



OXFAM

JOINT STATEMENT ON WOMEN LEADERS AND THEIR JOURNEY TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

September 14th, 2021

Today, the women activists, community members, practitioners, and journalists, representing 4 countries in the Mekong and Asia region are gathered virtually for the Global South Women Forum 2021. We, at Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, Oxfam, Network of Indigenous Women in Asia, Green ID, Indigenous Women's Network in Thailand, Gender Development Association, Weaving Bonds Across Borders and Cambodia Indigenous Women's Association have come together in solidarity to recognize and share our story as women leaders and custodians of rivers, land, forest and freshwater ecosystems. We are here to elevate women's voices, build alliances, and to learn from and strengthen each other's struggles and initiatives to build our road to Environmental Justice.

The alarm bell has been rung. Global health crises like COVID-19 pandemic must be seized as a great opportunity for joint agenda on environmental justice through feminist's lenses as the way to tackle the destruction of ecosystem that increase threats to the future of our planet and human life. River, Land and Forest sustain human life and all of earth's ecosystems and biodiversity. They are our global commons; they belong to us all as well as to future generations. For women, river, land and forest are our soul. As water collectors, peasants, caretakers, and stewards of natural resources, women's relationships with environment throughout the life cycle are fundamental, yet too often invisible.

From today's event we would like to celebrate and honor the women who have given their lives in the struggle to save our environmental commons for all who depend on them. We stand together with women who have long been leaders in this movement and we celebrate their achievements. We join hands with local and indigenous communities who continue to face enormous jeopardies in safeguarding their water and territories. We recognize that this is a long-term struggle and we recommit to supporting each other and welcoming other committed activists to our movement.

We hope that the joint action and recommendations from today event will be given due consideration by the Government and other stakeholders and we wish our concern and initiatives will be considered during COP26.

In the name of women, mother, sister, wife, river defenders, environmental protector we urge for:

- Promote participation and representation of Indigenous Women in decision-making processes should be achieved through quotas and the exercise of free choice in identification of representatives by Indigenous Women.

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- Government should prohibit criminalization of Indigenous lifestyles, food systems, and knowledge. And develop and implement laws and policies that recognize and promote Indigenous knowledge and food systems for the economic empowerment of Indigenous Women and girls.
 - Government and stakeholders undertake measures ensuring integration of gender sensitive approaches into all stages of program, project and policy design, development, and implementation of development initiatives to ensure allocation of necessary resources to relevant stakeholders on the basis of inclusivity.
 - All relevant stakeholders promote inclusion of international standards on the right to food, water, and decent work for Indigenous Women in state policies, laws, regulations, and programs.
 - Any development initiatives should emphasize the inter-connection and inter-relationships between cultural rights of Indigenous Women and their right to self-determination, and ensure they are able to freely pursue their cultural development. And should emphasize that the cultural rights of Indigenous Women as inherently tied to their lands, territories and river resources, and their role in environment sustainability, food security, and preservation of knowledge.
 - States Parties should develop climate response mechanisms addressing issues and the concerns of Indigenous Women; recognize and integrate Indigenous Women's role and knowledge in policies and programs relating to the mitigation and adaptation of climate change and disasters. Such measures should be undertaken through active participation and engagement of Indigenous Women in consultations and decision-making processes related to climate action, and investment in dialogue and research to support the production of inclusionary knowledge within policy and academic spheres.

I. Conclusion

In this time of climate crisis, floods and droughts, and growing water scarcity, protecting rivers and people against existential threats is ever more urgent. We further and specifically reiterate that efforts at addressing structural discrimination against Indigenous Women will remain incomplete without identification of diverse, intersectional experiences resulting from prevailing oppressive systems.

We stand together, united in solidarity. We commit to continuing our fight to protect our rights, culture, rivers, lands, forests and territories they sustain, to ensure women's leadership in decision-making at all levels over environmental justice, and to strengthen and build alliances and grow our network and alliance, for the future of ourselves as women, our families and communities, our cultural, social, people and planet.

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