands of people, the decimation of the Mekong's natural resources will increase inland migration, within and beyond borders, putting more pressure on the availability of work and causing instability. For instance, regarding Vietnam, it has been predicted that large-scale movements of majority ethnic Vietnamese to upland areas could create conflict between ethnic groups and uproot local ethnic minorities. A plethora of organizations are continuing to campaign on these issues, including the 'Save the Mekong' coalition, made up of regional and national civil society organizations.

2. Health

Tom Palmer

In terms of health outcomes, minorities and indigenous peoples continue to be left behind: In India, for example, though child malnutrition is 14- 20 per cent higher among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, levels have been declining at a slower rate than for the rest of the population.[27]

One reason for this is limited access to health care due to poverty, isolation or discrimination: An estimated 15 per cent of young Chinese New Zealanders report having no access to health services, more than three times the proportion among other New Zealanders.[28]

Poorer health outcomes also reflect broader issues of discrimination: Contamination from extractive industries encroaching on traditional lands, for instance, is a regular cause of ill health. In the oil-rich Ahwazi-Arab minority region of Khuzestan in Iran, residents suffer from the effects of pollution in the Karoon River.[29]

Despite these significant disparities, data on minority and indigenous health is often unavailable: In many countries governments do not disaggregate statistics due to lack of resources or even official policy. Consequently information on health inequalities among its minority populations is limited.

As in other areas, it is difficult to assess improvements in health outcomes for minorities and indigenous peoples over the MDG period, due to the fact that targets have not been sufficiently disaggregated to capture trends affecting marginalized communities. The pressure to meet these has at times led governments to focus on the populations that were easiest to reach, at the expense of more marginalized groups such as minorities and indigenous peoples who now find themselves further from achieving these targets. Although these disparities are sometimes justified in pragmatic terms, such as cost or geography, they raise serious concerns when viewed from a rights-based perspective.

The MDGs show how a focus on overall goals can undermine the understanding of health as a basic right by justifying efficient or 'cost-effective' interventions that deliver the agreed targets but overlook remote or marginalized areas. The implications also extend into other areas of development, such as education and livelihood opportunities. For minorities and indigenous peoples already exposed to disproportionate rates of poverty and social exclusion, higher rates of illness and lack of access to

essential services can become part of an inescapable cycle. In India, Dalits still engage in the illegal practice of 'manual scavenging', the removal of human excrement from private and public toilets. Their involvement in this dangerous occupation is a direct result of their marginalization in the caste system which, besides reinforcing their stigmatization, also exposes them to a variety of health risks.[30] Many are at greater risk of infections and long-term illness not only because of the nature of their work, but also the lack of basic labour safeguards such as protective equipment.[31] This in turn reduces their productivity and undermines their long term life opportunities.

One factor in the persistence of health inequalities is the lower levels of access to essential health care. Though impoverished or remote minority and indigenous communities regularly experience physical or economic barriers in accessing services, these often disguise deeper levels of discrimination at play. Discrimination can be very direct, for instance, when authorities refuse to provide the same level of care to minority and indigenous populations. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, for example, where many have been based for more than 60 years, are regularly denied access to public health care.[32] In many cases, lower levels of access to essential health care are the result of governments, staff or local communities actively preventing minority and indigenous patients from receiving available treatment.

But discrimination can also have subtler manifestations. The provision of public health information in the majority language is common in many countries, as is the use of conventional medical approaches that may not always be acceptable or appropriate for some minority and indigenous patients. Yet these obstacles can often be invisible, particularly in mainstream medicine, where the focus is often on standardized systems of delivery. As a result, there is a tendency to blame minorities or indigenous peoples for 'resisting' services rather than to question how services could be made more accessible. The right to health must be upheld without sacrificing the right to the protection of identity. In western China, for example, despite a national campaign for women to give birth in hospitals, many minority women have been avoiding these services due to embarrassment surrounding some of the standard procedures employed in these hospitals. Traditional birth positions, for example, are reportedly not available as an alternative to horizontal delivery.[33] However, in countries where traditional practices have been absorbed into mainstream health care, such as Peru, uptake by minority and indigenous women has improved dramatically.[34]

Beyond the immediate issue of service access, however, it is necessary to employ a more holistic approach to understanding the wider issues that contribute to health inequalities. A range of factors contribute to poorer health indicators, many of which are grounded in a more general failure to implement human rights for these groups. For rural minorities and indigenous peoples, for example, land is a critical determinant of health, yet this is not always easily captured in the compartmentalized measurements of the MDGs. But minorities and indigenous peoples are especially vulnerable to land grabbing and displacement, in turn exposing them to loss of livelihood, stress and other challenges that lead to deteriorating health.[35] The displacement of many forest-dwelling Batwa from their land has left communities without access to traditional medicines, local food sources, adequate shelter or sanitation. This has had a devastating impact on their health.[36]

Social exclusion can contribute to poor health outcomes in other ways as well. Across the world, minorities and indigenous peoples are often found working in jobs with higher occupational health risks as a direct result of their exclusion. In the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, for instance, some reports suggested that many of the workers involved in the cleaning up of the plant – criticized at the time for the widespread use of sub-contracting – were from Japan's Burakumin minority, who number among the country's most excluded populations.[37] This again points to the importance of a rights-based approach that looks at the broader issues of discrimination that determine health outcomes. Limited access to clean water and adequate sanitation, for example – both central issues in the MDG framework – have contributed to the spread of disease and chronic illness such as cholera and diarrhoea among minority and indigenous communities. Water sources may also be contaminated by mineral extraction or agro-industrial programmes, from gold mining in Peru to palm oil plantations in Indonesia.

The mismanagement of water resources and climate change in turn impacts on food production and food security – another important determinant for health given the close links to disease and malnutrition. Food insecurity has also occurred as a direct result of displacement caused by development programmes: for example, the relocation of indigenous communities in Chiapas, Mexico, into a 'Sustainable Rural City' – a project designed with the intention of progressing local MDGs – ended up having a number of adverse outcomes, including cutting off residents from their traditional sources of cultivation and nutrition.[38] Therefore, while it is certainly positive that indigenous peoples are referenced in the target for agricultural production under the food security goal in the draft SDGs, it is important that the full breadth of issues informing food security and by extension health are addressed in the coming years.

Ensuring a rights-based approach to health during the SDG period will require governments to take a more holistic view to health, in line with the perspective of many indigenous communities, who see it as tied closely to community well-being and the environment. The roll-out of culturally sensitive programmes and targeted legislation over the last 15 years, in countries as diverse as Australia, Bolivia and Canada, is an important milestone in developing more effective outreach to excluded minority and indigenous communities. Yet policy makers must also go beyond this and address land rights, water access, labour protections, lack of political participation and other issues that at present are contributing to disproportionate levels of ill health among these groups.

While the greater emphasis on inequality in the draft SDG framework is to be welcomed, the absence of specific minority and indigenous indicators in most of the goals – in particular Goal 3, 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages' – has troubling implications. Developing a more comprehensive health framework, with an emphasis on minority and indigenous specific indicators on issues such as service access, but also on related issues such as land tenure, is the surest path to achieving equitable health outcomes. One clear lesson from the MDG period is that development outcomes in different sectors are closely interlinked. This is especially the case with health, where disease, illness and lack of access to treatment are often the visible symptoms of underlying discrimination and exclusion.

Bulgaria: community monitoring improves access to health services for Roma
Jack Denith

A campaign run by Roma NGO Amalipe has improved awareness of health issues and rights, and access to health services.

Roma in Bulgaria live, on average, 10 years less than ethnic Bulgarians. High rates of poverty among Roma communities combine with other socio-economic factors to adversely affect their health and their ability to access adequate health care. For example, a 2011 survey carried out by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the European Commission found that 48 per cent of Bulgarian Roma had medical insurance, compared to 85 per cent for non-Roma living in the same area.

National legislation has been drawn up to address these inequalities, but implementation of these policies has been 'close to zero' say Lyubomir Lazarov and Deyan Kolev of the Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, a Roma NGO. Although the legislation sounded good on paper, there was a lack of financial and administrative support for the proposals, and no mechanisms to allow participation by Roma communities.

In 2011, Amalipe decided to put Roma at the heart of assessing and monitoring health services in Bulgaria. Following a model first proposed by Abhijit Das of the Public Health Institute in India, Amalipe developed a system to enable communities to monitor health care services themselves, and carry out their own research into their own health needs and how local services met (or failed to meet) them.

Amalipe established local volunteer clubs that brought young people, women and informal leaders together with trained moderators (also from the community) to discuss health issues. Together with the Amalipe project team, these community organizations conducted surveys of the health of Roma women and their use and knowledge of health care services. They also developed a health information campaign using community theatre.

The challenges were substantial: not only in terms of Roma health, but also in terms of the barriers to improving access – from poor diet and an inability to afford medication, to facing discrimination from medical staff. High rates of poverty make health insurance a rare luxury for the majority of Roma, while the rural areas where many Roma live have only a few general medical practitioners working insufficient hours to cover the population.

The surveys found that these factors were compounded by a lack of awareness of health issues, such as what rights to health people have, or what services are available (half of the women surveyed by the communities did not have information on when doctors visited their village). These issues were influenced in turn by Bulgarian and Roma scepticism about the ability or willingness of civil institutions to create positive change.

Through the information campaign, advocacy activities of the project team and free gynaecological checks organized within the project, the Roma communities improved access to a number of health services, from primary health facilities to emergency and hospital care. From simple measures such as raising awareness about what services are available to communities and what they are entitled to receive, substantial improvements were made by the communities themselves.

3. Education

Peter Grant

Education is frequently more difficult for minorities and indigenous peoples to access: In Peru, while school attendance among 6-11 year-olds is more than 90 per cent among all other groups, almost one in four (23 per cent) of Ashaninka children in the same age group are out of school.[39]

Education access is often closely aligned to existing hierarchies: In India, 6.1 per cent of Dalit girls are out of primary school – considerably higher than the national average of 3.6 per cent - making them the most excluded group in the country.[40]

Poverty, discrimination and other barriers can also undermine educational attainment: Drop out rates among Native Americans in the US are 15 per cent, 2.5 times higher than those among non-Latino whites.[41]

Educational inequalities have a lasting impact for minorities and indigenous peoples: Illiteracy levels among Roma women in South East Europe are 32 per cent, compared to 5 per cent of majority women and 2 per cent of majority men.[42]

For minorities and indigenous peoples across the world, education is one of the most pressing development priorities, with implications for decades to come. This is because literacy and formal schooling offer the best opportunity for members of these communities to transcend poverty and discrimination. Investments made now in education could have a transformative effect for minority and indigenous communities in years to come, offering the possibility of decent employment, higher incomes and greater political representation. Yet at present, inequalities in the quality and availability of education are perpetuating the marginalization of these groups. Previous estimates have suggested that between 50 and 70 per cent of out-of-school children worldwide are from a minority or indigenous background[43] – a proportion that has probably remained constant in recent years, in part because there has been no disaggregation of these groups within the MDGs.

So, despite some progress in extending educational access, minority and indigenous children continue to be sidelined. As a result, deep-seated patterns of exclusion will be replicated for yet another generation. As we enter a new phase in international development, with a strong emphasis on sustainability, addressing these shortfalls is more critical than ever. Virtually every aim in the agenda, from poverty reduction to social cohesion, would be bolstered by greater and more equitable access to education for all. Literacy is a strong determinant of better health outcomes, for instance, as access to information on services and positive behaviours is heavily dependent on the ability to read and write. Many minority and indigenous communities, due to limited levels of education, are therefore excluded by extension from available health care. In Nepal, for example, Janajatis struggle to access available family planning services not only because of poverty and discrimination, but also due to the inability of many to fill in the necessary documentation themselves.[44]

One obvious obstacle to school attendance is physical accessibility. Many minority and indigenous children are located in remote or isolated areas where educational facilities are either non-existent or poorly resourced. Added to these challenges are barriers of unaffordability: the economic difficulties of paying school fees and related costs, while experienced by the poor the world over, are often especially acute for minorities and indigenous peoples. With limited funds available, families may choose to send only their sons to school – meaning minority and indigenous girls may be particularly disadvantaged if funds are scarce. This is the case in the Somali region of Ethiopia, where just 23 per cent of male pastoralists are literate – a figure that nevertheless dwarfs the 4 per cent of pastoralist women who can also read and write.[45] As education is a major determinant of long term life opportunities, the effect is that existing inequalities are institutionalized through the continued exclusion of minority and indigenous children.

Yet higher poverty levels are also coupled with systematic underinvestment by national or local governments in schools located in areas with large minority populations. For instance, past government figures have suggested that state expenditure in Israel is three times higher for Jewish students than their Arabic peers.[46] Official discrimination in these cases serves to reinforce existing economic disadvantage among these communities. Even in a context where all children are guaranteed state education and strong anti-discrimination legislation is in place, inequalities in the education system persist. In the United States, for example, educational outcomes for African-Americans are markedly lower than those attained by non-Latino whites. Though the reasons are complex, zoning of schools and an increasing trend of privatization have helped perpetuate these disparities, resulting in lower educational attainment.

While these constraints are partly products of larger structural inequalities, direct discrimination can also take

place in the classroom. This may be reflected, for example, in the stigmatization of students from minority and indigenous backgrounds. In India, Dalit children may be segregated from their peers and excluded from shared water sources. This undermines the potential opportunity for interaction between young members of different communities, which would otherwise foster the increased understanding that is an essential part of the education process. In Pakistan, similarly, school curricula and teaching materials also contain derogatory terminology that misrepresents or vilifies minority communities. In these circumstances it is almost impossible for minority and indigenous children to enjoy the full benefits of education. In Uganda, literacy levels among members of the Karamojong minority are just a quarter of the national average. Though this striking shortfall is the product of a range of issues, one contributing factor is the negative discussion of traditional pastoralists in the curriculum, which serves to alienate or exclude many children from these communities.[47]

Another challenge is the frequent lack of culturally appropriate schooling, including education in their own rather than the majority language. This has a dramatic impact on learning outcomes and can lead to the long-term alienation of minority and indigenous children from the education system. In Bolivia, for example, '68 per cent of Spanish speakers aged 16–49 have completed some secondary education compared to one-third of Aymara, Quechua and Guarani speakers.'[48] The failure to adequately engage students from these groups in the education process, like other forms of discrimination, can contribute to disproportionately high drop-out rates once they have enrolled. This means that, even if minorities and indigenous children are enrolled in primary school education, they may still struggle to enjoy the full benefits of education. In Canada, for example, school drop-out rates among First Nation students are three times higher than those among non-indigenous Canadians.[49]

Education will undoubtedly remain a major priority for governments and donors. This is to be welcomed, but progress will likely remain slow without greater attention being paid to the specific disparities experienced by disadvantaged minorities and indigenous peoples. Encouragingly, the draft SDG on 'inclusive and equitable quality education' has a specific provision on indigenous access – 'ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including … indigenous peoples' – a significant step in recognizing the particular discrimination faced by this group. Yet religious, ethnic and religious minorities are still not mentioned, despite facing similar issues of exclusion. Addressing educational shortfalls will require, as in other areas, specific measures to address the multiple barriers confronting these groups. These should include targeted investment for disadvantaged communities, the design of appropriate curricula and more research on the constraints on securing

quality education. Once these are in place, the benefits to minority and indigenous communities will be far reaching, and will also support progress in other areas of development.

Countering hate content in Pakistan's school textbooks
Nicole Girard

'The education system in Pakistan is dominated by people having a particular religious ideology and extremist mindset. These people desire this extremist ideology to be inculcated into the curriculum and thus manipulate the education system.'
Cecil Shane Chaudhry, Executive Director of Pakistan's National Commission for Justice and Peace

Education has a central role to play in countering violence and discrimination against minorities. Promoting diversity and inclusion at schools and universities is one of the most effective ways to address prejudice and deliver lasting social change. Unfortunately, however, educational platforms can also be misused to entrench negative attitudes towards minorities. In Pakistan, where tensions between different religious and ethnic communities run high, curriculums and textbooks are actively contributing to these problems by perpetuating derogatory language and stereotypes.

There has been some official recognition of the problem, beginning in 2006 with a review of the country's National Education Policy. The National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), a Pakistani rights group, used the opportunity to examine hate content in school textbooks and advocate for the removal of biased or hostile material. In 2009, Pakistan had adopted a new education policy that included a provision to remove 'controversial material against any sect or religious/ethnic minorities' from teaching materials.

However, evidence suggests that in practice the problem persists. In March 2013, the NCJP published a review of textbooks used since the new policy was implemented. Its findings were disheartening: hate content in textbooks had actually increased during this period. In Punjab province, in particular, the number of instances of hate speech in textbooks specifically had risen from 45 in 2009 to 122 for the 2012/13 school year. The content included derogatory language, such as the description of non-Muslims as *kafirs* or 'infidels', as well as the presentation of other religions as false and antagonistic. Furthermore, some materials also included the distortion or exclusion of historical facts relating to minorities, including the role of Hindus in the partition of Pakistan.

Cecil Shane Chaudhry, Executive Director of Pakistan's NCJP, sees rising religious intolerance and attacks on

minorities as a clear impact of hate content in Pakistan's textbooks: 'It has given a boost to extremism, activities of violence against minorities and other marginalized sectors of society,' he says. 'When young minds are instructed with hate content in school, they start to consider students from other religions and sects as their enemy and thus start hating them.' The NCJP's research has formed the cornerstone of their advocacy campaign to remove hate content. They have held seminars and conferences to discuss their findings, with support from human rights NGOs and some political parties. While change has been slow to come, there is hope that tackling hate speech in the classroom could be an important milestone for minorities in the country.

4. Gender

Farah Mihlar

Minority and indigenous women typically earn less than men from their own community and women from other groups: 67 per cent of Afro-Brazilian women earned less than US $1 per hour, compared to 60 per cent of Afro-Brazilian men and 43 per cent of white women.[50]

While education access is often lower for minorities and indigenous peoples, women in these communities are typically the worst affected: in rural Ecuador, 48 per cent of indigenous women are illiterate, compared to 32 per cent of indigenous men and 18 per cent of non-indigenous women.[51]

Health outcomes for minority and indigenous women are far poorer, resulting in higher death rates: in China, while national maternal mortality rates stood in 2000 at 53 per 100,000 live births, in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China the rates were three times higher (161.4 per 100,000 live births).[52]

Violence against minority and indigenous women is enabled by their lack of access to formal justice: according to some estimates, the conviction rate for incidents of sexual assault against Dalit women is less than 2 per cent, compared to a national average of around 25 per cent.[53]

The failure of MDGs on gender and women's rights is now well established. Gender was not properly mainstreamed through all of the MDGs and, while there was an ambitious specific goal on gender equality, the targets were only with reference to primary education. What was missing was a holistic approach to supporting gender rights: barriers to gender equality, such as violence against women, were not dealt with and there were no proper means of monitoring the goal. As a result, while there were some positive developments on reaching gender equality, overall women gained less out of the MDGs than had been expected.

But while this failure has now been widely publicized, what is less known is how much worse minority and indigenous women have fared during this period. To achieve gender equality, at the most basic level, women and girls need to have equal access to and continued participation in education, employment and other developmental opportunities. In addition, structural barriers to achieving gender equality, such as discrimination and restrictive religious or cultural norms, need also to be tackled. In all of these aspects, minority and indigenous women are likely to be the worst affected:

besides achieving poorer outcomes compared to men from their own community, on account of their gender, they also fall behind women from majority or dominant groups because of their minority or indigenous identity.

Women from minority and indigenous communities are often among the poorest and most marginalized. Poverty levels are generally higher among women than men as they are less likely to be in formal employment and large numbers of women are engaged in the informal sector, working at home, cultivating vegetables or breeding animals. These forms of livelihood are unrecognized, poorly paid and often lack adequate labour legislation. In many minority and indigenous households, it is too costly to educate all of the children in the family and in this situation it is almost always the girls who are denied schooling as a result. This locks the next generation of minority and indigenous women into the same cycle of disenfranchisement, both within their own communities and wider society.

Women are also less likely to get access and ownership to land, which traps them in cycles of poverty. Land rights can be especially problematic when gender inequality intersects with minority-related discrimination. In Rwanda, for instance, though land law gives equal rights to land for 'husbands and wives', only civilly married monogamous couples are recognized as married under law. As many indigenous women, such as those belonging to the Twa community, are married by customary or religious rites, this in effect excludes them from these basic protections and leaves them exposed to dispossession from male members of their community.[54]

In most countries, large numbers of minorities and indigenous peoples live in very remote areas, meaning they can easily be sidelined from development programmes. While this discrimination can be direct – for example, when governments do not build schools and hospitals in areas with large minority or indigenous populations – there are also many forms of indirect discrimination that can impact especially on minority and indigenous women, such as a maternity hospital with staff who only speak the majority language or a public department with a prohibition on a particular religious or cultural form of attire. In France, for example, it is overwhelmingly the case that the ban on religious dress in schools has most affected Muslim girls and their wearing of headscarves.

Gender-based violence is a major barrier to achieving equality for women from minority and indigenous communities. They face disproportionately higher levels of violence than women from the majority community as they are often doubly vulnerable because of their identity. In

India, where sexual and gender-based violence against women is widespread, Dalits are especially vulnerable due to their low status in the caste system: their limited access to justice in the event of sexual assault provides attackers with near total impunity. In situations of conflict, evictions or civil unrest minority and indigenous women are also likely to be targeted for violence because of their ethnic, religious or national identity.

In addition, minority and indigenous women are particularly limited by social, religious and cultural norms. Among the Acholi in Uganda, for instance, husbands pay a bride price to the father of their wives – a practice that reinforces that traditional belief that women are the 'property' of the husband, since a payment was made for her.[55] Women from minority and indigenous communities may also face a greater expectation from their community to uphold certain cultural and religious norms, such as a particular behaviour or dress code that specifies the community's identity. Often, because women take on these roles, particularly with regard to dress, they become more easily identifiable and, as a result, are more vulnerable to attack by members of the majority community.

Finally, minority and indigenous women are often poorly represented in national level decision-making. In South-Central Somalia, for example, only 31 out of 275 parliamentary seats are reserved for minorities – an allocation that already provides much lower representation that the actual proportion of its minority population. However, as Somalia's patriarchal power structures are replicated among its minority groups as well as its majority clans, just five of these seats are occupied by women.[56] This amounts to just 1.8 per cent of all seats. Ensuring greater political participation for minority women in Somalia is therefore a complex challenge. A more inclusive political system for both minorities and women could, without appropriate mechanisms in place, lead to greater representation for women on the one hand and minorities on the other, but not necessarily minority women, who are sometimes sidelined within women's rights organizations and also excluded by their community's political elite.

Though it is welcome that gender equality has received greater attention in the SDG framework, there also needs to be a specific focus on equality and anti-discrimination to ensure that all women benefit, particularly those from minority and indigenous communities, and not just a lucky few. The critical factor that policy makers need to take into account in the post-2015 period is that not all women are at the same point in their march towards equality, and that the factors contributing to these disparities need to be dealt with if gender equality is to be achieved in the foreseeable future. This will require some form of special measures and targets. There will also have to be adequate funding and support for states at a practical level for this to be achieved. Most importantly, a holistic approach is needed to address the many complex factors that prevent minority and indigenous women from achieving equality, such as targeted violence, discrimination and cultural barriers.

Discrimination against Dalit women in Ahmedabad
Rajiv Shah

In Ahmedabad, located in the heart of Gujarat state, Dalits have been an important but often invisible presence for generations, working as scavengers and waste-clearers within the strict confines of India's caste system. Concentrated on the periphery of the city, frequently segregated from other communities, many had also migrated to the city in search of work in emerging industries such as Ahmedabad's textile mills. Nevertheless, though strong caste and communal barriers remained in place, Dalit settlements existed alongside upper-caste and Muslim neighbourhoods in the city centre and the nearby industrial townships. However, over the last few decades a number of violent incidents, including anti-Dalit riots in 1981 and communal violence in 2002, have reinforced divisions. This case study, drawing on interviews conducted in December 2014 with a number of activists and community members based in the city, highlights some of the key challenges facing Dalit women today.

According to Madhuben Koradiya, a Dalit women's rights activist with the Ahmedebad-based NGO Navsarjan Trust who was interviewed for this case study, the closure of many of the city's mills in the 1980s and early 1990s also precipitated a crisis for Dalit women. In previous years Dalit women had been making some small gains, with some even managing to secure low-level government employment, but this tentative progress halted with the collapse of the textile industry:

'[It] *led to large-scale joblessness among men, following which Dalit women were forced to do any job they could lay their hands on, even as construction workers, in order to help the family. A huge oversupply of labour in the job market meant less wages…. Women have nowhere to go, except to work as daily wagers or home-based workers.'*

As a result, their livelihood options deteriorated:

'*Things have further worsened over the last 10 to 15 years. Dalit women are doing such jobs which I could not even imagine when I was young. They are ready to work as guinea pigs for pharmaceutical companies, which use them to experiment with the reaction to medicines of the human body. They are ready to become surrogate mothers for money.'*

Following the outbreak of communal violence across Gujarat in 2002, the situation for Dalit women worsened.

Though Muslims were exposed to the worst of the violence, the 'next biggest casualty' were Dalits:

'Out of more than 1,000 killed, more than 100 were Dalits. The young Dalits were misguided by the saffron brigade [right-wing Hindu extremists]. Now no one takes care of the families of many of the Dalits who were arrested for the riots or those who died. The condition of women is particularly in bad shape. Many women have been pushed into such illegal activities like brewing country liquor and prostitution, and there is little anyone is doing.'

The challenges Dalit women face, though overlapping with general issues of urban poverty and gender discrimination, are in many ways distinct to the issues that face the female population as a whole. Ahmedabad has a number of active women's organizations, but while these often have a large Dalit constituency among their members, their focus generally is not on specific incidents of discrimination. While a trade union may periodically train its members on issues of sexual violence and harassment, for example, it usually avoids taking up human rights issues related to atrocities against Dalit women.

Solidarity was also undermined following the 2002 communal violence. Preeti Vaghela, another activist based with the Navsarjan Trust, described how prior to the riots Dalit and Muslim families lived side by side in some parts of the city. However, in the aftermath, the interaction between women from different communities came to an abrupt halt:

' [Until 2002] women interacted with each other. However, following the riots, Dalits have fled many of these areas, and got scattered to different places. The social fabric which women had built around themselves, even among Dalits, has broken apart.'

Ramilaben Babubhai Parmar, a researcher who was involved with Navsarjan Trust in a survey of the city's sanitary workers, reports that among Valmiki – probably the most marginalized of all the Dalit sub-castes – most women work as sanitary workers, whether it is for the municipality or housing societies.

'In housing societies, they are paid to work as sweepers. They sometimes are also allowed to work as sweepers inside individual houses and clean up individual toilets. However, they are generally not employed as housemaids to clean up utensils or cook food. The latter work is mostly done by women from other backward classes, who do not have the stigma of being "impure". There are Valmiki women who work in private offices. But they mostly work as sweepers.'

Their husbands, too, will also typically work in this dangerous occupation and as a result many end up having to head their households alone:

'The situation is such that there is a higher incidence of widows among the gutter workers. Our survey said about 20 to 25 per cent of young Valmiki women were widows, and I don't think that the situation has changed much even now. Malnutrition is widely prevalent. Most girls are married very young, even before attaining adulthood.'

In the segregated areas where Valmiki are located, however, sanitary facilities are almost non-existent:

'A large number of Valmiki localities are devoid of any toilet facilities. There is a pay-and-use toilet in several localities, like Bootbhavani and Chandranagar areas, where they live, yet it is in poor shape, or often locked, and never cleaned up because of lack of water, and women are forced to go out in the open, often sitting next to the railway station nearby, to defecate.'

One consequence of the systematic humiliation experienced by the community is that Valmiki women also face regular abuse from men of their own caste:

'Within Valmiki families, their condition has worsened. Our impression is that cases of their suicide have gone up drastically, and so have cases of violence by men. I come across such at least three to four cases of this kind every month. Working in insanitary conditions, dejected and depressed following day-long work, men drink a lot of illicit country-made liquor, which wasn't generally the case earlier. This tells heavily on women.'

In one slum area in western Ahmedabad, situated within an affluent locality, around 70 Valmiki families live in huts with no access to water, sanitation, electricity or any form of government support. None yet have the luxury of a concrete house, in part because their homes have been destroyed by local authorities as illegal several times already. All face the constant threat of eviction. The settlement is surrounded by expensive flats, whose owners employ some of the women as sweepers. Research interviews with a number of Valmiki women living in this area highlighted the continued discrimination they faced in their employment. While claiming they were not subjected to 'untouchability', as was the case in the past, all of them admitted that at best they were working as sweepers in individual households, with none employed as regular housemaids to clean up utensils or cook. As one of the women interviewed put it:

'Frankly I don't feel untouchability as our ancestors did, but I do not do any other work inside the houses except sweeping and cleaning the apartments. I am

allowed into the kitchen also, but I do not cook food or clean utensils. In fact, nobody has asked me to do these jobs, which others do.'

Another Valmiki woman, when asked why she did not refuse to work as a manual scavenger as it was prohibited by law, smiled and said, 'Do you want us to lose our job? If we do not do the work, we will be replaced by others.' This seemed to be the case even when they had been lucky enough to access some secondary education. Based on the accounts of the women interviewed, it appeared that even those Valmiki women who had managed some study were still condemned to the same manual labour their ancestors had been forced to perform. Though these issues are not usually as pronounced among non-Valmiki Dalit women, discrimination in Ahmedabad is still widespread even among the less stigmatized Dalit groups, as Koradiya describes:

'It is rarely visible, but one can feel it does prevail in the dominant caste behaviour. In an interaction, Dalit teachers complained to us that while they would sit together to take an afternoon meal, non-Dalit women as a rule would not like to share food with them, nor would the non-Dalit women ever offer them water. The feeling of distance was always visible.'

Sexual harassment, too, remains a serious challenge for women in Indian cities in general, but is especially acute for Dalit women, who are vulnerable due to their secondary status. For example, Leena Patel, a Dalit journalist and social worker interviewed for this research, highlighted the experiences of Dalit women working in the city's diamond polishing industry. The 'hypocrisy', as Patel describes it, is that 'untouchability is their motto, but the dominant caste owner doesn't have any problem touching Dalit women'. She heard similar stories from Dalit women recruited to work as cleaners at wedding parties, who felt helpless in the face of harassment. 'In fact, a few of the women considered sexual overtures as a normal behaviour of the contractors who offered them work. They said, if they protested against men touching them, they would not be given the job the next time.'

5. Environment

Peter Grant

Minority and indigenous communities often face greater environmental challenges due to limited access to land or basic services such as waste disposal: in India, for instance, it is estimated that only 10 per cent of Dalit households have access to sanitation, compared to 27 per cent of non-Dalit households.[57]

Minority and indigenous territory is particularly vulnerable to land grabbing by governments, businesses and other powerful groups: in Bangladesh, for instance, one study has estimated that as much as 65 per cent of indigenous Santal have been dispossessed of land.[58]

Lack of resources and their location in environmentally sensitive areas has left many indigenous communities on the frontline of climate change: In the Arctic, where the impacts of global warming are particularly acute, changing temperatures and melting sea ice are already affecting wellbeing and livelihoods among local Inuit.

Despite the challenges, minorities and indigenous peoples can contribute positively to environmental protection: a recent study of the Brazilian Amazon found that, in areas with high levels of deforestation, forest loss was lower in indigenous territory, highlighting the positive role that stronger land rights could play in conservation.[59]

The draft SDG framework recognizes the central importance of environmental protection for sustainable development. Until now, the legacy of at least some large-scale development projects has been deteriorating natural resources, rising carbon emissions and irreversible ecological damage, often far outweighing the short-term economic benefits involved. As with climate change, these are issues of universal significance that may determine the future for generations to come. Yet for minorities and indigenous peoples, the impacts are particularly acute.

In many cases, minority and indigenous communities are especially reliant on the environment for their well-being and survival. Traditional livelihoods, such as shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing and animal husbandry, commonly practised among indigenous peoples using locally available resources, are dependent on the preservation of ecosystems such as lakes and forests. Yet these essential sources of income are frequently destroyed in the name of development. In Brazil, for example, the construction of the Belo Monte dam along the Xingu River in the Amazon could leave thousands of indigenous

inhabitants in the area without food or water.[60] However, the implications of environmental destruction also extend well beyond loss of livelihood to the culture and spirituality of a community. Even when some compensation is provided, the effects of being uprooted from the communal areas and sacred spaces of their land can permanently devastate the identity and well-being of the displaced.

The location of some minority and indigenous communities in relatively unexploited, even pristine territory has also encouraged private companies, militias and dominant groups to encroach on these areas. Mineral exploitation, logging, plantations and other lucrative industries have driven widespread land grabs in Asia, Africa and Latin America, often accompanied by violence and other rights violations. Governments have frequently failed to protect minority and indigenous communities from these abuses, and in some cases even actively participated in dispossessing communities from their land. These activities are sometimes presented in terms of environmental protection. In Kenya, for instance, the eviction of forest-dwelling Ogiek and Sengwer from their ancestral territories has been justified by authorities in terms of local conservation.[61] However, as in both cases, the real threat to such ancient forests comes from external sources, such as large-scale logging companies and people moving in from other areas.

Troublingly, even many well-intentioned conservation efforts have worked against rather than with indigenous communities, due in part to the assumption that the preservation of fragile ecosystems is incompatible with human habitation[62] – an assumption that has persisted throughout the MDG period. As the majority of recognized protected areas world-wide belong to indigenous communities, this has been a source of frequent conflict.[63] Yet indigenous peoples have a clear stake in conserving these resources and have demonstrated, over centuries, their ability to maintain the forests, lakes and rivers in their care. One positive development, therefore, has been an increasing awareness that these communities have a central role to play in environmental protection. In Arunachal Pradesh, for example, recent research has documented how the Aka tribal group has developed a complex system of protocols that encourage the conservation of young animals, saplings and medicinal plants to ensure local resources are used sustainably.[64]

The draft SDGs are clear about the importance of protecting air quality, water resources and soil through stronger regulations, better stewardship practices and a focus on sustainable systems such as recycling and renewable energy. Minority and indigenous concerns, on

the other hand, are often overlooked in development activities relating to conservation. However, their situation is often closely associated with some of the most egregious instances of environmental destruction. The deforestation of swathes of indigenous territory in Indonesia and Malaysia for palm oil cultivation, without the consent of the communities, is just one example of how discrimination and lack of rights can also feed environmental destruction.[65] A stronger emphasis on rights and services for minorities and indigenous peoples could therefore have substantial environmental benefits, too.

The draft SDG 11 on 'inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' cities includes provisions on slum upgrading, waste management, basic services and other issues with direct implications for urban environments. These are valuable aims that again could be supported through a specific focus on minority and indigenous populations. In cities across the world, these groups are frequently the poorest and most marginalized, excluded from basic amenities like toilets or running water and located in overcrowded, unsanitary settlements with limited options for waste disposal and other essential functions. In Dhaka, for instance, much of the Dalit population is isolated in flood-prone colonies with little or no access to clean water or sanitation.[66] These conditions are a direct product of discrimination and may not be easily addressed through conventional poverty reduction or upgrading strategies as they are grounded in a basic lack of rights.

The draft SDG framework also highlights the importance of tackling climate change and its impacts. In particular, one provision advocates for 'eff¬ective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities'. This reflects the growing recognition among policy makers that climate change is a social as well as a physical phenomenon, affecting poor and vulnerable groups such as women and children disproportionately due to their lack of resources, limited information and other factors. There is still, however, only limited recognition of the specific challenges that minorities and indigenous peoples face. In many cases, existing inequalities will be widened for certain groups who find themselves on the frontline of climate change; 56 per cent of Inuit households in the Canadian territory of Nunavut, for instance, are exposed to varying levels of food insecurity, compared to 14.3 per cent in the country as a whole. As a result, their food systems will be especially vulnerable to temperature changes and other shifts.[67]

Yet in addressing climate change, as with other pressing environmental issues, minorities and indigenous peoples are not simply victims but are also actively developing solutions to these challenges. While until recently community perceptions of climate change were largely overlooked, studies have demonstrated the unique value of local knowledge in developing specific responses to rising sea levels, crop failure and other stresses. In the Pacific, for example, indigenous communities carefully monitor changing weather patterns and have developed a wide range of adaptive strategies to alleviate these effects. These include the planting of resilient crops, tried and tested over generations, in the most exposed areas and the use of design measures such as stilted housing for settlements in vulnerable locations.[68] Low-cost, practical approaches such as these will prove vital in many countries as they struggle to adapt to climate change in the coming years.

The campaign against destructive palm oil
Nicole Girard

The rapid expansion of palm oil plantations in South East Asia is being driven by rising global demand for edible oils and bio-fuels. Malaysia and Indonesia are the top producers of palm oil in the world, and in these countries the industry fuels land dispossession and loss of livelihoods for indigenous peoples. Global consumption of processed palm oil more than doubled over the last ten years, with demand increasing mostly in China, India and Eastern Europe. Large-scale production in Malaysia and Indonesia started in the late 1980s and rapid expansion since 2007 has devastated bio-diverse rainforests, replacing them with mono-crop 'green wastelands'.

Millions of hectares of land have been swallowed by these plantations: an estimated 4.6 million hectares in Malaysia, and 9.4 million in Indonesia. Both countries intend to continue increasing the amount of land dedicated to palm oil. In Malaysia's Sarawak state, the government plans to double the area devoted to palm oil while Indonesia plans to double its palm oil production to 20 million hectares by 2020. This expansion will continue to be driven by large estates, rather than independent smallholders.

To achieve this expansion, the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia have handed over indigenous peoples' lands for palm oil, despite their customary land claims. In Sarawak, Malaysia, and in Sumatra, Indonesia, oil plantations have polluted rivers, destroyed wildlife that once supported indigenous peoples' livelihoods, and led to communities being evicted from their lands. Many of the land conflicts in these countries are directly related to the expansion of palm oil.

Communities like Dayak Benuaq, who struggle against palm oil plantations, meet violent reprisals. According to the Borneo Resource Institute, in February an indigenous community in Rumah Ranggon, Sarawak, Malaysia, were intimidated by a hundred armed men, allegedly hired by the palm oil company to force residents to halt their blockade protecting their forests. Police later arrested the leader of the armed group.

A flood of these incidents has led to increased pressure on palm oil companies to prevent abusive and destructive

practices. The industry formed a Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in 2004, to promote sustainable palm oil practices and raise the environmental profile of the industry. Comprising oil palm producers, manufacturers, investors and social and environmental NGOs, the RSPO has created a process to have plantations certified as sustainable.

Some NGOs have refused to join the RSPO, arguing that its standards have not done enough to address land disputes and environmental issues. But others, such as Sawit Watch, Indonesia's leading watchdog NGO on the palm oil industry, have participated and helped shape the RSPO's criteria for certification. The standard affirms the rights of indigenous peoples to their customary lands, requires adequate compensation, and insists that no lands can be taken from indigenous peoples and local communities without their free, prior and informed consent. The standard also requires the fair treatment of smallholders and prohibits discriminatory practices against women.

While the RSPO has developed strong standards through consultative processes, further efforts are needed to ensure that these standards are implemented. The international community must continue to demand palm oil that follows the sustainability model provided by the RSPO, along with implementation that protects the rights of affected communities.

6. Water, sanitation and other basic services
Virginia Roaf and Inga Winkler

Minorities and indigenous peoples frequently struggle with limited access to basic services: in the United States, indigenous peoples lack access to water and sanitation to a disproportionate extent: 13 per cent compared to 0.6 per cent in non-native households.[69]

Lack of access is not only caused by poverty, but also the product of active discrimination: in India, Dalit communities in some areas are reportedly still denied access to water by other castes, who often control local supplies.[70]

Even in countries with almost universal service access, minority and indigenous communities lag behind: in Italy, many Roma are located in segregated settlements such as La Barbuta where service provision is almost non-existent.[71]

Effective inclusion of minority and indigenous communities can boost overall service provision: in the Philippine city of Baguio, traditional indigenous practices of reuse and recycling have helped improve municipal waste disposal.[72]

The Millennium Development Goal target for access to water has nominally been achieved. However, due to the structure of the MDG target - to 'halve the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water' - the reality is that those who have benefitted from improved access to water tend to be the better off. Those who have historically been discriminated against, or marginalized, such as minorities and indigenous peoples, have tended to be left behind despite this progress. The MDG sanitation target, which has not yet been met, suffers from the same structural failing.

The MDG framework has not provided any incentive in the last 15 years to address inequalities in water and sanitation provision, or to consider the particular challenges faced by minorities and indigenous peoples in securing access to these services. However, the body tasked with monitoring the MDG targets on water and sanitation, the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme, has recently started carrying out research into disparities that exist among among ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. The evidence so far has illustrated the acute gaps faced by these groups.

For example, in Nepal, data shows that while open defecation rates for the majority Hindu population are 37 per cent, the rate for the minority Muslim population is 70 per cent.[73] In Laos, sanitation access among linguistic minorities, amounting to around 30 per cent among Chinese-Tibetan and Mon-Khmer, is less than half that of the 74 per cent coverage among the majority population.[74] Recognizing these disparities is essential for the design of appropriate policy and programming responses. At the global level, the new SDGs must be well-designed so that monitoring of inequalities is embedded in the relevant goals, targets and indicators to bring patterns of inequalities into the spotlight.

Minorities and indigenous groups often live in more impoverished areas, whether rural or urban, due to socio-political disadvantage, with attendant inequalities in access to water, sanitation and other basic services. Service provision is often neglected in impoverished rural areas, for instance, impacting particularly on indigenous and forest-dwelling communities. But in urban areas, too, many informal settlements where minorities and indigenous communities are concentrated experience similar difficulties in accessing basic services.

In both rural and urban contexts, services are often not only sub-standard but also unaffordable for the poorest and most marginalized communities. Because of limited access in informal settlements, for example, residents will frequently pay more per litre, and often even in absolute terms, for their services. And as service provision in informal settlements tends to be dependent on on-site and often informal sanitation, ineffective or non-existent waste management frequently leads to environmental contamination and negative public health impacts.

For example, due to the position of many communities in low-lying areas or along rivers, residents may suffer from pollution from untreated sewage from richer settlements that have access to a sewerage system, but where treatment systems are inadequate. While these issues are often presented primarily as the result of poverty, discrimination plays a key role in exacerbating these inequalities. A particularly egregious example affecting many indigenous communities in the Americas and elsewhere is the overuse and contamination of lakes and rivers by extractive industries, leaving locals without a safe water supply.

In many countries, discriminated minorities – such as Dalits in South Asia and Christians in Pakistan – are disproportionately occupied in waste disposal and latrine cleaning while lacking the benefits of effective sanitation in their communities. This situation not only creates a range of social, environmental and health problems, but also reinforces their stigmatization.

Discrimination towards minorities or indigenous populations can be direct, such as when they are actively

denied access to water, sanitation or other basic services. For example, in South Asia, Dalit populations may be prevented from using the local water pump, and in Europe, Roma and other traveller populations may be barred from existing piped water networks. Participation in decision-making processes related to access to services may also exclude minorities and indigenous populations. The impact of this discrimination is particularly felt by minority and indigenous women and girls, as they tend to bear the responsibility within the household of ensuring access to these services.

Exclusion can also be more indirect, however, and shaped by related issues such as lack of information or physical remoteness. For example, information related to water and sanitation services may only be available in majority languages or in formats that minorities and indigenous peoples, who often suffer also from a lack of access to education, are less likely to understand. Likewise, indigenous communities in remote areas will often be excluded from attending hearings and other events. Improving access to water, sanitation and other services such as electricity is therefore far more than a matter of technical delivery.

There are currently promising signs that the SDG framework on water and sanitation will go some distance in addressing these structural failures. At present, the suggested targets appear to require universal access to water and sanitation, and will make use of indicators that go beyond simple access figures to consider water quality and adequate levels of service. Nevertheless, there are many specific issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the many inequalities experienced by minorities and indigenous peoples are properly addressed. These extend beyond the immediate question of supply and resources to issues of power, rights and exclusion.

The question now is whether the draft SDGs are being designed to encourage states to address the root causes of discrimination in the provision of essential services for these populations. The challenge will be to ensure that relevant indicators are developed to monitor whether states are indeed 'paying special attention to the needs of….those in vulnerable situations'.[75] Of particular importance is ensuring that the needs of marginalized and discriminated minority groups and indigenous peoples are not left until last in securing 'universal' access. One Joint Monitoring Programme working group, for example, has proposed a process to monitor the elimination of inequalities between the general population and those who are frequently excluded or discriminated against in terms of access to water and sanitation.[76] Under this proposal, states would have to identify relevant marginalized population groups, including minorities and indigenous peoples, and monitor their access to water and sanitation services compared to that of the general population. It would also require states to demonstrate faster progress for disadvantaged groups than for the more advantaged population groups.

Lack of service access among minority and indigenous populations not only reflects but also reinforces their continued exclusion, undermining their health, dignity and economic wellbeing. Addressing these shortfalls is therefore a key element in strengthening their ability to enjoy greater equality and respect within societies. Furthermore, as these communities in many parts of the world play an essential role in the provision of these services – for example, through indigenous methods of waste recycling and water conservation – ensuring their participation in their delivery as active rights-holders will support countries in their efforts to realize universal access to services.

Improving indigenous menstrual hygiene management in rural Bolivia through education
Kara Chiuchiarelli

Despite increasing focus on access to water and sanitation (WASH) as a basic human right, it is estimated that as of 2015 2.4 billion people still lack improved sanitation and 663 million people lack access to a safe water source.[77] This figure includes many minority and indigenous communities, who frequently experience even higher rates of discrimination in accessing these services. This is often evident in communities with majority indigenous populations, particularly in rural areas, as authorities sometimes fail to provide public WASH services to local residents.

In Bolivia, for instance, widespread poverty among indigenous communities in the rural countryside is exacerbated by limited access to clean drinking water and sanitation: rural access to an improved drinking water source is only 76 per cent, compared to 97 per cent coverage in urban areas.[78] When water and sanitation services are available, they often meet the minimum levels required for drinking, cooking and cleaning in the home. This, however, often leaves other areas like agriculture and schools with inadequate WASH services.

An even larger disparity exists among indigenous female schoolchildren - one that is often taboo or sensitive to discuss within their communities. With inadequate WASH services at school, female children have the particular burden of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) during school days. Coming into school from indigenous communities creates long commutes for the girls, forcing them to either conduct MHM in inadequate facilities at school or stay home – a situation that can significantly undermine their ability to engage fully in what educational services are available to them.

A variety of initiatives have been developed recently to combat these challenges for young indigenous girls, including WASH in Schools (WinS), a programme

spearheaded by UNICEF to improve WASH conditions for schoolchildren globally. One of its projects in Bolivia focused specifically on rural indigenous communities and attempted not only to transform local facilities and raise awareness to promote behavioural change, but also to study the impact of the programme and analyze its efficacy for future use.

In 2012, UNICEF partnered with the Center for Global Safe Water at Emory University to explore the MHM challenges faced by female students in Quechua indigenous communities in Cochabamba, Bolivia. According to researchers Bethany Caruso and Jeanne Long, the initiative targeted 'Quechua speaking communities with [fewer than] 500 people residing there - communities were anywhere from 3 to 8 hours outside of the city center of Cochabamba.'

> ' *UNICEF made* [the] *decision on location—the UNICEF Bolivia country office focuses much of their efforts on rural communities,'* Caruso and Long explain. *'Bolivia is also very proud of its ethnic diversity.* [But] *nothing was known about girls' experiences in this area of the country.'*

The collaboration with a partner organization working in the community was valuable in encouraging discussion of traditional MHM practices and beliefs taught to Quechua girls in the Cochabamba region. This in turn provided essential information about how MHM could be improved among female indigenous students in rural schools.

According to the 2013 program report, menstruation-related challenges in the indigenous communities were compounded by a range of societal, institutional and personal factors.[79] At the basic level of facilities, most schools in the two rural communities did not offer the necessary resources for girls to effectively manage their menses. This led to self-isolation and fear from girls, especially those experiencing menarche.

Furthermore, MHM not only receives inadequate attention within school education, but is also rarely discussed at home within the Quecha communities. Local traditions passed down from mothers, sisters, aunts and friends have sometimes promoted certain MHM practices, such as avoiding cold water for bathing during menstruation, which have contributed to the challenges experienced by indigenous girls during menstruation.[80] To combat these issues, the researchers created a board game to communicate information on MHM and allow girls to overcome traditional cultural taboos to ask questions on the topic.

As a result of the project, UNICEF was granted an award in 2014 for research excellence and activities in Bolivia have since been scaled up, with UNICEF successfully building awareness among policy-makers on the issue of MHM. New studies and programs are also now being conducted on related issues, including follow-up in the original communities by UNICEF and Water for People, while new programming by Save the Children is underway to translate MHM via WinS to urban contexts.

The study has also encouraged research on MHM among other minority and indigenous communities in Bolivia. 'Right now, a similar study is being conducted in Beni, Bolivia, among two other ethnic groups in rural areas of the Amazon,' Caruso and Long report. 'Combined with the new findings from Beni, there will be a some teacher training as well as material developed for schools for MHM in the coming year.'

The WinS project on MHM in Bolivia has provided academics and practitioners with much-needed information on MHM and traditional cultures in South America. With continued studies underway and improved awareness, indigenous girls can hope to overcome the stigma associated with MHM and instead focus on being productive students.

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working to secure the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples

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Minorities, indigenous peoples and the post-2015 framework

Though the fifteen years of the Millennium Development Goals have seen some positive progress in areas such as health and education, minorities and indigenous peoples have often been excluded from these benefits. This short information pack, *Minorities, Indigenous Peoples and the Post-2015 Framework*, outlines the continued shortfalls affecting these communities and the opportunities for these disparities to be addressed through the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As the publication argues, there must be greater attention to the specific needs of minority and indigenous communities, with a stronger focus on rights rather than targets, directed investment and fully disaggregated data. As inequalities in health, education, livelihoods and other areas are interconnected, there needs to be a systematic focus on minority and indigenous inequality across all sectors of development.

Without a clear focus on discrimination, it is unlikely that their situation will soon improve. For these groups, the barriers to participation and service access often extend beyond resource limitations or weak governance. In this context, it is possible for countries to achieve rapid progress at a national level without any positive change for its most marginalized populations.

However, there is also growing awareness of the contribution that minority and indigenous knowledge can play in environmental conservation, local economies and other priority areas of the SDGs. Ensuring greater equality for minorities and indigenous peoples will therefore not only benefit these communities, but also support the general progress of countries in their realization of more sustainable development outcomes.

Visit the Minority Voices online newsroom www.minorityvoices.org for stories and multimedia content from minorities and indigenous peoples around the world.