

TRINATIONAL REPORT:
FIRES AND DEFORESTATION IN TERRITORIES WITH A
DOCUMENTED PRESENCE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN
ISOLATION - PIA
BOLIVIA - BRAZIL - PARAGUAY
(2020, REFERENCE YEAR 2019)

Executive Summary of the Report

International Working Group for the Protection of
Indigenous Peoples in Situation of Isolation and Initial
Contact (GTI PIACI)



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FIRE, ONE OF THE THREATS TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LIVING IN VOLUNTARY ISOLATION

The territories of the Indigenous Peoples Living in Voluntary Isolation (IPLVI), are continually threatened and violated. If it is not for the opening of roads for oil or mining exploitation, it is for the wood logger or prospectors of gold who, illegally, exploit protected or intangible areas. There is another serious and constant threat: the expansion of the agricultural frontier that is closing in on their territories. Arsons are part of this strategy to expand the agricultural frontier. In 2019, the fire devastated the forests and greatly affected their territories. Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay presented the highest fire rates compared to the historical record of previous years. An environmental disaster with direct consequences on the lives of the PIA.

The International Working Group for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples Living in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact (GTI PIACI), from the need to quantify and qualify the effects of fires on Indigenous Peoples, has prepared the Trinational Fire Report, IQT for its acronym in Portuguese. More than 99 Indigenous Territories (IT) with IPLVI records in Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay were analyzed, verifying in 2019 an increase in heat sources in relation to 2018 of the order of 258.25% in Bolivia; 259.28% in Brazil and 185.12% in Paraguay. The heat sources detected in the 32 conservation units (protected areas) with the presence of IPLVI in 2019, compared to 2018, increased by 744.38% in Bolivia, 347.87% in Brazil and 44.150% in Paraguay. Based on the contributions of local reports, a general analysis was carried out. Regional and local information makes it possible to elucidate a broader image of the problem that allows projecting the immediate risks and threats to Indigenous Peoples Living in Voluntary Isolation.

The report gathers accounts of Indigenous People who share territory with the IPLVI, in which the magnitude of the fires and the impacts that these have had on their territories are described. *“Someone came to burn down the house of the isolated. He burned the place where the isolated and wild animals are, because the forest is a house that protects, that gives life, that gives food for them, gives water, ”* -said an Ayoreo leader in Paraguay.

In Brazil, fires are directly related to political decisions. *“There was nothing natural about those fires. Even if a focus had emerged, it would not have been of the dimension that it was. This shows that, in a certain way, a part of the population, especially the wealthiest sectors, and for whom the land is their source of wealth, was encouraged to set fire to the forest, and now we are appreciating the consequences of it”,* -says the report of that country.

The same happens in Bolivia. It is necessary to differentiate the burning by traditional *chaqueo*, to enable a chaco or farm for self-sufficiency purposes, from the burning of large areas of forest to turn it into land for agribusiness, where 50 or 100

hectares are required. In Bolivia this phenomenon caused a voracity in the extent of flames with the capacity to consume more than 4,000 hectares per hour.

The report of the three countries is conclusive: the fires in Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay were not accidental. And they directly affected the territories of the PIA. With maps, georeferenced information and testimonies, this report reconstructs what happened in 2019. The territorial loss, which causes displacement of the HIPs in search of safer places, brings with it other dangers: involuntary approach to neighboring populations and possible contagion of diseases. The situation is further complicated by the presence of Sars-covid2, the virus that spreads like wildfire and could end the lives of these small groups, living heritage of America.

The Trinational Fire Report puts on the table the urgent need to establish a global mobilization in favor of the protection of the IPLVI of the Amazon and the Gran Chaco. States, multilateral organizations, civil society in general, despite being experiencing a global crisis as a result of Sars-CoV-2, must establish protection strategies against the return of fires and logging that will devastate, once again, the territories of the Indigenous Peoples Living in Voluntary Isolation and initial contact.

Faced with this bleak picture for the IPLVI in South America, delegates from the three countries propose the following measures to mitigate the destructive effects that affect them:

- Support the initiatives of Indigenous Peoples with a history of contact regarding the strengthening and formation of “indigenous brigades” to combat and prevent fires, as is the case in Brazil. This system has the function of coordinating the necessary actions and the organization and implementation of activities related to education, research, prevention and control and combat of forest fires and burns.
- Support initiatives led by Indigenous Peoples with a history of contact regarding territorial self-protection, such as the *Guardiões da Floresta* (Guardians of the Forest), who, on their own initiative, create collectives to protect their territories.
- Request that multilateral organizations urge the Bolivian, Brazilian, and Paraguayan States to establish, as a matter of emergency, and in cooperation with indigenous and allied organizations, preventive and fire-fighting programs in the territories with the presence of IPLVI.
- Recommend that the Legislative Houses of Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay, in dialogue with indigenous organizations and society in general, legislate on a proposal for a National Policy for Integrated Fire Management that leads to a Plan to Prevent and Combat Deforestation in the Amazon, Gran Chaco and Cerrado.
- Recommend that multilateral organizations urge the Bolivian, Brazilian and Paraguayan States to form a task force urgently, through their competent institutions, in order to define and implement a protection plan for the territories with registration of IPLVI, of so that it withdraws all the invaders that are within the mentioned territories;

- Recommend that multilateral organizations urgently convene States and develop preventive plans for the fires that are already increasing in 2020, in view of the countless records of IPLVI in the transboundary region in South America, with fire cases advancing from a country to another, as in Bolivia and Paraguay.

Last but not least, the group of researchers considers that, in the face of the pandemic spread by Sars-CoV-2, international scientific communities, as well as national societies, must recognize the different ways of understanding and scientific elaboration of peoples originating as regards the premises of the link between deforestation and epidemics.