Notes from the “Leave No One Behind” Dialogue Series: Indigenous People
April 27, 2017

• This is the last dialogue in this series, and there will be a side event during the HLPF.
• What is it that makes us human beings? We have intelligence and we think. We have dignity and choice. Poor people are denied this. People living in poverty cannot speak up.
• The Sami people of Norway are an indigenous group. They have a Sami Parliament which they elect every 4 years.
• The parliament originated in 1989 and was established based on conflict. Sami people, in collaboration with environmentalists, protested the building of a power plant that would affect the Sami, and it was viewed as a human rights issue.
• The Government of Norway realized that they had to act, and in January 1989, they agreed on a 10-point list which included the need for publicly elected Sami to serve as the voice of the Sami people in Norway. It was a long struggle for political recognition.
• The parliament has been working on 2 issues – climate change and domestic violence.
• The Artic area is one of the most affected in terms of climate change. SDG 13 is to combat climate change and provide renewable energy. Unfortunately, this has led to another dispute, as the government looked for areas to produce this energy and free land seems to only be found on indigenous peoples’ territory.
• Without dialogue, there is a risk of leaving people behind.
• The creation of windmills is taking place in Sami areas, using up land which typically would have been used for Sami reindeer husbandry (up to 40% of Sami land is used for reindeer husbandry). Every windmill needs roads and infrastructure, resulting in the areas being lost for reindeer husbandry.
• They are challenging the world to come up with better solutions - viable sustainable future solutions and finding other ways to produce energy. You cannot count on areas that do not belong to you.
• Regarding SDG 5 (Gender equality and women’s empowerment), a recent study shows that domestic violence in the Sami society is twice as high as in the rest of the Norwegian society. The victims of domestic violence are hesitant to report it, because they have a culture of being strong and not exposing the negative aspects of their society.
• One of the causes of this has been identified as the aftermath of colonial history, and the frustration and pain occurring within a society that has been marginalized over time.
• The society is challenging the government to work with them to produce a broader picture of the historical consequences of assimilation, and the problems they are facing today.
• The Sami are regarded as an expense in the dominant society’s budget line - it is discriminatory in its concept, and we should collectively try to address it.
• The indigenous people of Brazil (Yanomani) also face somewhat similar issues. They are impacted through the work of the extractive industries – often illegal extraction of gold, petroleum and other minerals. This extractive work and exploitation will not bring a dignified life for the indigenous people.
• There are also other activities that produce negative consequences – this is in the area of hydroelectric schemes/waterways.
• To change the direction of the river is to change the life of the people.
In addition, Brazil is not prepared to deal with various health problems, and wellbeing issues that will arise as a consequence.

Where these big projects exist, leaders rise to defend them – “clean water, and health for all” - but the leaders are often seen as criminals.

Indigenous people should be represented in government in order to work together to address these issues.

A call was issued for indigenous people to be recognized, in living words and in action.

What are the impacts on children, as indigenous parents are migrating for a variety of reasons?

The challenges of middle income countries were highlighted. Economic growth with cohesion and inclusion is needed as indigenous people are further behind.

Chile is adapting tools to measure multidimensional poverty and the disparities in terms of income, and it is important to have disaggregated data.

Political participation is important. Chile has new tools for participation of its indigenous people with the adoption of its new constitution.

What type of budget or access to media is being utilized to raise awareness of the issue? (e.g. using similar lines as “you have petroleum, we have lost our land.”)

Regarding Goal 5, women are disadvantaged because they are in a less dominant group, and concern was expressed about trafficking of indigenous girls.

Not all locations are appropriate for habitation. If a whole group of indigenous people are moved, people may not perceive that it is not appropriate, but for the children, the new environment may not be agreeable or appropriate.

In Yanomami comprehension and world view, climate change is nature defending itself from human actions. They are trying to raise awareness of what is happening.

With regard to financing the spreading of information, their partners do not always give the adequate support to this. More help is needed in this area.

Regarding political participation, the Sami have a consultation agreement on any issue that the government wants to work on that will affect the Sami. The parliament handles 40-60 issues and agrees with the government on approximately 95% of the issues. Disagreements are usually relating to mining and extractive industries.

Sami population values gender and women. The grandmother is the family head, and parliament is divided 50-50 gender wise.

The UN is making a concerted effort to base policy on evidence. What are some of the particular policies that are working that promote greater inclusion and the 3 most important issues that need to be addressed?

Children from indigenous areas face problems when they go to the cities.

In terms of advocacy, there is no internet in the village to spread information.

Help is needed regarding the invasion of indigenous land.

Regarding SDG 5, women in indigenous communities have issues with contaminated water.

The UN convention should mandate government leaders to talk with indigenous people.

The UN Global Compact works with businesses/companies regarding indigenous people, as land is often controlled by indigenous people, and they engage companies to work properly with them.

The most important issues for the Sami people: Language and culture, Education, and Land rights, in this order. Because the government is interested in the use of land, Sami people had to reverse the list of priorities and have land rights as the prominent issue.