



*Organization of
American States*
GWCI A XIV
November 7th, 2009

Chair: Barnett Koven

Vice Chair: Natalie Abuchaibe

Crisis Director: Matthew
Hermerding

**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
GWCIA XIV**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Organization of American States (OAS) simulation at the Greater Washington Area Conference on International Affairs XIV (GWCIA). Allow me to introduce myself; my name is Barnett Koven and I will be your Chair for this simulation. I am a student at the Elliot School of International Affairs at the George Washington University pursuing a double major in International Affairs and Latin American and Hemispheric Studies. Additionally, I am the Treasurer and Member of the Executive Board of Directors for World Information Transfer, a health and environmentally focused nongovernmental organization in General Consultative Status with the United Nations, and am the Co-founder of The Village Energy Project, a non-profit, nongovernmental organization dedicated to locally owned and small-scale renewable bio-energy projects in underdeveloped villages throughout the world.

I am joined by Vice Chair Natalie Abuchaibe, a senior majoring in Political Science and Latin American and Hemispheric Studies. Natalie has participated in activities related to the United Nations since she was in sixth grade. It is her passion to work in different projects that support the work of the UN, especially in Latin America. During her sophomore year in college she interned for the OAS's External Relation Department. Today she is the President of Por Colombia, a GWU student organization that brings Colombian culture to campus.

Serving as your Crisis Director is Matthew Hermerding. Matthew is a senior majoring in Political Science. Matthew fell in love with international affairs when he was a freshman in high school and has been attending and running Model United Nations Conferences ever since. He hopes that you too will become enamored with international affairs.

This year's OAS topic is the Rights of Indigenous Women and Children in Latin America. We will focus on three main subsets of the issue: Economic Mobility, Discrimination, and Access to Education. It will be up to this body to decide how to deal with these issues so as to create a more equal society in the Americas.

As the fall progresses, and so does your research, I encourage you to be in contact with Natalie, Mathew, and myself (our email addresses are bellow, please write 'GWCIA OAS Committee' in the subject line). We are here as resources and eagerly await our chance to work with you.

Finally, pursuant to GWCIA rules, position papers are required in order to be considered for an award. However, only one position paper is required per delegation. It would be helpful to us if you could send your position papers via email to (bkoven@gwmail.gwu.edu with 'GWCIA Position Paper' in the subject line) on or before the due date which will be posted on the GWCIA website (<http://gwias.com/GWCIA/>) shortly.

We look forward to working with you all during the simulation.

Sincerely,

Barnett S. Koven
Chair, GWCIA OAS
bkoven@gwmail.gwu.edu

Natalie Abuchaibe
Vice Chair, GWCIA OAS
natyabuchaibe@gmail.com

Mathew Hermerding
Crisis Director, GWCIA OAS
mhermer@gwmail.gwu.edu



Introduction to the OAS

The Organization of American States (OAS) brings together the nations of the Western Hemisphere to strengthen cooperation on democratic values, defend common interests and debate the major issues facing the region and the world. The OAS is the region's principal multilateral forum for strengthening democracy, promoting human rights, and confronting shared problems such as poverty, terrorism, illegal drugs and corruption. It plays a leading role in carrying out mandates established by the hemisphere's leaders through the Summits of the Americas.

With four official languages — English, Spanish, Portuguese and French — the OAS reflects the rich diversity of the hemisphere's peoples and cultures. It is made up of 35 member states: the independent nations of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. The government of Honduras, a member state, has been suspended from participation as a result of recent political events; thus only 34 countries participate actively. Nations from other parts of the world participate as permanent observers, which allow them to closely follow the issues that are critical to the Americas.

The member countries set major policies and goals through the General Assembly, which gathers the hemisphere's ministers of foreign affairs once a year in regular session. Ongoing actions are guided by the Permanent Council, made up of ambassadors appointed by the member states.

The OAS General Secretariat carries out the programs and policies set by the political bodies. Secretary General José Miguel

Insulza, who took office in May 2005, restructured the General Secretariat so the priorities of the member states could be addressed more effectively. Four specialized secretariats coordinate OAS efforts in several broad areas:

- Secretariat for Multidimensional Security – Coordinates OAS actions against terrorism, illegal drugs and other threats to public security.
- Secretariat for Political Affairs - Directs efforts to promote democracy, strengthen democratic governance and prevent democratic crises.
- Executive Secretariat for Integral Development – Includes departments that promote social development, sustainable development, trade and tourism, and education, culture, science and technology. It also handles follow-up to the region's ministerial meetings.
- Secretariat for Administration and Finance – Provides support services to the General Secretariat, in areas that include human resources, information and technology, and budgetary affairs.
- Secretariat for Legal Affairs – Promotes legal cooperation among the member states by helping to develop and implement international treaties.

Other offices and agencies – such as the Inter-American human rights bodies and the Summits of the Americas Department – report directly to the OAS Secretary General. The Assistant Secretary General also oversees various administrative areas and specialized units, including the secretariats of the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Inter-American Children's Institute, the Inter-American Committee on Ports and the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission.



Background on the Topic

Economic Mobility:



Indigenous people suffer from a lack of economic mobility, that is, they are often forced to live from day to day concerned only with survival. Of prime importance, is producing enough food for the community to eat, ensuring access to shelter, water and other basic goods. Indigenous groups are generally community oriented insofar as they all work together to ensure their survival. Women tend to work long hours; they work alongside the men farming, and are also responsible for all household chores including; caring for children, cooking and cleaning, and producing clothing and other household items. While the man's day may end at sundown, the woman's job continues into the evening. Children must also do their part to ensure the communities survival.



Children as young as five are often required to help farm, by planting seeds, removing weeds, and watering and collecting crops. Children twelve and older may be responsible for caring for their younger siblings.

Discrimination:

Indigenous populations tend to have darker skin and are therefore easily identified and are thus easy targets for discrimination. Indigenous populations face discrimination in every aspect of life. They are not given the opportunity to participate, fully, in the political process. Governments, tend to value the opinions of non-indigenous populations more. This is significant because, in many countries the indigenous population tends to be large if not a majority, for example in Bolivia 71 % of the population is Indigenous and in Guatemala 66% of the population is Indigenous. Discrimination against indigenous women is even greater because of gender.

Access to Education:

Indigenous populations suffer from decreased access to education. In Latin America, indigenous persons often speak a native language which is different than the official language of their country. Most governments only provide education in the official language. Additionally, there are many more and better schools in the major cities, while the indigenous people tend to live in the country side away from most of the schools. A typical school in the Andean countryside lacks basic equipment, such as text books, pens, pencils, chalkboards and even teachers. Furthermore, the fact that indigenous child have to work on their



families farms means they often do not have time to go to school. Female children in particular, receive less schooling because of gender inequality. An average indigenous male in Bolivia will not receive more than a third or fourth grade education; with females receive one to two years less education.

Possible Solutions

During GW CIA XIV, the members of the Organization of American States (OAS) will work to create a more equal society in the Americas, by improving the Rights of Indigenous Women and Children. According to statistics from the World Bank, indigenous people in Latin America have made little economic and social progress in the last decade; they still struggle with poverty, limited access to education, and discrimination. Even though their rights have been recognized by the United Nations in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, they remain unable to exercise these rights. Because of this, indigenous populations need more effective solutions to improve their lives and achieve equal rights. The following are some possible solutions for the body to consider:

Economic Mobility

The current economic reality, faced by indigenous peoples can only be changed by enabling indigenous populations to make a decent living. This can be accomplished by investing in infrastructure development projects and increasing access to credit.

Access to Education

Limited access to education translates into very low incomes and few employment opportunities. Because we want indigenous groups to have better lives, governments

need to develop projects that can improve the quality of the education received by indigenous populations. Quality, bilingual schools need to be located close to where indigenous populations live and work. School schedules should also take into account the work schedules of indigenous children so as to avoid having children drop out of school in order to help out at home or on the farm.

Discrimination

Today, one of the most common examples of discrimination against indigenous groups is seen in the political sector. Even though indigenous populations now have more representation in the political processes, they still are being discriminated against and are not given the opportunity to participate fully in the process. Insofar as indigenous groups do not have equivalent access to the political process, elected officials will value the rights and desires of indigenous people less because they are not as important a part of the electoral process as those who are more involved in the political process. Projects that include policies of assimilation and integration (within the political sphere) must be developed.

Conclusion

In order for these plans and programs to be carried out, each nation should be well informed about the situations faced by indigenous populations. By creating specific programs to strengthen education systems, provide for economic development, and limit discrimination, the lives of indigenous populations will improve, making the Millennium Development Goals a reality among the indigenous peoples of the Americas.



Questions to Consider

1. Why are indigenous populations discriminated against in every aspect of life?
2. Why are indigenous populations not given the opportunity to participate, fully, in the political process?
3. What are the Millennium Development Goals in the Americas? What should be done to ensure these goals are met? Should these goals be readjusted?
4. Indigenous groups are generally community oriented in so far as they all work together to ensure their survival. What effect does being community oriented have on this problem?
5. What factors result in decreased access to education amongst indigenous populations?
6. Most of the governments in Latin America only provide education in the official language. What is the Bilingual Literacy Programme of Bolivia? Has the OAS or the UN helped to create similar programs in other countries in the region?
7. Should the call to help Indigenous Women and Children in Latin America be lead by the OAS or should it be each nation's own responsibility?
8. The UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. What rights are ensured by the Declaration? What is the significance of the Declaration?



Helpful Websites

Organization of American States (OAS):

<http://www.oas.org>

United Nations (UN):

<http://www.un.org/English>

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html>

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/-](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/)

Eighth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_eighth.html

Indigenous Children and Youth:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/children.html>

Indigenous Women:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/women.html>

Gender and Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/gender_briefingnote6.pdf

Ensuring the rights of Indigenous Children:

http://www.unicef.at/fileadmin/medien/pdf/Digest11_FINALEnglish.pdf



Works Cited

Rights of Indigenous Women and Children in Latin America document prepared for the United Nations Association by Barnett Koven, available upon request to Barnett Koven

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html>

Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Human Development in Latin America: 1994-2004

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/0,,contentMDK:20505834~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258554,00.html>

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

<http://www.ifad.org/media/events/2009/ip.htm>

Advancing the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/cache/offonce/News/pid/2717;jsessionid=6ED2BA61E0BA298DEA0A50B9D1043B74>

Economic opportunities for indigenous peoples in Latin America

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/Synthesis_ConferenceEdition_FINAL.pdf

