



World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Venezuela : Yekuana

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Profile

Venezuelan Yekuanas live in the states of Amazonas and Bolivar bordering Brazil and are known around the world for their elaborate basket weaving.

Historical context

The Yekuana remained relatively isolated until the 1960s when the Venezuelan government launched a development plan for the southern part of the country. In this plan, the government promoted the migration of non-indigenous people to that region. This resulted in a fragmentation of the Yekuana political structure, which was further aggravated by the activities of non-Yekuana religious institutions. In the 1990s, the Yekuana protested proposed hydroelectric projects which would change the course of their rivers and by bauxite mining.

Current issues

The Yekuana continue to have limited access to education and health services.

They also face the threat of encroachment by legal and illegal miners. Though illegal gold, diamond and coltan mining has been condemned by the Venezuelan government, it continues to affect the Yekuana, who have called for greater government involvement in the issue.

Through the Indigenous Languages Act, there is an ongoing project to translate school textbooks into the Yekuana language and train bilingual teachers.

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