



## SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLICATIONS: INTERCULTURAL HEALTH POLICIES IN LATIN AMERICA



Historically, indigenous peoples' access to health services in Latin America has been limited due to a variety of social, economic and cultural factors. An intercultural approach to public policies, especially when promoting the inclusion and participation of indigenous people in policy design, is seen as a way to guarantee indigenous peoples' right to health according to their own customs and traditions. These policies can also successfully put indigenous rights issues on the public agenda of governments.

The following selection of publications that focus on intercultural health policies includes documents that explain how policies with an intercultural approach can be designed and implemented. Others present analysis of the status of indigenous peoples' right to health, in order to identify the challenges they face in accessing health services and offer recommendations. The publications also highlight a variety of Latin American experiences, carried out by governments as well as by civil society organisations, networks and social movements. These initiatives seek to include an intercultural approach to health while at the same time raising awareness among the population at large, helping to open spaces for participation and reflection about how best to design and implement intercultural health policy.

To learn more about how specific countries in the region are integrating an intercultural approach, see also the [ELLA Brief: Intercultural Health Policies in Latin America](#).

### ► [Best Practices in Intercultural Health](#)

This report is the result of background research that the Inter-American Development Bank conducted as part of an internal process of assessing its policy and strategy regarding indigenous health issues. It discusses the relevance of intercultural health practices to promote access to health as well as to strengthen traditional health practices, culture and lifestyles. The document presents five intercultural health experiences - from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Suriname - that are considered best practices. These cases highlight the importance of respecting indigenous peoples' own health systems to preserve their traditional lifestyle.

Full Citation: O'Neill, J., Bartlett, J., Mignone, J. 2007. *Best Practices in Intercultural Health*. Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC.



## ▶ [Health of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas](#)

This publication summarises the results of a [Pan American Health Organization](#) evaluation to assess outcomes and progress in indigenous health in 19 Latin American countries. To measure progress, an analysis of the current context of indigenous peoples' health was carried out, then countries were asked to report on the work they have been doing in indigenous health in the last decade, including in intercultural policies. While the report highlights that there has been some progress, challenges remain. In fact, in many cases achievements have been minimal, while serious limitations in effectively implementing the intercultural approach persist.

Full Citation: Pan American Health Organization. 2008. *Health of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Evaluation of Health Achievements within the Framework of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples*. PAHO, Washington, DC.

## ▶ [Indigenous Women of Latin America: Unintended Pregnancy, Unsafe Abortion, and Reproductive Health Outcomes](#)

The article highlights how indigenous communities have worse reproductive health outcomes than non-indigenous communities and face greater obstacles in accessing adequate health services. For these reasons, indigenous communities have higher morbidity and mortality risks related to unsafe abortion. This article then reviews the literature on unsafe abortion in Latin America and describes effective interventions to improve indigenous communities' reproductive health. The article also explores the circumstances, perspectives and realities lived by indigenous women of childbearing age, and offers recommendations for future intercultural policies and reforms.

Full Citation: Wurtz, H. 2012. Indigenous Women of Latin America: Unintended Pregnancy, Unsafe Abortion, and Reproductive Health Outcomes. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* 10(3) 271-282.

## ▶ [Lessons Learned in Working with Indigenous Women and Health: The Experience in Guatemala](#)

This case study focuses on one specific project, entitled 'Education and self-care in health as a means to strengthen indigenous women's participation and leadership in eight communities in Guatemala'. This experience of women's empowerment and appropriation of their own health issues generated interesting lessons learned about gender relationships in the indigenous context of the selected communities. The publication includes an assessment of the reality faced by indigenous people in Guatemala, describes project design and implementation, and concludes with key recommendations, all of which will be useful to those interested in understanding how intercultural approaches have been developed and implemented in one specific context.

Full Citation: Pan American Health Organization, Special Subcommittee on Women, Health and Development. 1997. *Lessons Learned in Working with Indigenous Women and Health: The Experience in Guatemala*. PAHO, Washington, DC.

## ▶ [Promoting Equality, Recognizing Diversity: Case Stories in Intercultural Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Indigenous People in Latin America](#)

This publication presents case studies from Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Panama that show the work carried out with Health Ministries and indigenous women's organisations and networks to implement an intercultural



health approach. The nine cases analysed highlight that governments and indigenous women’s organisations have made efforts to implement an intercultural human rights approach centered on sexual and reproductive health. The lessons learned from the Latin American experiences can be useful for other regions and countries that aim to put into practice culturally appropriate health models in public hospitals and clinics and at the community level.

Full Citation: Cline, R. (ed). 2010. *Promoting Equality, Recognizing Diversity: Case Stories in Intercultural Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Indigenous People in Latin America*. Panama City, UNFPA.

### ► [Social Agenda: Public Polices and Health Programmes for Indigenous Peoples in Latin America](#)

This chapter of the 2007 edition of the publication ‘Social Panorama of Latin America’ presents an assessment of Latin America’s health programmes and policies that focus on indigenous people. The assessment is based in large part on a survey sent by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to 16 countries in the region. In addition to reviewing the health issues facing the region’s indigenous people, the publication examines countries’ legal frameworks related to indigenous rights and their implementation of health policies, taking a particular focus on intercultural policies. The chapter concludes with an analysis of progress achieved and recommendations for the future.

Full Citation: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2007. *Social Agenda: Public Policies and Health Programmes for Indigenous People in Latin America*. In: ECLAC. *Social Panorama of Latin America*. ECLAC, Santiago de Chile.

### ► [Social Determinants of Health of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Meeting Report](#)

This report presents a summary of the exchange of ideas that took place during the Regional Meeting on Intercultural Health of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas ([Reunión Regional de Salud Intercultural de Pueblos Indígenas de los Américas](#)). The meeting aimed to bring together governments, policymakers and indigenous people in order to facilitate future implementation of policies, programmes and projects that can assess and address health inequalities. The recommendations coming out of the meeting emphasise the need for states to implement intercultural public policies as a priority for indigenous peoples’ health and overall development. The report also includes seven case studies from the region.

Full Citation: Pan American Health Organization. 2009. *Social Determinants of Health of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Meeting Report*. Regional meeting held 22-24 October 2008, Quito. PAHO, Quito.

#### CONTACT [FUNDAR](#)

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#### FIND OUT MORE FROM [ELLA](#)

To learn more about other approaches to promoting indigenous and ethnic minority rights in Latin America, read the [ELLA Guide](#), which has a full list of the knowledge materials on this theme. To learn more about other ELLA development issues, browse other [ELLA Themes](#).

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