MORE POWER TO INDIGENOUS WOMEN!

ASIA INDIGENOUS OBSERVER
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The Indigenous Women’s programme and the Communications programme launched the HerStory podcast this month in collaboration with our partner International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

The HerStory podcasts are a series of curated conversations created by the Indigenous Women’s Programme Coordinator Pragyaa Rai and Communications Programme Coordinator Nina Sangma for indigenous women and allies who wish to delve deeper into the issues that affect us and matter to us in our distinct voices.

Please watch the first episode where we sat and talked about the various forms of violence Indigenous Women are challenged by, from the domestic to the institutional. Do feel free to drop in your comments and post suggestions on what themes you’d like us to pick up for our next sessions. You can write to us at pragyaa@aippnet.org, nina@aippnet.org

You can view the first episode here
On the occasion of the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples 2021, our IPHRD network members shared their insights and ideas at the webinar held to celebrate the day.

This year’s theme of building a new social contract gave us food for thought. Here are some of the key reflections.
Civil rights groups are decrying the erosion of indigenous land rights after a French court dropped a lawsuit from a collective of 97 Bunong minority families from Mondulkiri province in a long-running dispute with Cambodian rubber plantation firm Socfin-KCD.

Attorneys in Cambodia confirmed to ... that ... the Tribunal in Nanterre had ruled the families in Bousra commune had no legal rights or title to the disputed land, where Socfin-KCD under its parent company Bollore Group has been developing a plantation.

The Bunong families expressed their frustration and disappointment with the ruling in a Wednesday statement, writing that the court decision failed to uphold their rights as indigenous people. “It is because the state did not register us that we don’t have a communal land title. We have other rights to that land and forest, but Bollore through Socfin-KCD has destroyed it all,” the statement read. “We were landlords before the establishment of the Cambodia Land Law, we have been cultivating that land [and gathering] forest products as is our tradition.”

Read the full story here
In a report dated August 27, the International Criminal Court - ICC's Registry found that an overwhelming number of victims of the Duterte administration's so-called "war on drugs" are in favor of a probe into all crimes against humanity allegedly committed in the context of the war.

- Read more the Rappler coverage [here](#)
- Read the ICC report [here](#)
Anthropological writings never really addressed this dimension and therefore a dominant idea in this discipline was only in terms of the construction of social and cultural sense that they are socially and economically backward. This idea became very dominant and was picked up by anthropologists and sociologists rather than engaging with the larger framework in which they were located namely the larger political economy characterised by domination where there was appropriation of land, removed from their homeland, forest and put into plantations in Assam and Bengal. The oppression, subjugation and domination aspects remains dormant and never configures in the Constitution, but only focuses on the social and cultural backwardness, and the need to be lifted and make certain kind of policies such a reservation and affirmation programmes to elevate them. The whole ethos was to integrate them into the larger Indian society. To some extent this was not even integration but primarily a process of assimilation. In the colonial India, it was a political, economic, legal administration through which appropriation began to take place and this process continued even in postcolonial India. Even today in the tribal belts of India in Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, postcolonial India is repeating what the British did and perhaps even more aggressively. Look at the way in which Forest Rights Act and various kinds of laws has implicated the tribals and in the process they have become illegal occupants, encroachers and therefore they need to be evicted. This kind of situation has never really been touched upon by the anthropological writings. Socio-cultural sense became a dominant idea and just addresses the issue of health, education, economic employment and how to make them a participant in the state through reservations, representation in the parliament, and legislatives. Read the full address here
Criminalization of Pathalgari Movement

Thousands of Adivasis involved in the “Pathalgari Movement” were criminalized for fighting for their collective rights to self-determination and protection of their lands, territories, and natural resources in Jharkhand State of India.

Forty-six year old Ladu Nag from the Munda Adivasi (Indigenous) community is bound to live alone after her husband Neta Nag, a resident of Kevda village in Khunti district of Jharkhand, was imprisoned in April 2018. The Murhu police had filed a case[1] against him along with 11 other persons (including a woman) on 13 March 2018. They were accused of mobilising a big armed crowd without any notice or prior permission from the government authorities, capturing the police station and disarming the police officers[2]. The police alleged that they had instigated the people at a public meeting, which was organized to erect a stone plaque at the village entrance, with their speeches that supposedly hindered public works and disturbed the law and order. They were charged with sedition under the Indian Penal Code.

These allegations are related to the Pathalgari Movement, an autonomous resistance movement of the Munda Adivasis of Khunti district in Jharkhand for reclaiming their collective rights over their lands, territory, and resources.[3] Presently, the movement has spread across the major central Indian states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Etymologically, “Pathalgari” is ‘erection of a stone slab’. ‘Pathal’ is a ‘stone’ and ‘gadi’ means to erect it or fix it[4] on the ground. Thus, “Pathalgari” is an erected stone slab symbolising Adivasi customary rights, practices, beliefs and culture. Commonly, the entire village community is involved in erecting stone slabs in the village ceremoniously for different purposes;[5] like for the perpetuation of the existence of the ancestors, demarcation of a village boundary, displaying the history of settlement to posterity, showing the existence of generations in the land and for memorising the special event or incident.

Read the full story here
In many countries of the Global South, transnational corporations wield more economic and even political power than the governments of the respective host states. Yet, as non-state actors, these businesses are exempt from legal obligations and accountability mechanisms under international human rights law. At the same time, international investment agreements often afford rights to them that are above national law and against which there is no recourse to appeal.
For decades, indigenous peoples have been victimized by such corporations, often exploiting natural resources within their territories without their consent, colluding with host governments in instigating violence against indigenous communities, destroying their natural basis of life and fostering corruption and authoritarianism. Indigenous peoples and their allies have done their utmost to resist this victimization and to replace international lawlessness with a new rights-based paradigm. For five decades, there have been attempts, mostly driven by civil society, to introduce regulations regarding business and human rights into international law. After the most recent attempt, the “Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights” failed in 2003, a process began that led to the unanimous endorsement of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights on 16 June 2011 by the UN Human Rights Council. Not being a treaty, these Guiding Principles do not create new legal obligations but rather attempt to clarify the obligations of states that flow from existing international human rights law and the responsibilities of business enterprises; They further provide guidance on how to comply with these obligations and responsibilities in the business context.
Read the full report here
This report is part of “Defending the Defenders: Indigenous Environment Human Rights Defenders (IEHRDs)” project of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) managed by the Environment Programme of AIPP. It aims to review the existing legal frameworks regulating cyber security and its applications in the Mekong countries with special focus on IEHRDs; to identify specific risks, legal frameworks regulating cyber security in these countries may pose to IEHRDs, and to develop practical recommendations for the IEHRDs to mitigate cybersecurity risks, while ensuring and exercising their right to freedom of expression. Please download the full version here.
A team, leading by Flora Bably Talang, Central Member of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Member of IPHRD network and General Secretary of KUBORAJ Inter-Punji Development Association met Mr. Shahabuddin Ahmed, Hon’ble Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister yesterday. He heard about the present situation of Khasi and Mandi communities from Doluchora punji under Kulaura Upozila in Moulvibazar district. He forwarded the application to the Secretary of Forest, Environment and Climate Change Ministry.

Mr. Siraj Uddin, Chairman of Borolekha Sadar Union, Philah Pohthmi, Secretary of Greater Sylhet Adibasi Forum, Father Joseph Gomes, Central Member of BAPA, Silvester Pathang, UP member of Karmadha-13no (3 Ward), Lobing Sumer, Myntri (Headman of Doluchora), Advocate Md. Abul Hasan, Moulvibazar and Hiramon Talang from Kapaeeng Foundation were present during the meeting.
The Indigenous Navigator is a framework and set of tools for and by indigenous peoples to systematically monitor the level of recognition and implementation of their rights. By using the Indigenous Navigator, indigenous organizations and communities, duty bearers, NGOs and journalists can access free tools and resources based on community-generated data.

* Click on the image to redirect to YouTube link
David Young, Youth Programme Specialist at Unesco Bangkok, writes, in this feature for Bangkok Post,

Beyond the more familiar remedies to the loss of culture via increased documentation and cultural activism, many indigenous youth promote cultural preservation through socially responsible and eco-sustainable entrepreneurship. In Vientiane, for example, Lah also works with women in her community to make handicrafts that are later sold in local street markets.

Read the full feature here
Tales from the Mekong: Connecting Cultural, Social and Environmental for Sustainable Development Through Storytelling was launched by Global South Women’s Forum 2021
Some of the key issues presented were Indigenous Women’s challenges and achievements on Water Governance issues in Mekong along with a joint statement which can be accessed here
Women have been on the frontlines defending their communities, resources and land in the Mekong. The future of sustainable development goals lies in their able stewardship & implementation. This is what the map of fighting the good fight looks like. More power to them!
At the Second World of Conference of Indigenous Women, in 9 countries of Asia (Nepal, India, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia) participated with more than 100 indigenous women through AIPP/NIWA’s facilitation.

* Nepal session
A virtual session for AIPP secretariat members, with 22 participants was facilitated by the Indigenous Women’s programme coordinator Pragyaa Rai and Trimitra Chakma.

Some of the key issues and aspects of gender discussed were Intersectionality, Gender privilege, Envisioning a gender just AIPP.

A kickstarter for many progressive changes starting with a female friendly restroom for women at the Secretariat!
Environment Programme of AIPP organized four sub-regional virtual consultations on Indigenous Food Systems from 21-24 September.

The specific objective of those consultations:

To discuss and identify the key issues and concerns, and formulate call for policy asks on Indigenous Food Systems

To discuss and identify the good practices on Indigenous Food Systems including their cultural, spiritual, medicinal, and nutritional values

To discuss and highlight the roles and contributions of Indigenous Women on Indigenous Food Systems

To identify the initiative and action of Indigenous Youth on Indigenous Food Systems

To document stories of Indigenous Peoples on the impacts of protected areas, mega dams, and industrial mining, among others on the traditional occupations, livelihoods, knowledge, health, well-being, and food security and diversity of Indigenous Peoples

The consultations were organized as part of the Global Advocacy Project (GAP) of AIPP supported by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)
It has been widely acknowledged that the world's dominant food systems are unsustainable: as key drivers of climate change, they generate adverse environmental, socio-economic, and health impacts on the entire planet. Not only are they responsible for massive greenhouse gas emission and biodiversity loss worldwide, but they also contribute to economic exploitation, increased inequalities, conflict, human rights violations, and food insecurity.

In contrast, Indigenous Peoples’ Food Systems belong to the most sustainable, resilient and equitable food systems in the world. They provide healthy and resilient diets, ensure food security with minimal environmental impact, promote social cohesiveness and a sense of belonging to the community through sharing and exchange of labor, and contribute to biodiversity conservation and enhancement. As key holders of Indigenous Knowledge and custodians of land, territories and resources, Indigenous Women are at the center of traditional food systems of Indigenous Communities. They play a key role in seed conservation, sustainable resource management, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and practices related to food security in their communities.
These are some of the key insights that emerged during the webinar “Celebrating and Amplifying Her Stories through Indigenous Food Systems”, co-organized by the Asia Indigenous Peoples Past (AIPP), Indigenous Knowledge and Peoples of Asia (IKPA), the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples’ Food Systems, the International Land Coalition (ILC) Asia, and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), on the occasion of the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples on 9 August 2021. The online event, attended by over 75 participants from more than 20 countries, aimed at increasing the visibility of the roles and contributions of Indigenous Women in food systems and sustainable environmental management, through contributions from local, regional and international experts on Indigenous Knowledge and food systems.

The webinar was organized as part of the Global Advocacy Project supported by the SSNC. Click [here](#) to read the article.
Video Diary: Sharing Seeds is Integral to Shan Tradition & Preservation

Taw-pae, a traditional Shan village in Maehongson Province in the north of Thailand is the benchmark of how indigenous communities can balance the demands of modern life with symbiotic and reciprocal traditions such as sharing of seeds among community members in order to maintain variety and abundance of vegetables and crops. This has led to a sense of pride and prosperity in age old traditions, consciously preserved in a fast-changing world.
The Law-ker [Lua] community living in the Mae La Noi District of the Maehongson Province does not measure wealth with money but cotton cultivation and the abundance it provides to the community through the production of cotton fabric woven and dyed with natural pigments.

The community elders hold crucial knowledge of medicinal herbs still used today. For example, in postpartum healing.

Today, modern constraints have led to a gap in traditional knowledge sharing and learning between the elders and the youth. The young are sent to schools where the only time to learn indigenous practices is relegated to school holidays.

The future of the community, therefore, depends on their continued learning which enables self-sufficiency and sustainability of indigenous traditions that are still relevant today.

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) financially supported the production of this video. Click here to watch the video.
For Akha Peoples, Indigenous Women are a symbol of diversity and fertility. In their resourcefulness lies the propagation of farming methods that have yielded a variety of foods.

In the past, the Akha Indigenous Peoples cultivated field rice interspersed with many vegetable crops, including perennial, seasonal, and fruit trees – grown at higher and lower levels – and termed "nine level agriculture". Such is an indicator of the abundance and variety of seeds among Akha Indigenous Peoples.

While this became a tale of the past, this video explains how knowledgeable elders of Akha Community later built a Center for the Study of Akha Culture in Chiang Rai Province of Thailand, which boasts agricultural demonstration plots and a kitchen for the collection and storage of traditional seed varieties.

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) financially supported the production of this video. Click here to watch the video.