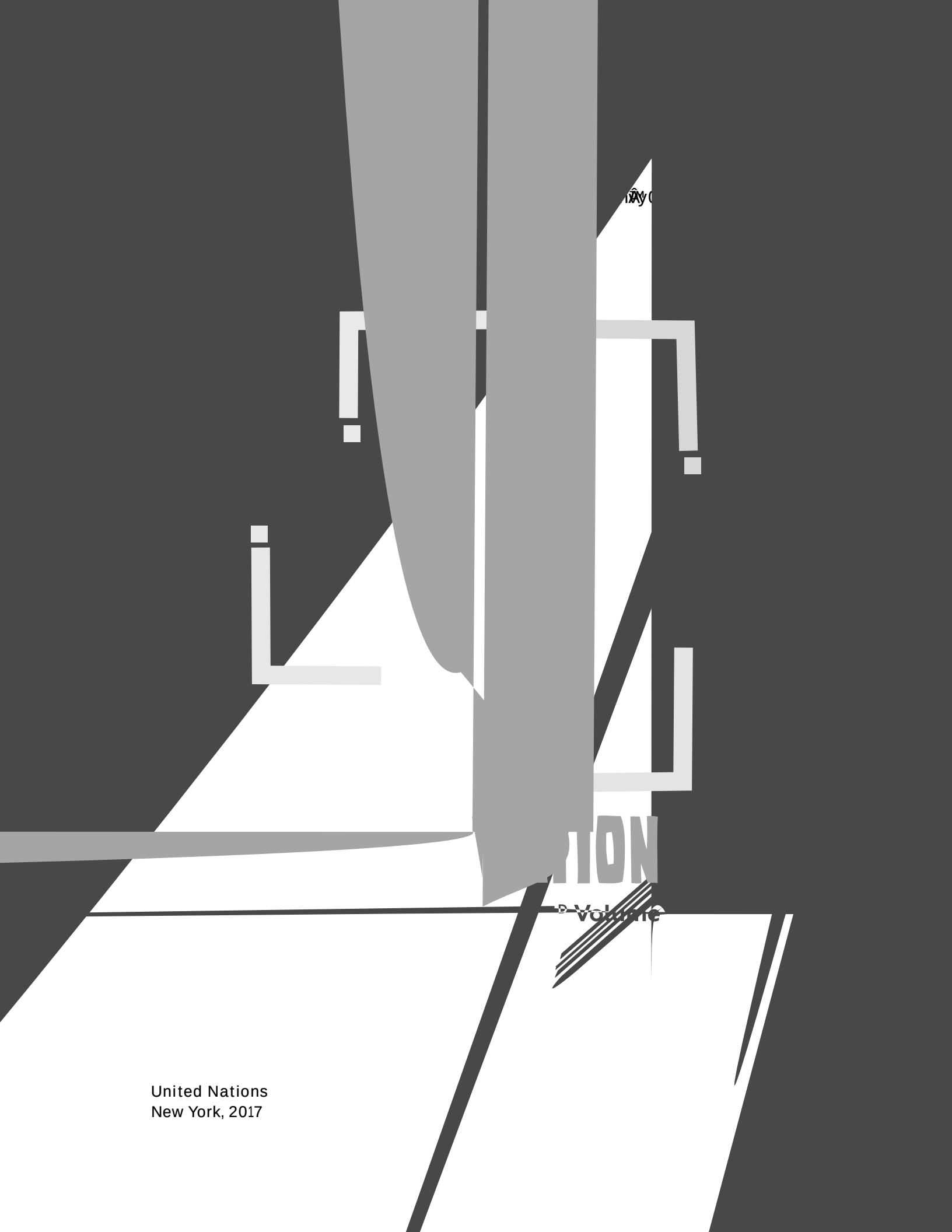


United Nations
New York, 2017

Contents

Acknowledgements iv

FOREWORD v

OVERVIEW 3

About this publication 9

CHAPTER 1: Indigenous peoples and education in the African region 15

Introduction 15

Indigenous peoples and education in the African region 16

Main findings 31

Recommendations 32

References 35

CHAPTER 2: Indigenous peoples and education in the Arctic region 41

Introduction 41

The Arctic region 42

Indigenous peoples and education in the Arctic region 45

Main findings 59

Recommendations 66

References 68

CHAPTER 3: Indigenous peoples and education in Asia 77

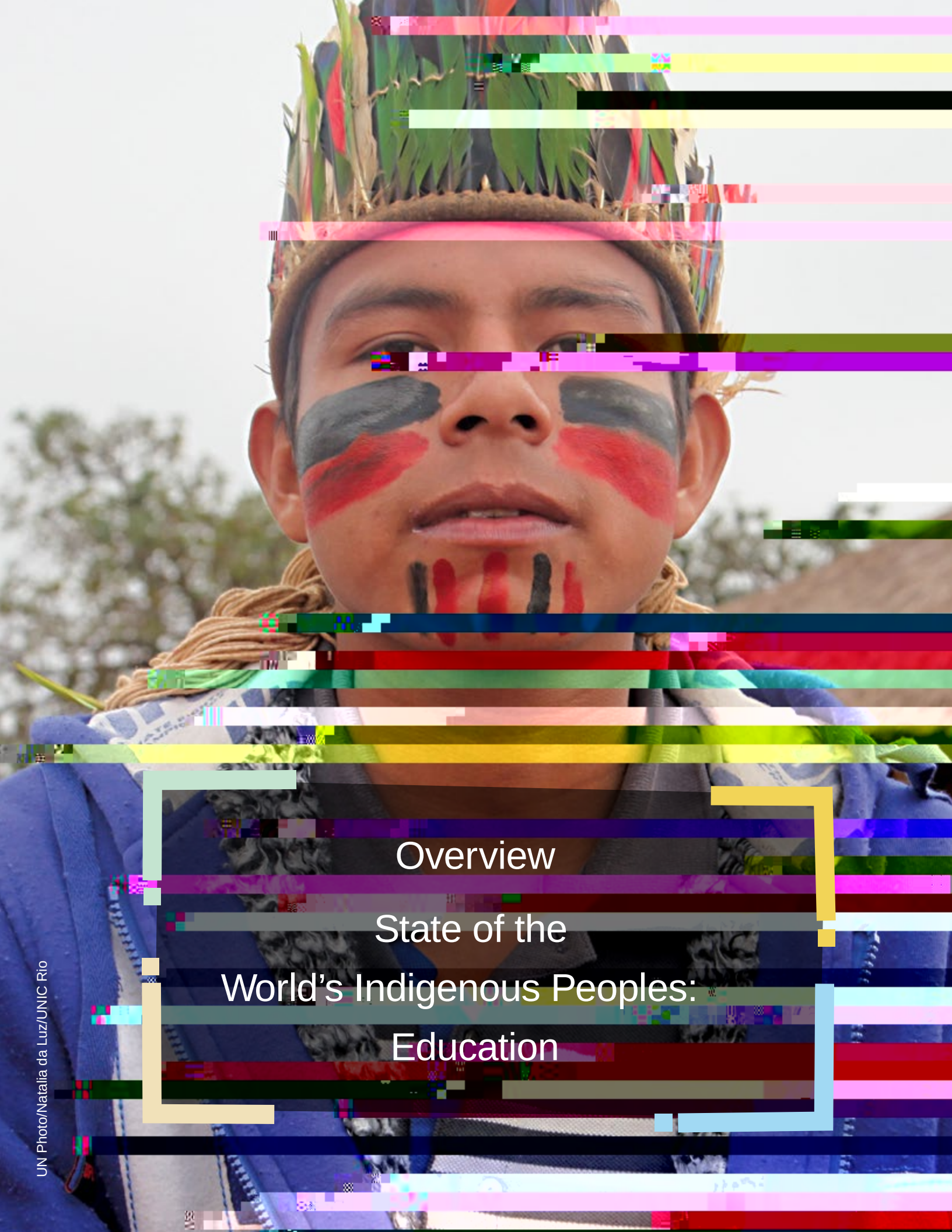
Introduction 77

Indigenous peoples and education in the Asian region

the situation of indigenous peoples and their right to education. It describes the different contextual backgrounds and policy impacts on indigenous peoples, faced with the challenge of embracing mainstream education, while at the same time revitalizing their own languages and cultures.

Ten years has passed since the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted, yet many challenges remain. There are alarming reports of indigenous languages in danger of extinction. Conservative estimates suggest that more than half of the world's 6,700 languages will become extinct by 2100 and the majority of the languages under threat are indigenous languages. This publication provides concrete actions to secure the identity, languages and cultures of indigenous peoples, and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect.

The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development includes explicit consideration of indigenous peoples, and pays particular attention to education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 focuses on ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. If we want to achieve this goal is necessary to ensure equal access to education for indigenous children, including children with disabilities. I hope that this publication helps readers to better understand where we are, so that this Goal can be reached.



Overview State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Education

UN Photo/Natalia da Luz/UNIC Rio

OVERVIEW

While there are differences within and between indigenous peoples, countries and regions, the regional reports included in the present publication reveal almost universal patterns of violation of indigenous peoples' rights. Some of the key issues identified across regions are described below.

Non-recognition of indigenous knowledge and learning systems

Indigenous values, institutions, practices and economies are often based on sustainable management of natural resources. Along similar lines, indigenous peoples have their own methods of knowledge transmission, based on oral traditions. When States and religious organizations developed frameworks of formal education for indigenous peoples, often, either indigenous cultures, languages and practices were ignored or their preservation was discouraged. In consequence, such preservation was confined to the domestic sphere or suppressed entirely, resulting in the disruption of the transmission of languages, cultural values and practices. Globally, formal education has contributed to the loss of both indigenous languages and traditional bodies of knowledge and lifestyles.

Education as a vehicle for assimilation

Formal education for indigenous peoples has often been conceived as a means of their assimilation into mainstream national society. In the worst cases, entire peoples experienced forced removal of their children or their forced enrolment in residential schools, where widespread abuse of indigenous children was practised. In 2015, upon receiving the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, entitled Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future ,[3] the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, stated that the Indian residential school system had had "a profoundly lasting and damaging impact on indigenous culture, heritage and language".[4] The accounts presented here are not of distant events but rather of contemporary traumatic experiences, with whose consequences thousands of communities are still struggling to cope. The wounds are so deep that learning about the past in the classroom may even lead to re-traumatization.

Marginalization of indigenous peoples in formal education

Many regions lack the disaggregated data needed to establish the exact dimensions of the discrimination and marginalization undergone by indigenous peoples. Where data does exist, they reveal a pattern of persisting disparities between indigenous peoples and the non-indigenous population in all the regions of the world with respect to educational access, retention and achievement. Furthermore, cultural perceptions of gender roles and gender-based discrimination also influence the patterns of exclusion and inclusion.

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3 Toronto, Ontario, James Lorimer and Company, 2015.

4 Statement issued on 15 December 2015.

Towards an education that strengthens indigenous peoples' rights

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However, the transformation of education from an instrument of assimilation and integration into a means of self-determination is a multidimensional and complex long-term process, which advances at a pace that depends on the conditions of the region, country and community concerned.

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In the Russian Federation, there is currently no instruction provided in the languages of the small-numbered indigenous peoples, which are taught as optional subjects only. Their teaching is usually organized in local schools in the areas where indigenous peoples reside, including boarding and nomadic schools. Out of 40 indigenous languages in the north, only 23 are taught as a compulsory subject. Five are taught as an optional subject, while the rest are not taught at all. The federal statistics service and the federal education ministry collect information on the use of languages in education based on the data from the regions. The ministry does not collect data on ethnicity, and only estimates can be produced on the number of students who are learning their own language (Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 40-42).

During academic year 2001-02, a total of 20,406 students in 284 schools had been taught indigenous languages as a compulsory subject. Indigenous languages were taught to 14,115 students in 215 schools in 2012-13; and in the same period, the number of indigenous students who were learning their language as a subject decreased from 48.7 to 41.5 per cent. The number is further decreasing owing primarily to the closure of small ungraded schools. From 2001-02 to 2012-13, the number of students who were learning their language as an optional subject doubled, including in facilities of additional education. A change in the number of students learning their language as a compulsory subject and those learning their language as an optional subject might be an outcome of education reform (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 119, 142 and 438; Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 40-42).

The linguistic and educational needs of indigenous peoples who live outside their communities, in towns and urban settlements, are not addressed. They constitute approximately one third of the entire indigenous population in the country (World Bank, 2014, p. viii). In urban areas, the number of indigenous students who can learn their languages is very small (Arefiev, 2014, pp. 120-123). Moreover, in situations where language classes are available at urban schools, language instruction is considered an extracurricular activity is taught as an optional subject for one hour per week. To take advantage of this opportunity, children are obliged to stay after school in study circles or additional education establishments.

The low social status of indigenous languages provides no incentives for language learning. Most students lack a linguistic environment at home and possess no prior knowledge of an indigenous language. They must therefore learn an indigenous language as a foreign language. Among those with access to language learning, only a few will have acquired good language competence or even communicative skills upon school completion, an outcome that is due partly to ine□ective methodology (Dijanskii and others, 2005, pp. 230-233).

Governance, policies and legislation

Legislation

The Russian Constitution recognizes the right to education. This right is guaranteed through universal and free-of-charge access to preschool, primary and secondary general and professional education within public educational institutions and enterprises. The State also guarantees free access to higher education on a competitive basis.[131]

The Russian Federation has committed to the universally recognized principles and norms of international law in protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have the right to receive state support for education of the younger generations, while considering the specific characteristics of their traditional livelihoods. They also have the right to create their own study groups for teaching traditional economic activities and trades.[132]

Educational policy, education reform

Since 2001, the modernization of education has become a policy goal, with general education being financed from regional and municipal budgets. Over the past few years, competition over federal funding needed to modernize the system of education-related governance has led regional authorities to introduce performance-based teacher salaries and per-student school financing (Nikolaev and Chugunov, 2012, pp. 27-31).

In 2001, ungraded schools constituted 70 per cent of all schools and accounted for 30 per cent of students and 40 per cent of teachers.[133] However, since 2001, the number of school-age children in the Russian Federation has dropped by almost half. The restructuring of the school system through "optimization" of regional education systems,

and core curricula that define the scope (number of hours) and structure (list of subjects) of studies and facilitate their implementation. While the educational programmes can still include multicultural subjects, the regional education agencies have lost their power to make those subjects compulsory and educational establishments enjoy relative autonomy in determining the content and methods of education (Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 38-40).

If there is sufficient parental demand, schools will provide educational services and decide on the language of instruction and the teaching of multicultural subjects. The third sample syllabus of the federal basic curriculum applies to schools where native language and literature are taught as subjects; and the fourth applies to schools offering indigenous language instruction. Usually, three to five hours per week are allotted to indigenous language learning in the republics and from one to three hours per week are allotted in autonomous districts and other regions (Zamyatin, 2012, pp. 36-37 and 40-42).

Recently, nation-building was officially declared to be the first goal of the policy of nationalities and the maintenance and development of multicultural diversity were declared to constitute the second.[134] Under education policy, the unity of the educational space is emphasized in conjunction with the protection and cultivation of the multicultural traditions of the peoples of the Russian Federation, including those traditions' characteristic features.[135] The promotion of the dominant language and a unified vision of history attest to the aim of achieving homogenization of the population.[136]

Institutional and structural support

Institutional support

Federal law provides significant support for the teaching of non-Russian languages and other specifically ethnic or cultural subjects.[137] In ethnically defined regions, this is achieved through the implementation of regional programmes targeted at financing, inter alia, for the purchase of textbooks, training manuals and dictionaries, and for the salaries and, in some cases, the bonuses of teachers with knowledge of languages. Research institutions, such as the Institute of Education of the Small-numbered Indigenous Peoples at the Russian Academy of Education and the Institute of National Schools of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), have developed multicultural content and new modalities for education.

134 Strategy of the State Nationalities Policy of 19 December 2012.

135 Article 3 of the federal law of 29 December 2012.

136 Government order of 3 August 2006; Zamyatin (2012), pp. 29-30.

137 Article 263 of the Federal law of 6 October 1999; article 8 of the Federal law of 29 December 2012.

One means of ensuring continuity between secondary and tertiary education is to produce qualified teachers. The training of indigenous teachers for work in preschool, schools and vocational institutions has been formally implemented in the Institute of

professional teacher training and provision of schools with modern equipment encompassing computerization and Internet access. The action plan also enabled distance learning to be implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science.[138]

Some international funding is available, for example, through a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO-funded project entitled "Promoting the literacy of indigenous pupils through capacity building among nomadic peoples of the north of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)" and a World Bank-funded

responsiveness of their authorities. In many instances, there is a lack of qualified teachers and up-to-date teaching materials. Specialized public bodies at the federal level provide structural support for coordinated e□orts across regions; international support for e□orts at the regional and national levels is also important in this regard.

In the Russian Federation, the Constitution and national legislation set out the rights of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the north. At the same time, the level of education of indigenous peoples is lower than the average, and indigenous students have little or no opportunities for learning their own languages. Many indigenous peoples must face the fact that their ancestral language and traditional values have or are in danger of being lost. Racism and xenophobia in society at large as well as dominant language ideologies reinforce stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards indigenous education.

While some good school models do exist in the Russian Federation, inadequate development of appropriate preschool facilities for indigenous children remains an issue. The nomadic kindergarten-school model represents an important contribution to the education of nomadic boys and girls.

Indigenous peoples must be encouraged to participate and to be involved in decision-making with regard to the development and implementation of educational programmes, curricula and school administration.

Recommendations

1. The Government should provide disaggregated data on the number of students who attend small ungraded schools, nomadic schools and boarding schools across the regions. These schools provide the opportunity for children to remain in their communities and receive an education locally. The use of boarding schools for nomadic indigenous children should be minimized;
2. Indigenous peoples must be encouraged to participate and to be involved in decision-making about the development and implementation of educational programmes, curricula and school administration. Indigenous parents need to be made aware of their right to request the inclusion of indigenous languages and other ethnocultural subject-matter;
3. There is a need to raise awareness among indigenous peoples of the opportunities for learning their own languages and to encourage the value of bilingualism. Authorities should ensure that education reform does not result in the diminishment of ethnically oriented education and the decrease of number of small ungraded schools which support indigenous students.

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Relevant legislation and instruments

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Concept of the National Education Policy of the Russian Federation, as approved by order No. 201 of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation of 3 August 2006

Concept of the sustainable development of the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east of the Russian Federation, as approved by decree No. 132 of the Government of the Russian Federation of 4 February 2009

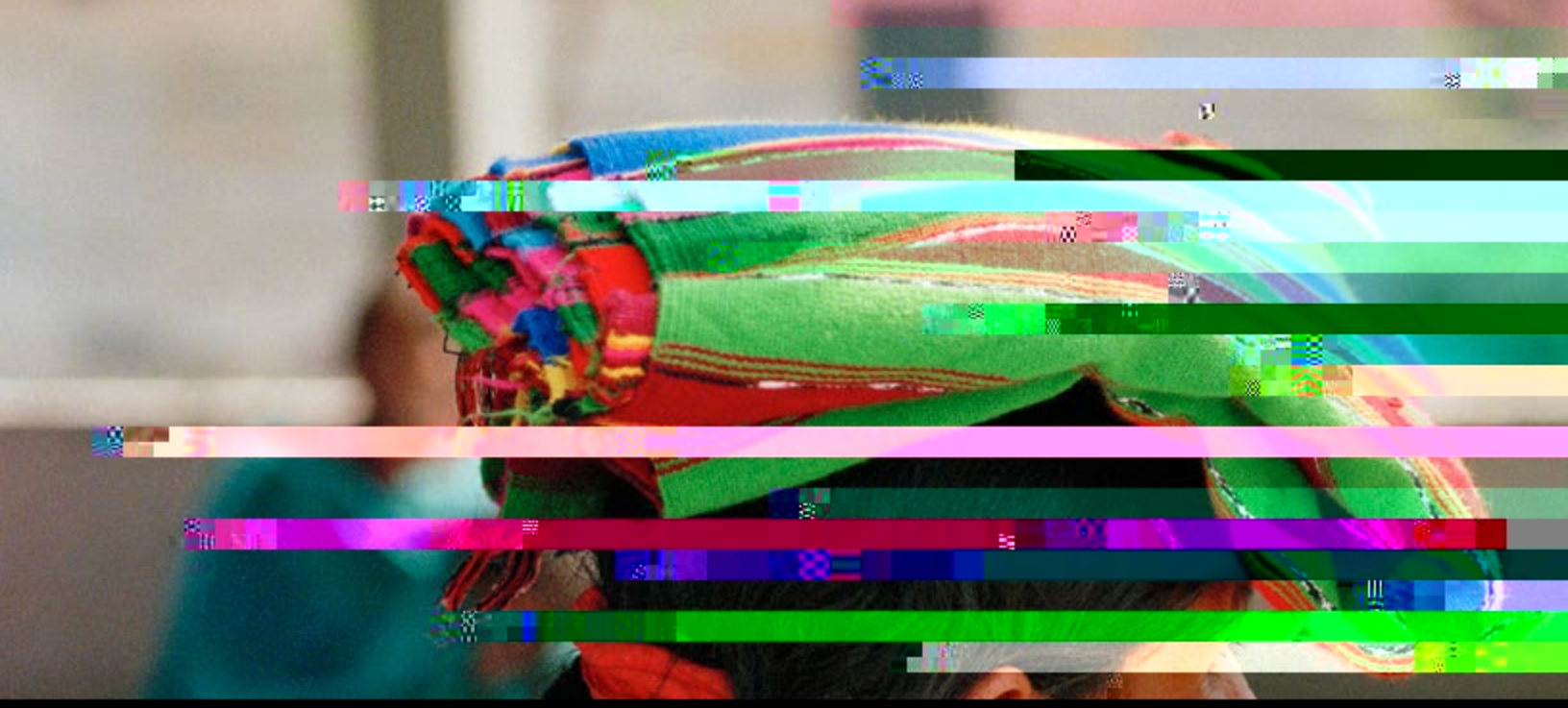
Decree No. 871 of the Government of the Russian Federation on the restructuring of

Europe on 10 November 1994 and opened for signature by the member States of the Council of Europe on 1 February 1995. Date of signature by the Russian Federation: 28 February 1996; date of ratification by the Russian Federation: 21 August 1998

Framework of measures taken in the Russian Federation for 2011-2014 in connection with the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, as approved by order No. 2455 of the Government of the Russian Federation of 28 December 2010

Law No. 1807-I of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic on the languages of the peoples of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of 25 October 1991

Resolution CM/ResCMN(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the Russian Federation of 30 April 2013



Conclusion

State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Education

UN Photo

conclusion

re-traumatization in the classroom reinforce and perpetuate stigmatization of indigenous children. A wide range of economic, social, cultural and political obstacles need be addressed holistically to enable success in learning and to promote systemic change in the areas of education legislation and governance, human resources, curriculum and assessment based on indigenous priorities and aspirations.

Indigenous peoples' right to education is affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,[139] and the rights to education and culture are protected in a variety of international instruments including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights,[140] the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;[141] the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;[142] the Convention on the Rights of the Child;[143] the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;[144] the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107) of the International Labour Organization;[145] and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization,[146] as well as the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) of the International Labour Organization.[147] Furthermore, indigenous peoples' right to education is also increasingly recognized in national legislation.

Quality of education, as considered in articles 26 and 28 of ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), remains below desired levels for the vast majority of indigenous communities. Access and quality disparities between indigenous peoples and their non-indigenous counterparts, which are intensified in the upper levels of

degrees and are able to take advantage of opportunities generated by the increasingly information-based and globalized economy.

Support for education for indigenous peoples should encompass pursuit of two major goals, which in some cases may be conflicting. The first goal should be to provide indigenous children and youth with full access to the educational system, as a means of ensuring their social inclusion and that they are considered valuable members of mainstream society. The second goal should be to foster and preserve their sense of indigenous identity by implementing culturally appropriate strategies focused specifically on the issues that they face as indigenous peoples — and in particular because of that identity — while attempting to access the various levels of education. Although most formal processes of learning are based on non-indigenous values and knowledge systems, assimilation through educational integration must be avoided. Indeed, many indigenous peoples have come to see formal education as a mechanism for eradicating their cultures, languages and ways of life.

Assimilationist educational policies have often triggered cultural and generational conflicts between youth and elders, and threatened the social cohesion of indigenous communities. The gradual loss of the traditional identity of indigenous youth, which has never been fully replaced by a sense of belonging to the dominant national society, is an important determinant of their high rates of substance abuse and suicide. Colonization has entailed a denial of indigenous peoples' intellectual capacity, the benchmark by which academic qualifications and competencies are measured. Such standards are grounded in implicit, untested perceptions, and as dictated by those standards, indigenous peoples are expected to acquire skills they are assumed to lack, rather than to build on the strengths and real assets that they possess. Indigenous peoples are collectively the treasure bearers of much-needed experiential knowledge, and hold the potential to articulate visions of the future of education and development. They are not passive recipients of aid and external interventions. Instead, their own worldviews and pedagogies should be accepted to enable them to exert an influence over educational processes and systems. Educational reformers therefore have much to do to unpack the long-term e□ects of colonization, and to lead the way towards national reconciliation.

In the Arctic region, owing to historical cultural domination and uneven patterns of education attainment, many indigenous self-governing institutions still rely on external civil servants to fill many of their positions (see chap. II). Nonetheless, the role of traditional cultures in education has improved in the past few decades. Positive changes in governance, policies and legislation have been implemented thanks to the lobbying of an e□ective indigenous leadership. Adoption by the State of regulations that allow for teachers to be evaluated based on cultural standards is a good example of formalizing recognition of indigenous languages and cultures. To achieve educational decolonization, indigenous communities will be required to achieve the professional capacity to

The Pacific region offers encouraging examples of language immersion and revitalization programmes in secondary education, as well as well as development of culturally adequate curricula. Higher education and research have become an important focus for indigenous peoples in the Pacific who view higher education and research as a means of protecting their cultures and engaging their communities in knowledge production. While the building of indigenous research capacity remains a challenge, it is also seen as a step necessary to prevent the Pacific indigenous space from remaining the preserve of non-indigenous researchers, scholars and authors. Building qualifications in higher education alongside research capacity is one of the many challenges faced by indigenous peoples in Pacific economies that rely heavily on knowledge and technology innovation.

In the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia, and Central and Eastern Europe, a certain flexibility exists in respect of accommodating cultural and linguistic diversity in curricula at both the state and local levels. Similarly, there are some schools, including nomadic schools, that have adapted to diverse community situations. However, indigenous languages are taught mainly in the lower grades as an optional subject, which does not count in final examinations and therefore does not play a substantive role in the opening up of career and employment opportunities. Further, the linguistic and educational needs of indigenous peoples who live outside their traditional communities are not addressed. Although legislative provisions allow for the establishment of private educational institutions, indigenous peoples do not have the resources to avail themselves of such opportunities.

Respectful and appropriate representation of indigenous identities in the content of curricula is an effective means of contributing to the retention and intergenerational transmission of culture and language. The development of any education policies must include consultations with indigenous communities and representative bodies elected by the members of those communities. Indigenous peoples need to play a proactive role in designing, implementing and improving the kind of educational systems that work best for them and their children. The formulation of the content of textbooks by indigenous experts, the training and recruitment of teachers, the implementation of culturally responsive programmes of bi- and multilingual education for children and

The lack of indigenous scholars and researchers in the top echelons of academic institutions, as well as the absence of culturally appropriate teacher training and assessment institutions, leads ultimately to a deficit in the educational process. Indigenous scholars and researchers who support knowledge exchange in the collaborative networks of tertiary education institutions are needed to break new ground as well as set good examples for future indigenous learners.

In addition to the academic community, non-governmental organizations, international agencies and indigenous peoples' organizations need to work together closely — and strategically — and in alignment with Governments in order to enable further harmonization among the numerous donor-assisted education projects targeting indigenous peoples. The coordination and collaboration among different implementing and funding organizations and Governments call for comprehensive and better-articulated policy guidelines. Overarching principles, goals and common platforms for knowledge generation and sharing become particularly important given the enormous diversity of the contexts within which indigenous peoples live.

As stated throughout this publication, States play a crucial role in the quest for quality education for indigenous peoples. States are responsible for (a) the provision of the census data, country-specific statistics and data disaggregated by ethnicity and gender that are needed to portray accurately the situation of indigenous peoples in education and (b) implementation of responsive, accountable and inclusive policies designed to facilitate enhanced delivery of educational goods and services. In the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 22 and 23 September 2014,[148] Member States of the United Nations committed to working with indigenous peoples to disaggregate data to better address the situation and needs of indigenous peoples. States need to implement positive national educational policy provisions and address any reasons for non-implementation. Financial and human resource mobilization is needed to support indigenous education. To assist indigenous communities in fulfilling their educational needs and exercise their rights, States must strengthen and refine the existing educational policies that are weak, inconsistent or problematic. By educating the public on the importance of indigenous education, Governments will enlist stronger support for their efforts.

This publication points out that official identification of indigenous peoples has a profound impact on recognition of indigenous peoples nationally and internationally. States often treat the term "indigenous peoples" as inapplicable or irrelevant to their contexts, thereby diverting attention away from the core issues that its usage internationally is meant to address. Where indigenous peoples are recognized officially, their

[148] General Assembly resolution 69/2 of Para. 10.

educational needs stand a much better chance of being included in constitutional provisions, and in laws and regulations.

States need to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to ratify international agreements such as the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization and align

"human rights-based guide" to indigenous peoples' education, to inform the policies and strategies to be pursued up to 2030.

Furthermore, the relevance of the 2030 Agenda to the issue of indigenous peoples' right to education goes beyond the specific goal on education. For example, targets 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels) and 16.10 (Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements), under Sustainable Development Goal 16, are equally meaningful.

For indigenous peoples, education is fundamental for the realization of other fundamental human rights. The right to education is also essential for development that is equitable and respectful of cultural diversity. Education is a means of reducing chronic poverty in indigenous communities and countering the entrenched discrimination faced by indigenous peoples. For women and girls, equal access to quality and culturally appropriate education is also a crucial means of ensuring their empowerment, and their full economic, social and political participation as members of their communities and States.

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