

**UNICEF DENMARK STATEMENT AT THE REGIONAL MEETING OF THE EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

July 13, 2021

Distinguished Members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Chair of 14th Session.

I am honoured to join you today from Greenland, where most of the Greenlandic population is Inuit.

UNICEF congratulates the Expert Mechanism for its comprehensive study on the rights of Indigenous children, many of whom who continue to face systemic and widespread, multiple, and overlapping discriminations and marginalisation.

As the study shows, indigenous children are a group that is particularly vulnerable to violations of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. This group is most often merged with non-indigenous children in national reports due to the lack of systematic disaggregated data showing the difference between indigenous and non-indigenous children.

In the Arctic, UNICEF is concerned by the fact that indigenous children are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing domestic violence and sexual abuse compared to non-indigenous children. The pathology of violence and sexual abuse is transmitted from one generation to the next, and consequently it can create a new normality and tendency towards unreported incidents. Therefore, it is essential to recall and broaden the understanding and acceptance that any abuse constitutes a breach of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, regardless of the circumstances.

The abuse of indigenous children is often linked to poverty, lack of education and housing shortage. But psychological traumas within families and societies also play a role. Studies show that children growing up with untreated traumas often have learning difficulties, which in turn leads to lower educational attainment among indigenous peoples. Untreated trauma also often leads to loneliness, discouragement, and depression among indigenous youth. Studies¹ show that this is linked to the high number of suicides in the Arctic, also here in Greenland.

UNICEF therefore concurs with the Expert Mechanism on the need to pay special attention to the following elements:

- First, there is a need to secure disaggregated data between indigenous and non-indigenous children. The data should clarify the inequality and uncover patterns in relation to poverty, housing, education, abuse etc.
- Second, the government of Greenland must be aware of the growing inequality in the society in general. Even though 85% of the Greenlandic population is considered indigenous, the intersecting inequalities within that group remains a threat to sustainable development.
- Third, there is a need for solid and far-reaching initiatives to address historical and generation-based trauma on an individual and collective level.

We call on member States to recognize and secure, both in law and practice, the rights of Indigenous children.

Thank you - Qujanaq .

¹ Psykiatriske lidelser i Grønland Francisco Alberdi Olano & Johannes Rasmussen STATUSARTIKEL Psykiatrisk Afdeling, Dronning Ingrid's Hospital Ugeskr Læger 2019;181:V06190345