

Cultural Survival



Partnering with Indigenous Peoples to defend their lands, languages, and cultures

May 8, 2013

PRESIDENT AND CHAIR
OF THE BOARD
Sarah Fuller

VICE CHAIR
Vincent Nmehielle
(Ikwerre)

TREASURER
Nicole Friederichs

CLERK
Jean Jackson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Karmen Ramírez Boscán
(Wayuu)

Duane Champagne
(Turtle Mountain Band of
Chippewa)

Laura Graham

Steven Heim

James Howe

Edward John
(Tl'azt'en)

Cecilia Lenk

Pia Maybury-Lewis

Les Malezer
(Gabi Gabi)

P. Ranganath Nayak

Stella Tamang
(Tamang)

Jeff Wallace

Che Wilson
(Ngāti Rangī)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Suzanne Benally
(Navajo and Santa Clara
Tewa)

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR
Mark Camp

Your Excellency Madam President of
Federative Republic of Brazil
Senhora Dilma Rousseff
Gabinete da Presidência
Palácio do Planalto
Brasília – DF

Your Excellency Dilma Rousseff,

Cultural Survival is an Indigenous Peoples' rights organization based in Cambridge, MA, USA. Cultural Survival has been following the complaints concerning the calamitous state of Indigenous health care in Brazil advanced by many Indigenous leaders and Brazilian and international associations, including the Association of Brazilian Anthropologists and the American Anthropological Association. We recognize the legitimacy of these complaints and support requests for intervention needed to resolve this serious state of affairs.

The creation of the Special Secretariat of Indigenous Health (SESAI) under the Ministry of Health (Decree 7336 of October 19, 2010) was immensely supported by indigenous organizations and leaders. Indigenous health had previously been managed by the National Health Foundation (FUNASA), since the creation of the National Indigenous Health Care Subsystem in 1999. Indigenous communities expected the new Secretariat to provide them with more effective representation, and hoped that problems in health care would now be resolved. However, in the two years since the creation of SESAI, and despite efforts to build an independent management model for the Subsystem for Indigenous Health Care, various problems have been reported. These problems involve not only the operations of the 34 Special Indigenous Health Districts (DSEI), but also the availability of even basic health assistance in territories managed by SESAI.

Reports of problems have come from various sources located in diverse regions of the country. They emphasize above all the failure of the multidisciplinary health teams to meet the basic needs of indigenous populations, due to a lack of adequate medicines,

Cultural Survival, PO Box 381569, Cambridge, MA 02238 USA

2769 Iris Avenue, Suite 101, Boulder CO 80304 USA

5a calle 14-35, Zona 3, Apartamento 202, Edificio Las Tapias, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, 09001

Phone: 617-441-5400 Fax 617-441-5417 Email: culturalsurvival@cs.org Web: www.cs.org

means of transportation and communication, and even the minimal infrastructure to enable medical care, which has aggravated the already chronic health problems among these peoples. Some of the most widespread problems are deficiency diseases (malnutrition and anemia, among others), parasitic and infectious diseases, diseases that can be prevented through vaccination, and other endemic diseases, all of which require constant monitoring and surveillance, prompt emergency care, and preventative measures. Cases such as these have been amply reported especially among the Marubo of the Javari river, the Hupd'äh of the Upper Rio Negro, and Xavante of Marãiwatsede.

In accordance with the requests of these Indigenous organizations, we urge your Excellency to adopt emergency measures to provide urgently needed medical care and assistance to the Indigenous peoples of Brazil. Their frequent appeals have not resulted in any concrete action from SESAI. It should be noted that the main strategy used to date in addressing the serious health problems among Indigenous populations – especially the lack of basic medical care and the failure to contract healthcare professionals to provide care for these populations – has been the filing of actions and recommendations by units of the Federal Prosecutor of several federal States.

Cultural Survival is aware, Your Excellency, of your commitment to the defense of Indigenous rights, as guaranteed in the Magna Carta and subsequent laws. We appreciate your consideration of these issues, as well as that of the Executive and Legislative bodies, and hope that these requests can be promptly met. We ask you to take steps to prevent the further unnecessary suffering of innocent people, and to demonstrate Brazil's commitment to the respect and protection of human rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne', written in a cursive style.

Suzanne Benally
Executive Director