



Asia Land Forum 2021, Thematic session

Indigenous women and youth as change-makers in conservation and land rights (AIPP)

Organized by Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Date: 28 October 2021

Time: 1.30pm: Bangkok, Jakarta, 12.30pm: Manila, 8.30am: CET

Methodology: Zoom online

Background

Approximately 50% of 410 million total global Indigenous Peoples Population are Indigenous Women. Asia Region is home for 70% of the total population. Indigenous Peoples' way of lives has close ties with their lands, forest and water resources that shape their identity, cultures and livelihood systems. With 6% of the total global population, they are the guardians of 70% of biodiversity. Indigenous Peoples across the Asia have been affected by the changes and enactment of laws recent years made in the name of development and in the name of COVID-19 responses. Introduction and imposition of detrimental laws by the state is also leading to loss of rights to Land, Territories and Resources (LTR) where, Indigenous Peoples and communities are facing land grabbing and different forms of violence for fighting for their rights.

Indigenous women play the role of front liners in sustainable management of these resources through balanced interaction between these resources and their communities. Further, they are the key resource managers, facilitator and mediators to conflicts related to these resources. Their roles are highly recognized as the peacekeepers in their communities. Indigenous Women's dynamic and multiple roles are critical in sustainable development. However, they lack representation in decision making forums including customary institutions that include decisions related to forest, water and lands. Their meaningful participation and representation become lower over the changing tiers as they have limited access to these platforms. It leads to the exclusionary decisions without considering the Indigenous knowledge and skills as well as needs of Indigenous Women. Hence, the potential contribution of Indigenous women for the sustainable resource management and solution provision are not optimized. They further suffer inequality and systemic discrimination from insensitive decisions and policies which are based without their engagement. Land is a key frontier where the gender equality gap is clear. In 90 countries, women do not share equal access as men to own land.ⁱ Women's ownership over land does not always translate to their ability to control and make decisions over land they owe.

The indigenous youth face multitude of issues compared to the counterpart from mainstream societies. The challenges they face touch upon cultural and linguistic preservation, land rights, ownership and exploitation of natural resources, political determination and autonomy, environmental degradation and incursion, ill health, substandard education and discrimination.ⁱⁱ Indigenous youths are getting uprooted at a young age from their homes for schooling in the urban



centers and towns. And then because of inadequate higher educational infrastructure and for job opportunities, a large number of indigenous youths move to the cities and metros. In this process they lose out on inter-generational transfer of indigenous knowledge and values that they could have from their parents and elders. The conflict situations in some places push the youth to leave, to try to make a living elsewhere. Even if they live far away in the big cities, they always come home for the important events as members of the community. They need their village; otherwise, they lose their identity.

In 2013, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, (a mandated advisory body to deal with indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights), convened a series of expert consultations to anchor discussions on the issues faced by young indigenous people. Among the myriad of issues, the land rights problem of indigenous youth came out to be one of the prominent.

Despite all the difficulties confronting the youth in particular and indigenous communities in general, because of their strong connection to their land, strong customary institutions and culture, including the youth diaspora, the connections they have with their homes and home villages, and their lands and territories continue to be very important. In many indigenous communities, youth have led the movement for their various rights from the front. Their understanding and level and awareness is ever increasing.

In Cambodia, the 2001 Land Law provides for collective land titling to formalize communal land claims of indigenous groups based on customary use. As of 2017, 166 communities had applied for collective land titling, of which 117 indigenous communities had been recognized by the Ministry of Rural Development and 111 had been recognized by the Ministry of Interior as a legal entity for issuance of collective land title. However, of the 166 applications, the Ministry of Land Management have only applied only 19 land titles for 1,784 households covering an area of 16,271 hectares. At the same time, indigenous peoples continue to face challenges to their rights, including and particularly due to large number of economic land concessions that the government grants to agribusiness, mining and other companies. Government data of 2014 provides an aggregate figure of 229 Economic Land Concessions covering a total of 1.22 million hectares while the Social Land Concessions were granted for 113,167 ha of land registered for settlement, infrastructure and agriculture, which is only 5 percent of the total area granted as Economic Land Concessions. Additionally, a recent government report suggests that mining exploration and exploitation licenses consist of 366 projects and cover a total area of 819,451 ha as of 2018. However, non-governmental data on all exploration licenses granted from 1995 to 2014 includes a list of projects covering a total area of 2.7 million ha – off those, a total area of 885,180 ha is referred to as ‘Government Data’ and the rest 1,88 million ha consists of other mining licenses reported in media, company profiles, NGO reports and other publications.ⁱⁱⁱ

With beginning of LASED III (Cambodia Land Allocation for Social and Economic Development Project III)^{iv}, a \$ 93 million project, it has compelled the indigenous youths to take lead role in guiding the communities, creating awareness and coordinating with different government ministries for smooth and systematic implementation of the project. In this sense it is truly youth-led land right movement.

This session will try to shed light on the role indigenous women and youths are playing in securing tenure rights while subscribing to sustainable use of natural resources and internalizing the human rights-based approach to conservation on their indulgence. The involvement of the youth in Cambodia



will be talked about by the youth activist where the Community Land Titling (CLT) is being formalized under the initiative of the government through its different ministries.

Objectives

- To share good practices relating to women and youth's role in territorial protection and sustainable use of resources for informing the regional and global audiences.
- To examine the scope and means of integrating rights-based approach to conservation in the process of securing the land tenure.
- To prioritize the gender sensitive conservation regime and accord the rightful place and role of youth within the indigenous society.

Target Audience:

- ILC Member organizations
- Indigenous Peoples: leaders, activists and community members
- Regional networks: NIWA, IKPA, AIYP, IVAN, IPHRD, AIWN.
- Conservation organizations, support organizations and Institutions: Samdhana, Land Tenure Facility, NTFP, ICCA, RECOFTC etc.
- INGOs, UN Agencies and government
- Donors

ⁱ United Nations. Women Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment. Available online: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

ⁱⁱ UNDP

ⁱⁱⁱ Ingalls, M.L., Diepart, J.-C., Truong, N., Hayward, D., Neil, T., Phomphakdy, C., Bernhard, R., Fogarizzu, S., Epprecht, M., Nanhthavong, V., Vo, D.H., Nguyen, D., Nguyen, P.A., Saphangthong, T., Inthavong, C., Hett, C. and Tagliarino, N. 2018. State of Land in the Mekong Region. Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern and Mekong Region Land Governance. Bern, Switzerland and Vientiane, Lao PDR, with Bern Open Publishing.

^{iv} <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/06/26/cambodia-93-million-project-to-improve-land-tenure-security-for-poor-farmers-indigenous-communities>