



ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT FOUNDATION

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16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, 2020

Joint Statement of Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact Foundation and Networks of Indigenous Women in Asia

On

Silenced issues of Violence against Indigenous Women at the time of Covid Pandemic

Triple discrimination based on ethnicity, gender and class against Indigenous Women has always intensified in the humanitarian settlements like the recent global pandemic of Covid-19 context. Lack of access to culturally appropriate information, general health services including reproductive and sexual health rights, intensified racial discrimination, criminalization, and human rights violations are some of the common issues faced by Indigenous Women, Indigenous Women with Disability across Asia during Covid-19. Several Reports¹ submitted by Indigenous Women's organizations and networks in Asia has also confirmed spike in gender-based violence during the pandemic.

Today, on the first day of 16 days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, we wish to bring your attention for meaningful and effective participation and engagement of Indigenous Women and Girls in Gender Based Violence prevention and response especially considering the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on them.

The extended lockdown, restricted mobility and the loss of employment exacerbated the violence on Indigenous Women and Girls. Besides, many Asian Governments are also introducing detrimental laws and policies that are violating the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Women and Girls. Red tagging, criminalization, threatening and repressions of Indigenous Women Human Right Defenders (IWHRDs) by security forces is rampant in the Philippines. Gloria Tomalon, an Indigenous Woman leader from the Philippines, was arrested and detained over trumped-up charges².

Increased cases of gender and sexual violence against Indigenous Women and girls are reported in the conflicted areas of Kachin, Northern Shan, Kayah and Rakhine states of Myanmar. Likewise, there are numerous reports of military linked abuses from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh, regarding the arbitrary detention and harassments in including death of a pregnant Indigenous Woman while interrogated by the security forces on the way to hospital. Another indigenous woman was killed and her child was injured in an indiscriminate army firing in the name of capturing terrorists in the CHT.

According to "A Rapid Assessment Report on the impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Bangladesh" published by Kapaeng Foundation, a total of 13 cases of violence against Indigenous Women, including rape, abduction, murder and physical attacks were reported from January 2020 to June 2020. National Indigenous Women Federation (NIWF) reported a rape case of an eight-year old Indigenous girl who was killed in Nepal but falsified the reason of death as falling from a tree.

¹ Reports from members/partners of AIPP, AIPP Flash reports

² Weaponizing Pandemic Against Indigenous Peoples: Continuing Plunder and Rights Violations; And Initial Report on Indigenous Peoples Situation During The Covid-19 Pandemic, IPMSDL | May 2020



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Indigenous Women being the knowledge holders, protectors of land, territories and resources; and practitioners of natural resources are already under grave threat due to poverty, marginalization and exclusion resulted from discriminatory practices/provisions including dispossession and development aggression. The current pandemic has worsened their livelihood and socio-economic burden forcing them to migrate and increase their vulnerability to trafficking, sexual harassment and bonded labor.

These disparities and invisibility that exists in all our societies is affecting the Indigenous communities' rights to self-determination and equality. With this statement, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and Network of Indigenous Women in Asia (NIWA) would like to urge the states, Non-state actors, UN mechanisms and civil society to

- Effective implementation of United Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to acknowledge and protect Indigenous Women's Rights and self-determination of Indigenous Communities.
- Take immediate action to provide culturally appropriate information and strategies on public health crises situation in the Indigenous languages.
- Develop and strengthen institutional, national and global disaggregated data collection mechanism to reflect statistics of violence against Indigenous Women and girls
- Ensure effective and meaningful participation and decision making of Indigenous Women and Girls in the planning, implementation and monitoring of Gender Based Violence prevention and response programmes

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