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Roundtable:
Indigenous Peoples, Sustainable Urban Development with Culture and Identity

Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration

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Brief Bio

Dr Anne-Marie Tupuola is of Samoan descent born in New Zealand with indigenous and ancestral ties to Samoa's villages of Lotofaga, Tufuiopa and Vaigaga.

She specialises and has published extensively in the areas of human development, adolescent psychology, youth studies, gender studies, indigenous health and well-being, research methods, scholarship and epistemologies.

Anne-Marie has been affiliated with Columbia, Harvard and New York Universities as a Fulbright Senior Scholar and was Visiting Professor and Visiting Scholar at New York University and Teachers College, Columbia University where she was awarded an Outstanding Teachers Award.

Dr Tupuola currently resides in London, UK and is Principal of Global Edge Research, an independent scholar, consultant, researcher, lecturer and freelance writer.
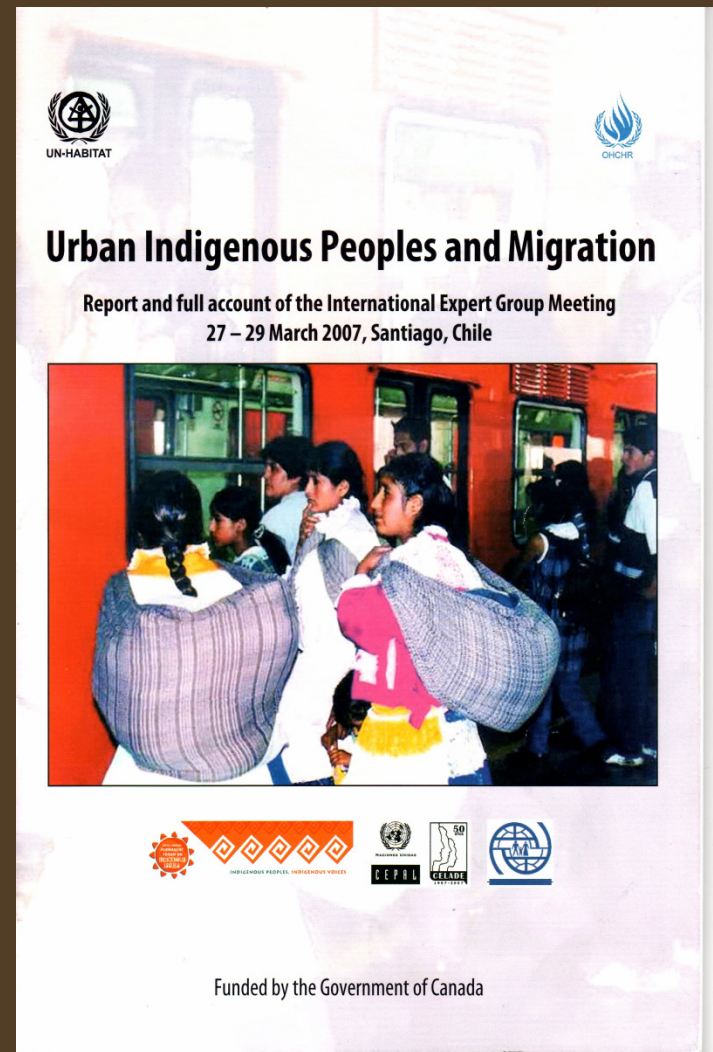
Context

"Indigenous peoples should not be seen as divided between urban and rural, but rather as connected peoples with common cultural identities." [i]
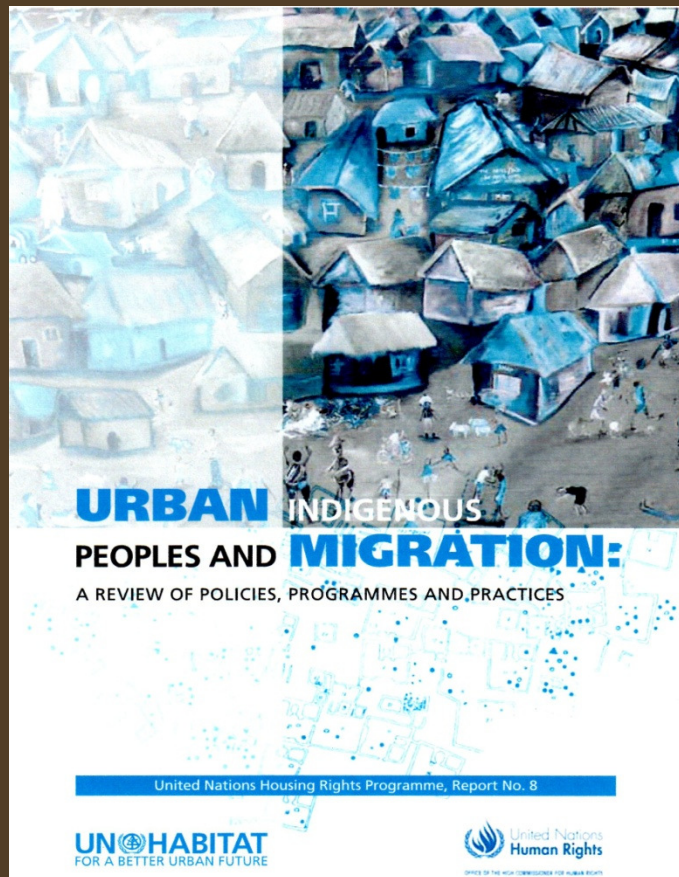
- Urbanisation is a reality for many indigenous peoples. However, this urban reality is not well documented nor fully understood within appropriate indigenous contexts.

- The urban migration process of indigenous peoples has received increasing interest. However, the process of urban migration itself is often simplified with much attention paid to the rural-urban migration process.

- Some indigenous peoples are moving from one urban location to another and some generations of indigenous peoples have only ever lived in the city.

EGM, Santiago, Chile, March 2007

- Recognition of human rights.

- Improve the livelihood, living conditions, well-being and quality of life of indigenous peoples.

- Self-sufficiency, self-determination and governance and greater inclusion and participation of indigenous peoples in the decision-making process.

- Examine and analyse the urban experiences of indigenous peoples within an indigenous holistic framework.

UN-HABITAT

OHCHR

Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration

Report and full account of the International Expert Group Meeting
27 – 29 March 2007, Santiago, Chile

Funded by the Government of Canada

Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration Report

- Issues, debates at the EGM shaped, facilitated and guided the direction and methodology.

- Increasing numbers of indigenous peoples are migrating to and settling in urban areas.

- Complex and paradoxical nature of urban migration processes and the so-called 'urban dream'.

Urban Migration

Torika Bolatagici, Self Portrait, 2001

- Urban migration processes vary.

- Caution against simplifying urban migration processes.

- Heterogeneous experience for indigenous peoples.

The nature of the migration process is difficult to define in a single framework… as urban indigenous people's identities become increasingly fluid, the tendency to compartmentalise the migration experience according to push-pull factors, rural or urban, voluntary or forced, becomes difficult and less clear cut. [ii]

Urbanisation

- Urbanisation is not new to indigenous peoples.

- Caution against overstating the rural connections of indigenous peoples at the cost of undervaluing their urban counterparts.

- Recognise and acknowledge the number of indigenous peoples who have always lived in the city.

Policy makers often think of Indigenous Peoples as living in the country-side, …. It often comes as a big surprise when they discover that huge numbers of Indigenous Peoples reside in major cities... urbanization has been around since time immemorial for many Indigenous Peoples – for example, think about the ancient urbanization of Central and South America and Michu Pichu [sic] in Peru comes to mind. [iii]

...it is equally important to recognize that increasingly many members of indigenous peoples… have known no other home than the urban centres and there needs to be space within the dialogue to consider their views and issues. The failure to do so would exclude a large (and growing) number of indigenous peoples. [iv]

Challenges

- Feminisation of poverty.[v]

- Violation of land rights.

- Myth of the urban dream.

- Misappropriation and exploitation of indigenous cultures, skills and wares.

- Discrimination (cultural, racial, gender and disability), inequality and intra-cultural identity politics.

…while the city can offer economic mobility and social development... [it can] also generate and intensify social exclusion, limiting the benefits of urban life to... indigenous peoples… As such, the human rights of indigenous peoples, particularly regarding their living conditions and quality of life, are often compromised. [vi]

…in urban cities, indigenous peoples rely on the informal sector to market their wares which often amounts to the commoditisation of indigenous culture and skills… Even though it is the indigenous cultures that are advertised to lure and entice tourists, their remuneration does not reflect this... [vii]

Resilience and Ingenuity of Urban Indigenous Peoples

- Young people illustrate the possibility to preserve indigenous identities while maximising the benefits of urban society.

- Indigenous youth, through indigenous popular culture, are self-appointed cultural custodians to protect the integrity and ownership of indigenous cultures, skills, knowledge and traditions.

- Effective best practices and programmes by indigenous peoples that adopt pro-active, rights based and holistic strategies to improve the education, health, livelihood, quality of life and economic capacity of indigenous peoples.

Torika Bolatagici, untitled, 1999

Recommendations

"Why many initiatives have proven unsuccessful relates to the fact that they were developed for the people, not with the people" [viii]

- Urbanisation is a phenomenon that governments, local authorities and States have to recognise to ensure that indigenous peoples are not forcibly removed or driven from their homelands, nor subject to discrimination once in urban areas.

- The diversity of indigenous peoples in urban areas must be recognised. Indigenous peoples are not a static population but have increasingly multiple identities.

- Policy must comply with the principles of the ILO Convention no. 169 and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to eliminate discrimination, inequality and the violation of human rights of indigenous peoples in urban areas.

- Governments and local authorities must consult with and ensure the participation of indigenous peoples at all phases of policy formulation process. They must also ratify and comply with the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention no. 169 to ensure indigenous peoples are equal partners in the decision-making process and they comply with free, prior and informed consent on all matters that concern and affect indigenous peoples in urban areas.

Recommendations

- Governments must take steps to provide the necessary resources so that indigenous peoples can achieve the full and progressive realisation of their rights to adequate housing, to eliminate homelessness and to provide necessary services, especially for the disabled, women and youth.

- Systems of accountability should be considered as part of policy development to address non-compliance with national and international rights of indigenous peoples.

- Holistic frameworks should be recognised and implemented so that housing, health, employment and education are not assessed in isolation. Outcomes should be long term.

- Indigenous peoples should not be seen as divided between urban and rural, but rather as people with rights and a common identity, adapting to changing circumstances and environments.

References/Notes

References:

UN-Habitat and OHCHR, (2007). "Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration: Report and full account of the International Expert Group Meeting 27-29 March 2007, Santiago, Chile", Nairobi: UN-Habitat.

UN-Habitat and OHCHR, (2010). "Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration: A Review of Policies, Programmes and Practices", Nairobi: UN-Habitat.

Notes:

i.   UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2010: xiii.
ii. UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2010: 2.
iii. Littlechild, 2007: 1 cited in UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2010: 9.
iv. UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2007: 10.
v.   Brite Scholz (2005) in UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2010.
vi. UN Doc PFII/2006/WS.3/9: p.2; UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2010: 23.
vii. Kipuri, 2007: 8 cited in UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2010: 25.
viii. Rust, 2009: 2 cited in UN-Habitat and OHCHR, 2010: 29.