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Rajat Srivastava

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Is Technological Advancement a Threat to the Right to Isolation and Remain Uncontacted for Indigenous Tribes in 2024

Rajat Srivastava

*Law Student, 5th year,
B.A.LL.B. (Hons.), ICFAI University, Dehradun*

ABSTRACT

This paper assesses whether Human Rights available to uncontacted and voluntarily isolated indigenous tribes are compiled in 2024. Indigenous tribes defend their traditional territories and way of life in the face of mounting pressure from the state and private sector to oppose disruptive development initiatives like large-scale mining and industrial operations. The forced relocation and environmental damage that these development projects frequently cause have a negative influence on Indigenous ways of life and cultural heritage. Due to their frequent marginalization in political processes, many Indigenous tribes have little political representation, which makes them more susceptible to negative outcomes from outside initiatives and coerced encounters with the general public. Furthermore, Indigenous customs and autonomy are put at greater risk by forced contact with dominant cultures. This paper highlights how important it is to have inclusive governance that fully incorporates Indigenous rights as well as the necessity of political and development frameworks.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous Rights, Voluntary Isolation, Technology, Cultural Preservation, Environmental Monitoring, Legal Frameworks, Underrepresentation

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Indigenous Peoples are distinct social and cultural groups that have close ancestry to their ancestral lands and natural resources. Their distinctiveness, traditions, and general well-being depend critically on this relationship. Speaking more than 4,000 of the 7,000 languages spoken worldwide, Indigenous groups speak for about 476 million people, or about

6% of the world's population. Many of these languages are in danger of becoming extinct. "Overview of Indigenous Peoples". These tribes' strong ties to their natural surroundings allow them to maintain their independent ways of life and cultural customs. However, dangers to their lands and resources leave them even more exposed, increasing the likelihood of marginalization and exploitation. Despite being essential in preserving the ecological and cultural variety, Indigenous Peoples often face severe socioeconomic difficulties. Their life expectancy is up to 20 years shorter than that of non-Indigenous communities, and they make up about 19% of the world's extremely poor (Secretariat 6-7). For them to survive and to preserve their special inheritance, they must defend their territories and civilizations.

They comprise roughly 19% of the world's severely poor, and their life expectancy is up to 20 years lower than that of non-Indigenous communities (Secretariat 6-7). They must protect their lands and cultures if they are to endure and pass on their unique heritage.

Because they are vital to maintaining the planet's biodiversity, indigenous tribes must be conserved. Their management of biological resources and cultural practices help to preserve a variety of species and environments. with the use of tried-and-true land management techniques like agroforestry, controlled burns, and rotational farming, all of which significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon. But more and more economic activities like industrialization, mining, and deforestation are endangering Indigenous places. These. The ecosystem as well as the cultural practices and traditions of Indigenous peoples are at risk due to these incursions. Enhancing environmental preservation efforts requires aiding Indigenous communities in the protection of their land rights and incorporating their traditional knowledge into global conservation programs.¹ (*Here's How Indigenous People Are Protecting the*

¹ *Here's how Indigenous people are protecting the planet.* (2023, Aug 1). The World

Planet, 2023).

1.2 Effects of External Contact on Indigenous Tribes

Getting sick or becoming infected is a major worry for Indigenous Peoples who are intentionally living in isolation or are experiencing their first contact with the outside world. Their long periods of isolation have left them without the immune systems needed to fight off even common diseases. Unwanted contact with different cultures can have disastrous results, potentially leading to the extinction of entire tribes.²

Indigenous tribes severely face deprivation and a lack of sustainable development opportunities. Commodity-driven development's growth has frequently involved exploitation. Understanding the potential areas where industrial growth could encroach on Indigenous territories is necessary to address this. Indigenous Peoples have not been fairly or significantly involved in current practices that shape how their lands and resources will be used in the future.³

1.3 Consequences of Mainstream Development on Indigenous Lands and Cultures

Industrial development endangers about 60% of Indigenous Peoples' territories across 64 countries. Within this scope, 37 countries have areas that are especially at risk of being converted due to severe threats. The likelihood of such conversion is heightened by deficiencies in land rights, representation, and financial resources. Enhancing support for

Economic Forum. Retrieved August 14, 2024, from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/08/indigenous-people-protecting-planet/>

² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Protecting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact* (June 2021), <https://www.un.org/en/desa/protecting-rights-indigenous-peoples-voluntary-isolation-and-initial-contact>

³ Kennedy, C. M., Fariss, B., Oakleaf, J. R., Garnett, S. T., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Fa, J. E., Baruch-Mordo, S., & Kiesecker, J. (2023). Indigenous Peoples' lands are threatened by industrial development; conversion risk assessment reveals need to support Indigenous stewardship. *One Earth*, 6(8), 1032-1049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2023.07.006>

Indigenous governance and management practices can significantly help reduce the risk of land conversion.⁴

1.4 Indigenous Peoples' Marginalization and Political Underrepresentation

Despite making up roughly 10% of the population in the region, indigenous peoples are notably underrepresented in national governmental bodies worldwide. Their political participation, especially among women, remains low.

The underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in media contributes to the notion that they are wilting from history. Although Indigenous people constitute around 5% of the global population (The World Bank, 2016), their presence in media coverage is minimal. A report by Journalists for Human Rights emphasized that Indigenous issues in Ontario, Canada, received just 0.46% of news coverage between 2012 and 2013 (Pierro, 2013). The description of Indigenous issues varied, with 41% of the coverage being neutral, 20% positive, and 39% negative. Coverage often spiked during significant affairs like the Idle No More movement in January 2013. With time, the unfavorable image of Indigenous protestors increased in frequency, especially in opinion articles and editorials (Pierro, 2013).

Indigenous groups have taken more and more charge of their own stories in response to poor media depiction. They are producing media to highlight their concerns and points of view, which has also contributed to the growth of Indigenous-themed literature in novels, TV series, and movies. This content often features distinctive cultural insights and storytelling methods.⁵

⁴ *idib.*

⁵ Asmi, Rehana E., "Indigenous Representation in the Media and the Importance of Personal Narrative" (2017). Undergraduate Theses, Professional Papers, and Capstone Artifacts. 174.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PROTECTION OF LAND, CULTURE AND ISOLATION

2.1 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

An important declaration outlining the rights of indigenous communities, including those who want to live in isolation, is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). According to Article 3, the declaration upholds these communities' right to self-determination, allowing them to choose their own forms of government, including whether or not to maintain their isolation from the outside world.

It also highlights their right to protect their lands, culture, and resources from the external world under (*Articles 26 and 29*) of the Declaration ensuring that their colonies are protected against encroachment and exploitation. This declaration also grants these tribes the right to retain and administer their own lives and lands, acknowledging the significance of including them in decisions that affect their way of life (*Articles 18 and 32*).⁶

2.2 The ILO Convention No. 169

The ILO Convention No. 169 is yet another essential piece of legislation that protects the rights of native and tribal peoples. In particular, those indigenous people facing extinction or grave dangers to their cultural heritage are the focus of this convention's emphasis on the necessity of specific protective measures (Article 4). Additionally, it recognizes these groups' rights (Articles 14 and 15) to possess and manage their ancestral lands, guaranteeing the unhindered continuation of their way of life.

2.3 Guidelines on the Protection of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/utpp/174>

⁶ (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, §§ 3, 18, 26, 29, 32, G.A. Res. 61/295, U.N. Doc. A/RES/61/295 (2007), n.d., pp 8, 15, 19, 21, 23).

Isolation and Initial Contact in the Amazon Basin and El Chaco certain rules for safeguarding isolated tribes. These recommendations emphasize the non-contact principles and implore governments and corporations to acknowledge the right of these tribes to maintain their isolation and to take appropriate precautions against unwelcome interactions with the tribe.⁷

2.4 The American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This declaration asserts that these tribes have the right to remain isolated and to live according to their cultural traditions, and it calls on states to protect their lands and resources⁸.

2.5 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) also contributes to the safeguarding of Indigenous peoples, particularly through Article 8(j), which highlights the significance of preserving the knowledge and practices, cultures of Indigenous communities.

These frameworks collectively form a strong legal foundation that sustains the rights of isolated and uncontacted Indigenous tribes to remain peacefully and undisturbed, safeguard their lands, and preserve their cultural autonomy.

RECENT CONTACTS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: NON COMPLIANCE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

3.1 *Mashco Piro people in the Peruvian Amazon*

The Mongabay reports presented recent rare sightings of isolated and uncontacted indigenous tribes in the Peruvian Amazon, an event that highlights their vulnerable crisis. These communities, who have

⁷ (Draft Guidelines on the Protection of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and in Initial Contact of the Amazon Basin and El Chaco: Report Prepared by the Secretariat, U.N. Human Rights Council, U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, U, n.d.)

⁸ (Article XXV) (Organization of American States, American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Art. XXV, OEA/Ser.P AG/RES. 2888 (XLVI-O/16), at 30 (2016))

traditionally lived in voluntary isolation from modern civilization, were spotted in a region increasingly risked by unlawful activities such as gold mining and logging. This sighting is especially troubling as it surfaces in an area where deforestation and environmental degradation are overgrown due to these activities.

Such contact could lead to extreme outbreaks and additionally risk their well-being. The situation has prompted attention from Indigenous rights communities and environmental groups for prompt efforts to safeguard and preserve these vulnerable communities.

Effective and sufficient legal frameworks are crucial but have not constantly been adequately enforced and implemented.⁹ (“Hernández, Renzo)

3.2 The Ayoreo-Totobiegosode Tribe's Forest in Paraguay Has the World's Fastest Rate of Deforestation

The Ayoreo tribe, which is located in the Gran Chaco region of Bolivia and Paraguay, faces serious threats from encroaching territory and unwelcome contact with the outside world. Deforestation for husbandry and agriculture, particularly cattle ranching and soybean farms, is destroying their traditional lands and disrupting their definitive lifestyle. Unlawful logging and land invasions worsen these threats and increase health risks due to exposure to infection, diseases, and pollutants.¹⁰ (“Ayoreo,”)

3.3. Brazil Tribe Facing Genocide

Article "Rights Group: Brazil Tribe Facing Genocide," which published in the Dhaka Tribune on July 9, 2020, details the alarming circumstances

⁹ Hernández, Renzo. After Isolated Tribes' Rare Appearance in Peruvian Amazon, Big Questions Remain for Their Future, Mongabay, July 22, 2024, <https://news.mongabay.com/2024/07/after-isolated-tribes-rare-appearance-in-peruvian-amazon-big-questions-remain-for-their-future/>.

¹⁰ Ayoreo, Survival International, <https://survivalinternational.org/tribes/ayoreo> (last visited Aug. 14, 2024).

concerning the Guajajara tribe in Brazil. Human rights organizations have expressed concerns that the Guajajara tribe is experiencing what may be considered genocide because of increasing levels of violence and roughness along with encroachment on their territory. The unlawful and illegal logging, and land invasions by armed forces have intensified in the Guajajara's territory, leading to extreme risks to their survival. The environmental destruction is damaging their ability to reside safely and preserve their traditional way of living life¹¹. (Anam, n.d.)

INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS RIGHTS INTO GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK: A CALL FOR CHANGE

The implementation of international agreements on biodiversity depends critically on the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. Through their traditional cultures and practices, the Indigenous communities manage substantial areas of the world's ecosystems, making them essential guardians of biodiversity. The effective monitoring and implementation of global biodiversity goals necessitates the protection of indigenous rights and their active participation in decision-making processes. Incorporating Indigenous viewpoints into conservation programs and upholding these rights require stronger global commitments since accomplishing so is essential to attaining both sustainable and successful biodiversity outcomes and justice.

Aiming to reverse biodiversity loss and coincide with the Sustainable Development Goals, the monitoring framework for the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), a landmark agreement approved by 196 governments in December 2022, sets four goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030. In order to guarantee that the framework protects Indigenous rights and encourages genuine engagement with these communities, activists are

¹¹ Faiyad Anam, Rights Group: Brazil Tribe Facing Genocide, Dhaka Tribune, July 9, 2020, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/world/latin-america/210336/rights-group-brazil-tribe-facing-genocide>.

pushing for amendments. Research supports the effectiveness of Indigenous peoples as environmental guardians and several Indigenous groups have proposed four traditional knowledge metrics to assess community well-being, land rights protection, and Indigenous participation in decision-making. The upcoming conferences in Nairobi are critical for addressing these issues and ensuring that Indigenous rights are fully integrated into global biodiversity monitoring efforts¹². (Kahungi, 2024)

**TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT'S AID ON INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES WHILE THREATENING THEIR CULTURAL
DISTINCTIVENESS: A BALANCED APPROACH OF PRESERVATION
AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS**

Modern technology is being used by indigenous tribes in the Amazon to combat environmental crimes including deforestation and illicit logging. Using mobile applications, drones, GPS devices, and satellite imaging, these tribes can track and record environmental infractions in real time. (Hopman, 2021)¹³. This technical integration improves their knowledge of managing vast and remote rainforest areas. Indigenous community monitors, familiar with their land, culture, and traditional practices, are crucial to these efforts, though they face challenges including limited resources and threats from ongoing illegal activities. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have delivered the technological tools and training needed. The success of these steps not only operates as a model for similar territories but also shows the broader potential of

¹² Kahungi, N. (2024, May 12). *Global biodiversity monitoring should be amended to protect indigenous rights: Amnesty International*. Jurist.org. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://www.jurist.org/news/2024/05/global-biodiversity-monitoring-should-be-amended-to-protect-indigenous-rights-amnesty-international/>

¹³ Hopman, E. S. (2021, March 31). *Indigenous people in the Amazon use satellite data, smartphones, drones to fight illegal logging* » *Yale Climate Connections*. Yale Climate Connections. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2021/03/indigenous-people-in-the-amazon-use-satellite-data-smartphones-drones-to-fight-illegal-logging/>

technology to empower Indigenous communities in global conservation efforts. (Romo & Salazar, 2020)¹⁴

The Earth Defenders Toolkit is a cluster of apps and resources aimed at strengthening Indigenous voices and sustaining land defense efforts. Indigenous communities can operate this toolkit to handle their data, encourage local self-sufficiency, and decrease dependence on outside support (Looby & Salazar, 2021)¹⁵. One of the essential apps, Mapeo, helps tribes map environmental and human rights issues, empowering them to safeguard their lands from external dangers. In a study involving 36 communities in the Peruvian Amazon, locals were trained to use smartphone applications and satellite data to monitor deforestation (Lee, 2021)¹⁶. These technologies enabled timely detection and response to illegal logging and other threats. The results were remarkable, with deforestation declining by 52% and 21% in 2018 and 2019, respectively. A project in Southwest Ethiopia involving agro-pastoralists, where indigenous tribes used mapping technology to manage pressing problems like water and food insecurity. (Moreu, 2023).¹⁷ The project showcases the prospect of integrating AI and peer-to-peer technologies for better inclusive planetary-scale monitoring systems. One primary concern is the possibility of a leak or misuse of sensitive traditional knowledge and data. The digital documentation of cultural practices and land usage can

¹⁴ Romo, V., & Salazar, M. (2020, June 30). *Using technology, indigenous monitors in the Amazon combat environmental crime*. Mongabay. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/using-technology-indigenous-monitors-in-the-amazon-combat-environmental-crime/>

¹⁵ Looby, C., & Salazar, M. (2021, August 2). *Sharing solutions: How a digital toolkit is strengthening Indigenous voices*. Mongabay. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/sharing-solutions-how-a-digital-toolkit-is-strengthening-indigenous-voices/>

¹⁶ Lee, S. (2021, July 12). *Armed with data and smartphones, Amazon communities boost fight against deforestation*. Mongabay. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/07/armed-with-data-and-smartphones-amazon-communities-boost-fight-against-deforestation/>

¹⁷ Moreu, M. (2023, November 17). *The technology empowering Indigenous Peoples and local communities to map their lands*. One Earth. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://www.oneearth.org/technology-empowering-indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities-to-map-their-land/>

inadvertently reveal these details to unauthorized groups, leading to possible exploitation or cultural appropriation. This threat highlights the necessity for cautious usage and robust protections to ensure that while Indigenous communities gain from technological advances, their distinctive traditions and sensitive data remain secure and respected

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The compliance with the right to isolation for indigenous groups—particularly those who voluntarily remain uncontacted—seems to be increasingly compromised by exterior development and technological progress. International legal frameworks such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the ILO Convention No. 169 assert the right of these communities to remain isolated and conserve their conventional living without external interference. However, these protections are not consistently effectively implemented, leading to considerable risk in maintaining isolation.

Technological advancements propose a double-edged sword. On one hand, tools such as GPS, drones, and satellite imagery empower Indigenous communities to scrutinize and fight environmental crimes like illegal logging and deforestation more effectively while on the other hand, it increases the threat to their distinctive tradition and culture being exploited. These technologies have enriched their knowledge to protect their lands and resources, offering an essential means of self-defense against external threats. Yet, this technical integration also poses substantial threats. The digital documentation and sharing of data can inadvertently disclose their sensitive conventional knowledge, making these tribes vulnerable to exploitation. The raised external contact enabled by technology undermines the voluntary isolation of these communities. The introduction of advanced tools and relations with the outside world can disrupt their manner of living life, leading to potential health risks, and cultural deterioration. These findings suggest that while technology

contributes meaningful benefits, it also necessitates strict precautions to protect the right to isolation and maintain the cultural virtue of indigenous peoples. As we progress technologically, it is essential to execute robust protections and approaches to ensure that these tribes can benefit from modern tools without compromising their distinctive autonomy.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes how important it is to address the complex issues that Indigenous communities—especially those living in deliberate isolation—face in the face of technological advances. Indigenous peoples face growing dangers from environmental deterioration and technological encroachment, despite their critical role as protectors of the world's biodiversity and cultural history. International frameworks like the ILO Convention No. 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provide protections, but their implementation is frequently insufficient.

Indigenous communities who are isolated are particularly vulnerable to the exploitation and cultural appropriation that might result from the internet exposure of their traditional activities. Moreover, technological intrusion can disrupt their voluntary isolation, exposing them to external health risks and legal disputes over land. This situation raises profound questions about whether the right to isolation is genuinely upheld amid growing technological and environmental pressures. The underrepresentation of indigenous peoples makes it much more difficult for them to successfully defend their rights. Improving legislative safeguards, ensuring strong enforcement of current rights, and actively involving Indigenous communities in decision-making processes are critical as we forward. To maintain their cultural autonomy and guarantee that their rights are upheld in the face of modernity and environmental change, it is imperative that these issues be given careful consideration.

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