

Indigenous Minorities of the North in conditions of modern Environmental Management

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INTRODUCTION

General characteristics of the problem area in question are the following. Indigenous peoples of the North, including those living in the autonomous areas of the Tyumen Region of Russia, belong to ethnic groups, poorly adapted to modern living conditions. For a long time their way of life has not changed, but the Russian expansion into Western Siberia has brought developments. Heavy colonization of the territories densely populated by indigenous peoples resulted in the destruction of the natural environment, the destruction of traditional industries and handicrafts, traditional way of life, culture and customs. The crisis of traditional economic activities has led to an aggravation of social problems. The standard of living of the citizens of a significant number of small peoples of the North living in rural areas or living nomadically is below the national average. The unemployment rate in the North, where the small peoples of the North live, is 1.5-2 times higher than the average for the Russian Federation (Nazarov, 1997).

All of the above is observed despite the fact that as a whole in the Russian Federation there developed regulatory and legal framework to protect the rights and traditional way of life of the indigenous peoples of the North, securing governmental support (in the form of incentives, subsidies, quotas on the use of biological resources). Benefits for members of minorities of the North are provided by the Tax, Forest, Water and Land Codes of the Russian Federation (Prava korennykh narodov Severa ..., 2005).

In this connection, the aim of our study was to investigate the perceptions of well-being of indigenous minorities in the modern environmental management. According to the records of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment International Programme, features determining human well-being may include: basic materials for a good life (safe and decent living conditions,

constant maintenance of a sufficient amount of food, shelter, clothing and access to the benefits of consumption; health, including good health and having a healthy physical environment, clean air and access to clean water); normal social relationships (social cohesion, mutual respect, the ability to help others and to care for children); security (secure access to natural and other resources, personal security and protection from natural phenomenon); freedom of choice and action, including the possibility for an individual to be who he wants and to do what he wants (Ecosystems and Human Wellbeing..., 2005).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials were collected during the expedition trips to the place of residence of indigenous peoples in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug - Yugra (Tyumen region, Russia) in the period of 2009-2012. The rural population has been chosen as the most vulnerable in the present conditions, as city dwellers, in our opinion, are more mobile, adapted part of the population.

Loci of study were identified as settlements with the status of a national community, or being a place of compact residence of indigenous peoples of the North Yugra (Khanty, Mansi, Nenets). They were Saranpaul, Ugut, Varyogan and Peregryobnoe – settlements in Berezovsky, Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk, and Oktyabrsky districts of Ugra, respectively. The settlements are located along the Liapin, Big Yugan, Agan, and Ob rivers. In addition, we visited the yurts (a traditional type of settlement of the Khanty people) on the Big Yugan River.

The study was conducted using a questionnaire developed by the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, in association with the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Arctic and Antarctic under the Ministry of Economy of the Russian Federation (Krasovskaja, 2008), upgraded by Olga Yu. Vaver.

RESULTS

Analysis of the legislative provision of the rights and traditional way of life on the regional level in Yugra has shown that in the area there was implemented an institute of protected areas - the territories of traditional nature management (Polozhenie o statuse..., 1992), and there approved the Concept of Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra (Kontseptsia..., 2011). At the same time, the number of indigenous peoples, leading traditional lifestyles within the boundaries of the traditional territories is 12.0 % of the total aboriginal population. The number of families among the indigenous peoples, keeping the traditional way of life amounts to 974 families, including 507 families engaged in reindeer breeding (Informatsia..., 2016)

Thus, it should be noted that representatives of indigenous peoples of Yugra do not seek to maintain a traditional way of life, most of them live in cities, which leads to ethnic and cultural assimilation and loss of ethnic identity, and in general - to the loss of national culture. This is confirmed by the analysis of the research materials.

Among the factors that prevent well-being, most often respondents put in the first place such items as fishing grounds and resources, money, housing, quality health care (21.8%, 20%, 20% and 18.2% of respondents, respectively). In the second place there are such items as money, quality health care and normal living conditions (27.5%, 25% and 20% of respondents, respectively). This quite clearly revealed the difference in the views of respondents living in yurts and villages: for respondents living in yurts, the priority is the availability of commercial land and resources, to villagers - the availability of housing. On the second and third places most frequently mentioned by all respondents there were such items as money and quality medical care. The respondents from villages in their priority list (though not shown first) indicated the need for recreation and communication conditions, which was not noted by the yurts residents. Several respondents offered special opinions, which are important in the context of the investigation: they believe that it is necessary to provide a socio-economic system that allows fitting the minorities

to the modern market, and a management system that meets the same problem.

The greatest concern of the respondents cause such negative social factors as (the total number of responses): alcohol and drug abuse (24%), unemployment (17%), the destruction of nature (15.5%), the impoverishment of the population (9%), injustice (9%). Overall, only 24.6% of respondents believe that traditional culture is preserved and the majority of people will keep their traditional way of life. 21.5% of respondents believe that traditional culture is preserved only in the ethnic and cultural centres, and the majority of indigenous peoples will work in other than the traditional economy, industries. The majority - 46.2% - declared the complete ethnic and cultural assimilation. At the same time 48% of respondents living in yurts, believe that the people retain their culture, and 52.4% of respondents living in villages, believe that assimilation will occur in the next 15-20 years.

Most respondents answer that the unemployment rate is high and does not change, which especially affects young people (youth outflow from their homes is mainly influenced by the lack of work). The main source of income is pensions and various social benefits, as well as wages of employees of municipal institutions (schools, administrations, kindergartens, clubs, etc.). Additional revenues are generated by sales of products of traditional forms of industries (hunting, reindeer breeding, fishing and gathering wild plants). Only in Ugut additional source of income is construction and trade. This allows to evaluate the acuteness of this issue for the small peoples of the Yugra, as traditional industries are increasingly superseded by highly profitable occupation in oil and gas producing and servicing industry, construction and trade.

In the villages, next to which oil is extracted, 100% of respondents note environmental degradation: contamination of water in the rivers flowing around settlements and being the basis for fishing, permanent forest fires, oil spills.

It is to be noted that the settlements under investigation are sufficiently distant from the regional centres of the area. The main transport routes to connect these settlements with other territories are often rivers. As a result, due to the remoteness and inaccessibility, the expenditure part of life increases. Without participation of the

inhabitants of these settlements in the traditional forms of industries, they cannot cover the costs by the revenues, which are formed mainly by the governmental support. However, the majority of respondents recognize the reluctance to leave their homes for cities; they note uncomfortable conditions of urban living.

FINDINGS

Analysis of the results of the study of representations about the welfare of indigenous peoples in current environmental management has shown that:

1. Traditional environmental management for indigenous peoples is a traditional lifestyle, relevant for the conservation and protection of their original habitat, which corresponds to the objectives of sustainable development. Despite the efforts of Russia's measures, the situation of minorities of the North is complicated by unsuitability of their traditional way of life to modern economic conditions. This leads to a rather low estimate of indicators characterizing welfare.

2. National rural settlements of Yugra differ by their economy, which is formed at the expense of budget revenues and lower-income types of traditional industries, in connection with what they observe outflow of youth, unemployment, pronounced antisocial factors (alcoholism and suicidal thoughts), an active process of assimilation takes place, traditional value orientations are lost. Thus, in accord with questionnaire data processing (preliminary results were published earlier in Vaver, 2011) only 87.7% of the respondents can be classified as indigenous peoples in some degree preserving elements of traditional culture in its various manifestations. In this case, among the respondents living in yurts, the figure is around 100%, while among respondents living in settlements it is 81%. The vast majority of respondents, 80%, identify themselves as indigenous peoples only by culture-connected criteria (language, religion, traditions, folklore). In total 15.4% of respondents believe that their people are different from the rest of the Russian population by their special culture of nature management.

3. The owners of tribal lands, where oil is extracted, note an improvement in their socio-

economic situation due to the payment under economic agreements (compensation for damages). But it is 100% of the surveyed owners of tribal lands, and 80% of those who do not have any, note that this improvement is temporary. Later (after fires, oil spills, etc.) there will be lack of space within the boundaries of tribal lands, where they will be able to implement the traditional industry in reality. In addition, the "easy money" provokes lack of motivation to continue the traditional way of life not only within youth, but also among adults.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the study showed that the existing system of governmental support of indigenous peoples of the North does not take into account the identified trends. We think that to solve these issues can be made these follows:

1. To create active groups of indigenous people in their localities for studying: ideas to reduce unemployment, involvement of young people in the traditional industry, negative social factors, and other obstacles for their well-being.
2. To use results of the study and the groups themselves for effective management of national rural settlements.
3. To create a mechanism for "strategic compensation": the account for damage caused by human activities should include a loss of profit while the ecosystem recovery after the fire, oil spills, water pollution.
4. To consider the model of "ethnic nature parks"*, in which indigenous peoples are guaranteed the right to pursue their traditional lifestyles, as a form of territorial organization of national rural settlements.

* In Russia, ethnic nature park is a protected area, in which the preservation of historical and cultural heritage of indigenous peoples takes place in the sustainable use of natural resources. Example – ethnic nature park Uchenmek (<http://uchenmek.ru>).

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