



World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Venezuela : Warao and Kariña

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Profile

Warao and Kariña occupy lands around the Orinoco Delta. Warao are the second largest indigenous people in Venezuela with a population of around 50,000.

Historical Context

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Warao lived in lands to the northwest of the Orinoco Delta and were an agricultural society. Increased colonization forced them to move further into the delta region and give up much of their traditional culture.

The Kariña are the descendants of the Caribs, who led a long resistance to European colonization.

Current Issues

Oil companies are working on lands around the Orinoco Delta occupied by the Warao and Kariña. Kariña villages have been wrecked, and imported diseases such as cholera have caused many deaths.

Warao leaders have drawn attention to the pollution caused by the oil industry and to the displacement of communities caused by the construction of the Caroni dam. This dam is likely to become inoperative within 50 years due to the sedimentation resulting from extensive destruction of the surrounding forest by timber companies.

One of the greatest challenges faced by the Warao is access to adequate health facilities. These facilities are spread out across 22,500km² and staff often do not have enough fuel and motorboats

with which to visit patients. Infant mortality amount the Warao is 20 times higher than that of the general population and is largely due to easily preventable diseases.

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