

Forum: General Assembly 3 (GA3)

Issue: Addressing the impact of globalisation on indigenous people

Student Officer: Kanav Jain

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

More than 476 million Indigenous people live across approximately 90 countries, representing 6.2 per cent of the global population [ILO (International Labour Organization), 2020]. Indigenous peoples own, manage or hold tenure rights over more than one-quarter of the world's land surface, including approximately 40 per cent of protected and ecologically intact landscapes (Garnett et al., 2018).

Globalisation has provided employment, investment and international visibility to Indigenous communities; however, mining, agriculture, energy, logging and tourism have increased pressure on their lands, livelihoods and traditional knowledge. The consequences depend on whether communities have decision-making power, provide informed consent and receive an equitable share of benefits.

This report therefore examines globalisation's effects through Indigenous self-determination, FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent), and the protection of land, culture and traditional knowledge.

Definition of Key Terms

Globalisation

“Globalization refers to the process of connecting the world economy more closely through the flow of goods, services, investment, technology, data, ideas, and workers” (Jakubik & Van Heuvelen, 2024, para. 3).

Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations has not adopted a universal definition. The UN has identified common characteristics, including historical continuity with pre-colonial societies and communities that consider themselves distinct from others which are now prevailing within their territories [Martínez Cobo, as cited in

UNPFII (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues), n.d.].

FPIC

The right of Indigenous Peoples to give, withhold or withdraw consent to a project affecting their territories, and to participate in its design, implementation and evaluation [FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), 2016]. Consent must be free of coercion, sought prior to approval, and based on full, accessible information.

Self-Determination

The right of Indigenous Peoples to freely determine their political status and pursue economic, social and cultural development (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2007, Article 3).

Forced Assimilation and Cultural Destruction

Processes compelling Indigenous Peoples to abandon or resulting in the destruction of their culture, identity or way of life; UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) Article 8 establishes their right not to be subjected to this (UNGA, 2007).

Indigenous Lands and Territories

Lands, territories and resources that Indigenous Peoples have traditionally owned, occupied, used or acquired (UNGA, 2007, Article 26).

Background Information

Economic Globalisation and Traditional Livelihoods

The rising demand for minerals, timber, fossil fuels and farmland has driven rapid expansion of mining, plantations, dams and infrastructure into Indigenous territories, creating employment opportunities and at the same time displacing communities and cutting off traditional livelihoods, while profits accrue to corporations. Displaced Indigenous peoples are then pushed into informal employment. Approximately 86% of employed Indigenous people worldwide work in the informal economy when compared with 66% of employed non-Indigenous people. Informal work often involves inadequate wages and limited social protection (ILO, 2020).

Based on data from 23 countries, Indigenous Peoples represented 9.3% of the population surveyed but accounted for approximately 19% of those living in extreme poverty (ILO, 2020).

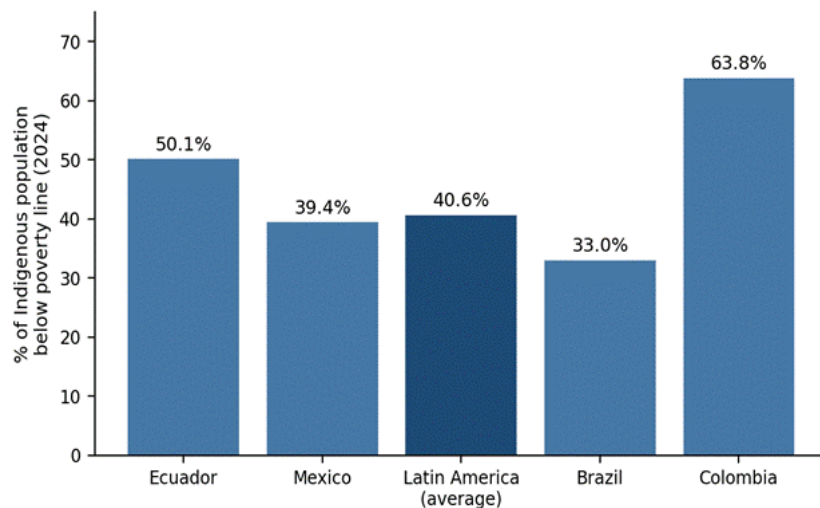


Fig. 1. Share of Indigenous population living in poverty by country, 2024. Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, via Statista, 2025.

Land, Resources, Health and Environmental Damage

Ancestral territory provides economic security and is the foundation of Indigenous Peoples' cultural and spiritual identities. If commercial and extractive projects proceed without obtaining Indigenous Peoples' free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), they can threaten communities' rights to their lands, resources and self-determined development.

In 2021, Norway's Supreme Court ruled that licences for wind farms on the Fosen peninsula violated Sámi reindeer herders' cultural rights by interfering with land required for traditional herding (Supreme Court of Norway, 2021), showing that even renewable-energy projects can threaten Indigenous rights.

Such projects also cause displacement, deforestation, water contamination and biodiversity loss when communities lack robust land tenure, also reducing access to traditional food sources and exposing isolated communities to disease and inadequate healthcare.

The Yanomami crisis in Brazil shows that illegal gold mining has damaged forests, contaminated rivers with mercury and disrupted traditional hunting and farming. A Fiocruz study of 287 people in nine Ninam Yanomami villages found mercury exposure in all those tested, with 84% recording hair-mercury levels above 2.0 µg/g [Fiocruz (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation), 2024].

Culture, Language and Technology

With the advent of global media and migration to cities, transmission of Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge is weakening, as most education is conducted in dominant or international languages. A UNESCO report finds that younger Indigenous people in cities in Ecuador, Mexico and Peru are significantly less likely to speak Indigenous languages than their rural counterparts [UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), 2019]. UNESCO estimates that at least 40% of

the world's roughly 7,000 languages are endangered, with Indigenous languages forming a significant proportion (UNESCO, 2022).

Global markets can provide income through commercialisation of Indigenous art, fashion and tourism, but cultural expressions may be commercialised without consent, becoming appropriation when outsiders control their use and profits. Technology can help communities to document languages, market products and organise advocacy, though unequal internet access can exclude remote communities, and is beneficial only when Indigenous Peoples control how their culture is used.

Previous International Action

International policy has gradually shifted from assimilation towards participation and self-determination. ILO Convention No. 169 (1989) revised Convention No. 107 and remains the principal binding treaty addressing Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, though ratified by relatively few states (ILO, n.d.).

ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) established UNPFII in 2000, and the General Assembly adopted UNDRIP through Resolution 61/295 in 2007, affirming rights to land, culture, self-determination and consultation (UNGA, 2007).

In 2024, WIPO adopted a treaty that, upon entering into force, would require disclosures in patent applications for inventions based on genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge [WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), 2024]. Financial initiatives include the COP26 (26th Conference of the Parties) pledge of US\$1.7 billion for forest-tenure rights and a further joint donor commitment of US\$1.8 billion at COP30 for 2026–2030 (Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership, 2025; Government of Norway, 2025). UNDRIP nevertheless remains non-binding with uneven national implementation.

Organisations and Major Countries Involved

Organisations

UNPFII (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues): Advises ECOSOC on Indigenous development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights.

ILO (International Labour Organization): Oversees Convention No. 169, the principal binding treaty on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, establishing obligations on consultation, employment and land rights.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization): Leads the Decade of Indigenous Languages, 2022–2032, and supports language education and cultural preservation.

WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization): Adopted a 2024 treaty that, upon entering into force, would require disclosures in patent applications for inventions based on genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge.

UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) LCIPP (Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform): Promotes Indigenous participation and knowledge within international climate policy.

Major Countries

Brazil: Home to a large Indigenous population and extensive Amazonian territories, where mining, logging, agribusiness and infrastructure have generated land-rights disputes. **Position:** Ratified ILO 169 and created a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (2023), though Congress's 2023 “marco temporal” law restricts land claims (Boadle & Machado, 2023; ILO, n.d.).

Canada: Adopted the UNDRIP Act in 2021, but continues to face disputes over mining, pipelines and First Nations' territorial rights. **Position:** States that FPIC goes beyond the duty to consult but is not an absolute veto over government decisions; has not ratified ILO 169 (Government of Canada, n.d., 2021; ILO, n.d.).

Norway: Finances international forest-tenure initiatives but has faced domestic conflict over wind-energy's effects on Sámi reindeer herding. **Position:** First state to ratify ILO 169; apologised after the 2021 Fosen ruling and co-funds the COP30 tenure pledge (Government of Norway, 2023, 2025; ILO, n.d.).

Philippines: Recognises ancestral domains and FPIC through its Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, though implementation remains contested in mining, dams and infrastructure. **Position:** Lifted its moratorium on new mining agreements in 2021 (GMA News, 2021); has not ratified ILO 169 (ILO, n.d.).

Indonesia: Faces conflicts between customary land rights and expanding palm-oil plantations, nickel mining and other globally connected industries. **Position:** The government has argued almost all Indonesians are Indigenous; a national Indigenous Peoples Bill has stalled for over a decade [IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs), 2026].

Kenya: The African Court ruled in 2017 that evicting the Ogiek from the Mau Forest violated their land rights; in December 2025 it found Kenya had not complied with key orders (African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2025). **Position:** Abstained on UNDRIP (2007) [UN DESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs), n.d.].

Possible Solutions

Indigenous Project Passport

The UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), in consultation with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, could establish an Indigenous Project Passport framework. Under this programme accredited independent certification bodies would issue the Passport after confirming that a project obtained FPIC, completed environmental assessments and agreed benefit-sharing. Only certified projects

to receive finance from participating banks and development institutions.

Community-Controlled Escrow Fund

Companies could deposit expected revenue upfront before operations begin, thus guaranteeing compensation and community development if any damage occurs.

Direct Community Royalties

A fixed percentage of mining, logging or energy revenue to be transferred directly to Indigenous governing bodies through audited accounts and eliminate intermediaries.

Satellite Land-Alert System

Satellite imagery can identify illegal mining, logging or encroachment, and forward evidence automatically to enforcement authorities.

Indigenous Veto Checkpoints

Consent should be reviewed at several project stages rather than once, allowing communities to suspend approval if environmental or contractual terms are breached.

Indigenous Data Licences

Communities to issue licences to determine who may record, digitise, research or commercially use their languages and traditional knowledge.

Global Implementation Scorecard

UNPFII could publish country and company performance on land recognition, FPIC, revenue-sharing and access to remedies, thus having reputation consequences.

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