

Beyond the News Cycle

IVAN (Indigenous Voice in Asia Network) Regional Exchange

25-27 August 2023
Chiang Mai, Thailand



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Cover photo credit: Dr Colin Nicholas

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Executive Summary

Media has become as ubiquitous as the air we breathe. From entertainment to keeping up with the news and getting connected with the world, we consume a multitude of media every day. However, despite the abundance of media outlets, the coverage of Indigenous Peoples' issues remains extremely limited. If Indigenous Peoples' issues are covered at all, they are not always properly or positively portrayed. Thus, there is a need to decolonize and indigenize media, concluded the Asian Indigenous journalists who gathered recently in Chiangmai, Thailand.

On August 25-27, 2023, Indigenous broadcasters and communicators from the Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Malaysia participated in a regional exchange of Indigenous journalists organized by the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact to discuss the access, voice, and representation of Indigenous Peoples in media in the Asian context

As in many places around the world, the media in Asia is largely controlled by dominant groups and strongly influenced by political parties. As a result, Indigenous Peoples have low representation, especially in decision-making roles, which further minimizes their ability to influence content. In addition to these barriers, content and programming in Indigenous languages across all platforms—newspapers, radio, TV, online, and even social media—is limited.

“Colonialism still exists and has an ongoing impact on Indigenous Peoples. The colonial power now is not a foreign country...Indigenous Peoples are now neo-colonized by the dominant group within a nation-state. Therefore, there is a need to decolonize and Indigenize the media to challenge and dismantle the colonial frameworks that have historically shaped media representation and narratives about Indigenous Peoples,” said Colin Nicholas, Executive Director of the Center for Orang Asli Concerns, Malaysia.

Source: [Decolonizing and Indigenizing Media to Uplift Indigenous Peoples' Voices in Asia](#)

Opening remarks by Gam A. Shimray, AIPP Secretary-General



PHOTO: AIPP

Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

As Indigenous people, we are increasingly facing oppression, censorship, and challenges to freedom of expression, inhibiting our ability to report on the situations we face. During the upcoming workshop, we will be learning from one another's experiences, exploring ways to be more effective and to better collaborate. Welcome to everyone, and thank you for coming.



Keynote Address: Decolonizing Indigenous Media by Dr. Colin Nicholas



Photo Credit: Argho Sku

Indigenous media refers to media content that is produced, controlled, and centered around Indigenous perspectives, cultures, and communities. Indigenous media plays a crucial role in addressing historical marginalization, in challenging colonial narratives, and in amplifying the voices and stories of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous modern media, encompasses various forms of media, including print, radio, television, film, digital media, and more. Traditionally, however, indigenous communication was conveyed by songs, stories, dance, as well as via ceremonies and rituals. Records of their history and situation were also written, orally transmitted, or carved (in stone, on wood, or on cave walls).

What does the term 'Decolonizing' Indigenous Media mean? For one, decolonizing implies the prior occurrence or reality of colonization.

Colonization is the act of taking control of an area or a country that is not your own, especially by using force, and sending people from your own country to live there. The colonization usually comes in the form of territorial colonization (including taking of resources), economic domination, political control, and cultural assimilation. It is not surprising therefore that Colonization has had profound and often lasting impacts on the colonized societies. It has also led to the appropriation of indigenous territories and the extermination of indigenous peoples and their social systems and cultures. Many of these effects continue to this day.

"Colonization of the mind" is a concept introduced by the Trinidadian psychiatrist and theorist Frantz Fanon in his book "The Wretched of the Earth." The idea of colonization of the mind suggests that colonial powers not only exert control over the physical aspects of a territory but also manipulate the perceptions, aspirations, and self-perceptions of the colonized population. This is achieved through various means, such as imposing the colonizer's language, erasing or devaluing indigenous cultural practices, promoting the superiority of the colonizer's culture, and creating a hierarchy that places the colonized culture as inferior.

If your mind has been colonized, even your private, most intimate thoughts have been influenced and shaped by the new cultural systems we live in. In view of this colonization of the mind, there is not only an urgent need for political independence, but also the reclamation of cultural identity and self-determination, as important aspects of breaking free from the psychological and cultural shackles imposed by colonization.

Decolonizing Indigenous media involves challenging and dismantling the colonial frameworks that have historically shaped media representation and narratives about Indigenous peoples. It's a complex and ongoing process that requires active effort and commitment. It is also a journey that requires self-reflection, and an ongoing commitment to learning and change.

Some people talk about colonialism as a thing of the past. The reality is that colonialism still has an ongoing impact. Especially with respect to Indigenous peoples. Or the colonial power now is not a foreign country, but the dominant people in a nation state who themselves were colonized by others before. Internal colonization- where Indigenous peoples are now neo-colonized by the dominant society in a nation- still persists.

Sometimes the colonization is blatant and direct. More often the colonizing is indirect, subtle, invisible. Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas introduced the idea of the 'captive mind', which he defined as an 'uncritical and imitative mind dominated by an external source, whose thinking is deflected from an independent perspective'. Among the characteristics of the captive mind are the inability to be creative and raise original problems, the inability to devise original analytical methods, and alienation from the main issues of indigenous society. The captive mind is trained almost entirely in the western sciences, reads the works of western authors, and is taught predominantly by western teachers, whether in the West itself or through their works available in local centers of education. Mental captivity is also found in the suggestion of solutions and policies. Furthermore, it reveals itself at the levels of theoretical as well as empirical work.

Indigenous journalism, which feeds into Indigenous media, is fundamentally different because it works towards supporting Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. And does not belittle, but rather enhances, the dignity of Indigenous Peoples. When indigenous society encounters change, media is an important means to engage with social movements, cultural changes and even in the maintenance of endangered languages.

The way Indigenous knowledge systems on biodiversity is a good example of how Indigenous media was able to dictate and dominate the narrative on biodiversity conservation. Such that even the mainstream media now adopts the Indigenous narrative.

Decolonizing Indigenous media involves challenging and dismantling the colonial frameworks that have historically shaped media representation and narratives about Indigenous peoples. But as Indigenous media practitioners, you too must be proactive in making sure that your media content enhances indigenous dignity, instills Indigenous pride, tries to correct historical injustices, and tries to advocate for change from an Indigenous perspective.



Among the measures that we must continually be mindful of:

1. **Center Indigenous Voices:** Prioritize Indigenous voices, perspectives, and expertise in storytelling. Let Indigenous community members share their own narratives and experiences, rather than relying solely on external sources.
2. **Challenge Stereotypes:** Work to break down stereotypes and misconceptions about Indigenous peoples that have been perpetuated by colonial narratives. Avoid using language and imagery that reinforces harmful stereotypes.
3. **Understand Historical Context:** Study the history of colonialism and its impact on Indigenous communities. Understand how historical injustices continue to affect Indigenous peoples today and let it inform your reporting.
4. **Understand indigenous values, Indigenous spirituality and Indigenous systems and always incorporate these into your content and outputs.**

Indigenous media is a powerful tool for empowerment, for cultural resilience, and for social transformation. It offers an opportunity for Indigenous communities to reclaim their narratives, celebrate their identities, and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse media landscape.

Media most often serves the interests of political parties and corporations. Some of the thought-provoking questions asked during the Q&A session were:

How can we decolonize and make mainstream media represent the voice of Indigenous people?

The answer is that Indigenous media must be controlled by Indigenous people. Only then can you make the change you want. Mainstream media content needs to be guided and changed so that it is in line with Indigenous rights. Content must be corrected to right historical wrongs and promote change.

How to address accusations of serving your own activism?

It is not an either/or situation between journalist or activist. If you are in the mainstream journalism context, you can open the minds of readers, slowly reaching into the mindset of the general population to correct inaccuracies. Many activists do not have journalist skills, and many journalists do not know the issues, and this needs to be corrected.

We are by default activists, as we are fighting for our rights, so journalism is a kind of activism, addressing power imbalances. As Indigenous Peoples, we cannot accept the different boxes of journalist or activist. We are all connected, and this is part of indigenous philosophy. And also face similar attacks, as is the case of media in Cambodia which is controlled by the government. Both activists and journalists face harassment and arrest, we are also activists at heart, and bring passion to our stories. Moreover, indigenous journalists are often discredited for not being “real” journalists. Not having Press cards, legal IDs such as registration and licensing and other credentials, or access makes us vulnerable to harassment. However, the only difference between activists and journalists is that indigenous journalists will not blindly support their indigenous communities are the perpetrators of wrongs as majoritarian party. There, journalistic ethics and objective reportage will supersede identity politics.



Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples in Asia by Gam A. Shimray of AIPP



Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

When we are talking about decolonization, we are saying that our stories have been appropriated. It's sometimes our own Indigenous scholars who repeat information created by missionaries and non-indigenous scholars, reproduce and propagate it. When we talk about decolonization, how do we bring back our original way of thinking, generated by our own people?

Nature is the source of our inspiration, knowledge, life, and meanings, and establishes spiritual connections, as evidenced by many Indigenous practices. We also depend upon nature for production for our basic needs. We use a communitarian mode of production for collective needs through community labor and sharing, caring for mother earth. We respect the intrinsic value of what nature has to give. From surplus after consumption comes savings. This gives us leisure time, as there is enough to sustain us. There is no need to accumulate when we feel that nature will sustain us. Authentic human labor gives us time to critically reflect on our experiences, to draw lessons and identify strengths and weaknesses in our communities. There is time to produce new knowledge, science, technologies, art, songs, and dances. The fruits of our labor are collectively owned, enriching community life with equality, equity, and justice. This is the Indigenous way of life.

When land and people are subjugated, our relationship with our land can be broken. This is the beginning of assimilation, control, and the emergence of slave labor under feudal society, wherein the fruits of our labor are appropriated. Surplus and savings decline, and authentic human labor can no longer be practiced. Nature became lifeless and unsacred, to be exploited as a commodity. Both nature and people are subjugated. Production for profit, wage labor, and capitalism emerges. Under capitalism, surplus becomes profit, which becomes capital, to be reinvested for further profit. Human labor and nature become commodities. Inequality and injustice become institutionalized and justified.

When we talk about self-determination, are we talking about bringing back our original Indigenous worldview, or are we merely seeking rights/power reproduced within the same colonial structures? If that is the case, we do not have the moral right to talk about our rights and equality. What is the narrative that we want to promote among indigenous people? It's not just facts and figures, but perspective. Once we get our perspective correct, the way we report on facts and figures will change to reflect this.

Elements of self-determination include rights to land and territory, self-governance (political, administrative, dispute/conflict resolving mechanisms, customary law), and the right to Indigenous concepts of progress and development. If we are not to reproduce colonial structures, we must return to our Indigenous value systems, not feudal or capitalist modes of production, but to Indigenous modes of production.

Q&A Session:

Comment: As Indigenous people, we are advocating for our rights under UNDRIP. But some people equate the right to self-determination with the right to cessation. Are we advocating for more rights for Indigenous people or equal rights with others?

Gam: What we mean by the right to self-determination is the vision, values, and principles of Indigenous people. We must address fundamental questions such as what is a constitution. A constitution is a constitution because it is written by constituents. A constitution is a consequence of rights. Debate often centers around ideas of structure, and how many rights we should have. Without discussion of principles, we lack a unifying factor; a common narrative. Without this, we will merely reinforce the colonial structure. What should be the vision of our movement? The vision must be collective, and our leadership driven by the collective vision.

Dr. Nicholas: What makes Indigenous rights different from human rights? Indigenous identity is based on land and territory. Special rights are required to secure this.

Gam: Why do we have UNDRIP when we also have the UDHR? UNDRIP reflects the unique characteristics of Indigenous people, and the rights needed to reflect this that are not fully articulated in the UDHR. UNDRIP must be used to interpret CEDAW and other UN instruments to reflect our unique characteristics so that they will not be reflections of colonial structures.

All people have the right to self-determination. The UN does not encourage succession, but resolution of differences through various mechanisms. If there is no other option, only then will the UN suggest succession.

Dr. Nicholas: Self-determination simply means the rights of people to decide for themselves what is best for them. Independence and sovereignty are different levels of self-determination. The level required depends upon the people themselves.

Gam: Some communities may even choose voluntary isolation.

Comment from Philippines: Federalism, regional autonomy, and succession are all varied struggles in the context of gaining liberation from oppressive power structures.

AIPP Strategic Goals and Objectives by Gam A. Shimray of AIPP



PHOTO: AIPP

Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) is a regional organization that was formed by indigenous peoples' movements in 1988 in Chiang Mai, at a time when Indigenous people were largely invisible in Asia. AIPP is committed to the cause of promoting and defending Indigenous peoples' rights and articulating issues of relevance to Indigenous people. The decision to form a regional organization was a bold one at the time, when there were no Indigenous organizations in Thailand. We chose the word "pact" because it is reflective of our situation. There are conflicts surrounding Indigenous people within volatile political contexts, but peace pacts lead the way forward. Indigenous elders spend a lot of time in peacemaking. Peacemaking is an opportunity to continue to grow, and to build a platform upon which our agreements increase, to join and defend the collective position we have agreed upon so that we may move forward together. In 1993, AIPP was invited to speak at the Vienna conference of human rights, where the Human Rights Council was formed, UNDRIP was adopted, a special rapporteur on Indigenous rights appointed. This was our first time to speak before an international audience of world governments. It was the start of Indigenous people from Asia being recognized. This inspired Indigenous people in Asia to organize and form their own platforms. We now have 46 members, and many additional networks. Our members are from 14 countries, divided into 4 sub-regions, and we cover 6 program areas: communication, education, human rights, Indigenous women, capacity building, and organizational strengthening and movement building.



Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages by Linh Anh Moreau of UNESCO



2022-2032 is the international decade of action for indigenous languages under UNESCO's global action plan. Why an international decade? Indigenous languages are disappearing, resulting in users experiencing limits to freedom of thought and expression, and reduced access to education. Preservation of Indigenous languages is key to protection biodiversity. Regional consultations were held throughout the world to collect contributions towards the 2021 Global Action Plan, and a global task force was formed. The vision is a world in which Indigenous people will entrust their languages to future generations.

We recognize the importance of women and youth in transmitting knowledge. Duty bearers are governments and public institutions, and enablers are the private sector and the media. Supporting groups include language professionals and various private and public sector.

Under our Communications and Information Unit, we are doing a documentary heritage program, and have prepared animated videos on access to information and AI for knowledge societies, and to understand AI and key ROAM-X principles.

Through our Indigenous digital archives' initiative in Cambodia: 30 Indigenous youth in Cambodia were trained in film making and documenting their own languages, and their videos were shared on open access commons. We launched a social media campaign to raise awareness, of the youths' activities, and to support youth to continuously engaging. The films they produced have been featured at film festivals.

UNESCO Bangkok is preparing for a regional consultation for how to implement the decade of action, and will work with AIPP and Indigenous media outlets. We have started with pilot activities with a conference in the Philippines on Indigenous languages, and develop a regional activity in the near future.

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Question from Phrou: Can the use of AI in Indigenous languages violate the sovereignty of Indigenous languages? We are working on guidelines for this, and have noted a lack of awareness of rights and how protections can be implemented effectively. How is UNESCO addressing this?

Linh Anh: This is a very important question, and was discussed at a regional consultation in BKK. Consideration of Indigenous people in regards to AI and ethics falls under the social and human sciences section of UNESCO. Some activities will be organized around this topic specifically, and we will let you know when that happens.

Q&A Session:

Question from Cambodia: How will you further support Indigenous groups in Cambodia?

Linh Anh Moreau: We are planning to hold national activities to respond to the different needs in different countries. Our video project with Indigenous youth in Cambodia was a good starting point to show what can be done, and how information can be made accessible to Indigenous people. We would like to work together with you on this.



Nepal Country Situation, Challenges to Indigenous Media and UN Mechanisms by Dev Kumar Sunuwar of Indigenous Television/Cultural Survival/UNVFIP/ Indigenous Media Caucus



Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

What is Indigenous media? It is any form of media for, by and of (owned and managed by) Indigenous people that is dedicated to their community, and to the production and dissemination of information in a culturally appropriate manner and having meaningful Indigenous representation in planning, management, and decision-making. It is communicating information or news targeting to the needs and expectation of Indigenous people in languages that they speak and understand.

Beginning in the 1950s, Indigenous people have initiated publications with the objective to raise awareness of their rights and concerns. In the 70s and 80s, Indigenous people began raising concerns around mainstream media that was characterized by capitalism, racism, unequal access to media, and lack of representation of Indigenous people, and initiated radio broadcasting. Slowly, Indigenous-led media flourished. In 2008, the World Indigenous Television Broadcasters Network was founded, an umbrella organization of Indigenous-led TV channels.

In 1947, the Hutchins Commission recommended that media should fulfil social responsibility and contribute to social change. In the 1980s, UNESCO's MacBride Commission concluded that media is controlled by capitalism, and is not democratic. Community media/broadcasting aimed to address inequality.

The right to media is based on the UDHR. Article 19 states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression without interference and the right to seek, receive and import information and ideas through media. The ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) also reflects this. In 1978, UNESCO adopted a declaration stating that mass media plays a role in the promotion of human rights, peace building, and ending racial discrimination. Indigenous people continue to have a hesitant relationship with mass media, however.

Article 16 of UNDRIP states that Indigenous people have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination. Nepal is party to over two dozen international human rights conventions, including UNDRIP. The constitution of Nepal article 19 also guarantees the right to communication with no prior censorship. Article 27 guarantees the right to information, backed up by the Right to Information Act of 2007. There is no right to information in mother tongue, however, so amendment is necessary. There are a total of about 12,000 registered media in operation in Nepal, but still a lack of content in indigenous languages.

Nepal has a Federation of Nepalese Indigenous Journalists with over 1,100 members, and a number of newspapers and radio stations as well as a 4 TV channels operate in Indigenous languages. We are conducting advocacy to promote Indigenous-friendly media laws, and a series of laws are tabled for amendment. We are lobbying for a mass media bill, and an Indigenous Media Foundation, and are advocating for recognition and registration of Indigenous-led media to create a conducive environment for Indigenous media to flourish.

Challenges include a lack of financial resources and no government funding. We require support, networking and partnership with regional and international organizations to gain visibility. The Indigenous Media Caucus and IVAN can help to further networking and efforts to strengthen and support one another. Cultural Survival can also provide support to Indigenous groups to start our own media platforms.



Marginalization of Indigenous Communities in the Mediascape- a Mizo Journalist's Perspective by Kimi Colney



Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

After the 1959 famine and state neglect, a resistance movement started in Mizoram. In response, India bombed the state of Mizoram. Research shows that there was media coverage of the resistance in the three leading newspapers, but no reports of the bombing by the state. Food was reported to have been dropped rather than bombs. There were no reports of rapes by the Indian army. There were no reports as to why the people were resisting, and how the people had suffered. Media marginalization and manipulation of news against Indigenous people thus began early on. There was no media at the time in the Northeast, so no one knew about it. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act is still imposed in parts of the Northeast, showing that this marginalization continues until today. There is only one reporter for the eight northeastern states, with a population of 46 million. Indigenous issues are only featured in the media in times of bloodshed and during elections.

The difference between the time of the bombings and now is that Indigenous communities now have Indigenous journalists. We are our peoples' only hope. We feel their pain. We are there for the long haul. We prioritize their stories over numbers.

How to engage with mainstream media: form connections, raise your voice consistently across social media platforms. Write pitches that are unique to the community with a strong title and opening paragraph. To pitch to an international publication, find a peg that places the issue at the heart of much needed global attention, and see how the story fares with respect to the issue in the world as a whole. Follow up on pitches at least twice, localize global issues, and don't give up.

Thailand Country Situation and IP Movement by Phnom Thano of Indigenous Media Network (IMN)



Credit: Argho Sku

Indigenous people make up 10% of the total population in Thailand, or around 6 million people. Laws and policies are in place, but they are not effective to secure Indigenous rights. The Thai state does not recognize Indigenous people, only minority ethnic groups. The 2019 constitution was recently amended with article 70 saying that ethnic groups can exercise their rights, as long as this does not cause public health and safety concerns. There are currently two cabinet resolutions regarding Karen people and Indigenous peoples living on the sea. Thai forest laws are the largest obstacle to securing Indigenous rights, and is a main focus of our advocacy. Our Indigenous people's movement has been active since 2007, and we have formed an Indigenous network in Thailand to promote Indigenous rights. In 2018, this body was formalized into the Council of Indigenous People, and we have submitted a draft bill to the government demanding recognition of Indigenous people.

IMN (Indigenous Media Network) was founded in 2014. It is an online media platform, and is non-registered and volunteer-based. IMN combats stereotypes and discrimination in mainstream media. Out of 300 articles on Indigenous people over a six-month period, only 15% were found to have contained interviews or information from Indigenous people. After the establishment of IVAN in 2013, we have been able to operationalize our strategies.

IMN's strategies are capacity building, media and public engagement, and media monitoring. We have trained nearly 400 Indigenous youth, though we lack the resources for follow-up. Some media outlets do not realize that their information is incorrect, so we produced a guidebook for working with Indigenous communities with the participation of each Indigenous community. We also monitor the news for negative content, and engage with media outlets and mobilize and protest should they neglect to reform. We have also conducted press tours to increase engagement, with positive results. Indigenous content creators working online are also engaging large audiences independently, creating a positive impact.

Philippines Disinformation Mechanics with Experience Sharing by Mia Magdalena of the Facts First Initiative



Credit: Argho Sku

Hate and lies harm democracy. For over half a decade now, Filipinos have been spending the highest number of hours on social media globally. Thus, Philippines is considered patient zero in the disinformation pandemic. Misinformation is false information that is spread, regardless of intent to mislead. Disinformation is deliberately misleading or biased information, manipulated narratives, facts, or propaganda.

The movement to stop disinformation online (info@factsfirst.ph, #FactsFirstPH) is one of the first fact-finding programs to be done by the Baguio Chronicle. Readers can report dubious claims to participating organizations through the link. There are four layers to the initiative: fact checking, amplifying, research, and legal accountability.

We believe that without facts, there can be no integrity in democratic institutions. To sustain democracy, the people need accurate information on which to base their decisions and weigh the merits of their choices, and reliable media platforms that can be explored freely.

The Safe Spaces Act is a landmark Philippine case. Signed into law in 2019, the Safe Spaces Act defines and penalizes gender-based sexual harassment in streets, public spaces, online, workplaces and educational or training institutions.

“Without facts, you can’t have truth. Without truth, you can’t have trust. Without trust, we have no shared reality, and no democracy.” -Maria Ressa, Nobel Laureate

Malaysia Country Situation and the Big Stories from the Ground by Amanda Mojilip of PACOS Trust



PHOTO: AIPP

Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

Malaysia is a federation of three regions, with Indigenous groups falling under the general categories of Orang Asli, Dayak/Orang Ulu/ Anak Negeri. Indigenous people have always been visible through radio. Radio shows run about three hours in the morning, capturing attention with their focused timeframe. They go beyond music and news, featuring Indigenous cultural elements like voice acting and folk talks. Radio shows are crafted with a focus on the concept of community. They help strengthen Indigenous identity. Digital media is overtaking this, with unequal power relations.

After gaining independence from the British, the challenge arose to create a united nation. Efforts to form a national identity have resulted in policies favoring Malay Muslim traits.

Exploitation and commodification of Indigenous cultures and peoples followed. Indigenous peoples from East Malaysia feature on TV, notably during traditional harvest festivals and tourist promotion videos focusing on vibrant, exotic cultures, wherein those with power are selling our stories for profit. Ads often follow a common pattern, featuring a young person in the capital longing to return home to be with family. This presentation suggests that Peninsular Malaysia is the standard Malaysia, while Sabah and Sarawak are seen as secondary.

Indigenous people are consistently portrayed wearing traditional attire and engaging in customary activities. The portrayal of Orang Asli often presents them in distressing situations. This reinforces the idea that many Malaysians can't identify us without our traditional outfits, and assumes that we are backward and impoverished. Newer ads are more in line with our efforts to merge science and tradition, which has been a small achievement.

When films are made, non-Indigenous people dominate, and Indigenous people are not cast to play Indigenous roles. Indigenous characters are often overly exaggerated or are the butt of jokes. In Indigenous culture, for example female shamans are held in high regard as ritual experts and spirit mediums. In movies, however, they are portrayed as unkept, dirty, evil, and mentally unstable. Indigenous-produced films, on the other hand, depict women in a positive light, emphasizing their strength.

To address these issues, we have organized community filmmaking workshops with Indigenous Youth Council Members, equipping youth with practical, technical self-knowledge, so that they can present their own stories. An initiative to amplify the voices of young Orang Asli women is a collaboration with various tribes through community-based filmmaking workshops has had very positive outcomes: Indigenous women have successfully produced two films, published a book, and done two performances. The recent inclusion of a woman of Indigenous heritage on the film board has helped to make storytelling more inclusive.

Our immediate needs include continued capacity building for Indigenous media practitioners, and to develop Indigenous curators and producers to lead projects, so that every Indigenous exhibition truly represents us. We need less issue-based flag-waving, and more stories of humanity, using relatable themes to help others learn about the challenges we face.

A good example is Delikado, which chronicles a group of forest defenders, and has made a strong impact due to its robust team. We need to make Indigenous films accessible. In learning filmmaking, we need less focus on technique, and more focus on intuition. We must find ways to spread films, such as through community-based film screenings, as film festivals are not generally accessible to Indigenous people.



Community Media and Challenges with Philippines ground report by Gwendolyn Gay L. Gaongen



Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

Radyo Sagada is the only genuine Indigenous people's radio station in the Philippines. It is a community radio station powered by a 300-watt transmitter, franchised by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, registered under the Securities and Exchange Commission, and licensed by the National Telecommunications Commission. It is owned and managed by Sagada Community Media Network Inc, with 13 years of broadcasting experience since 2010. The station was established to provide a voice for the voiceless, and strives to provide accurate, timely, and relevant information and entertainment for and by Indigenous people. It brings the Philippines and the rest of the world to its listeners.

The vision of Radyo Sagada is of a well-informed people living in a harmonious community, with a rich culture and traditions working for a sustainable environment, good governance, and community development, enjoying equality and the benefit of social justice: a community collectively working for the common good. Radyo Sagada's mission is to be a voice of the community, involving the people in producing and disseminating information and entertainment, and providing a forum for discussion of issues and concerns towards development actions.

The station's general assembly is the highest policy making body, including women, youth, and elders. Its decision-making structure includes representatives from among women and farmers. It is powered by volunteer broadcasters and technicians, who conduct trainings, do research, script writing, and technical and administrative work. Programs produced by community members cover legal issues, culture, language, agriculture, religious programs, environment, and climate change adaptation. As listeners, community members participate through text messages, feedback, trivia contests, and schools on-air.

Challenges include constant the threat of equipment destruction due to lightning strikes, storms that result in transmitter antenna misalignment, and power interruptions. Other challenges are budgetary restrictions and the limited capabilities of volunteer broadcasters. There is a need to do trainings to develop community journalists and broadcasters. The station has also faced red tagging, and has been referred to as supportive of insurgency through association with the Community Party of the Philippines, though no specific charges or harassment have occurred. Despite these challenges, the station strives to be relevant, timely and appropriate.

Building Community Journalists and Challenges to Indigenous Media in Cambodia by Sam Oeung



Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

Conserve Indigenous Peoples Languages Organization (CIPL) is Indigenous-led organization working to ensure that Indigenous people's rights are fully respected and that they live with freedom and dignity. CIPL aims to ensure that leaders of the Indigenous community own the community's communication and media activities. The priorities and activities of the organization are shaped and guided by the Indigenous communities that it supports. The organization also has a role in strengthening Indigenous voice on matters impacting Indigenous rights, livelihoods and culture: namely the loss of Indigenous lands through illegal land grabbing and the government's granting of economic land concessions on Indigenous homelands.

The goal of the organization is for Indigenous youth to have the capacity to produce and use high-quality media with the participation and encouragement of their elders, using these media to raise awareness of important issues to their communities and to relevant stakeholders.

Indigenous people make up 1.12% of the population of Cambodia, with 22 groups living in 15 provinces. The main issues facing Indigenous people in Cambodia include land and natural resource rights and human rights violations, health, education, illegal drugs, migration, language and cultural preservation, and lack of access to information.

CIPL is part of a digital security working group in Cambodia with fifty members. Research found that only 30% of respondents have some knowledge of digital security, however.

According to the Cambodian constitution of 1993, citizens have freedom of expression of ideas, freedom of information, freedom of publication and freedom of assembly. A draft law on access to information of 2019, a National Internet Gateway Sub-decree of 2021, a Cyborg Law draft of 2022 also supports these rights. These laws and sub-decree are not widely understood by citizens, especially Indigenous citizens, however, and they have not been consulted in their drafting.

CIPL works with Cambodian Indigenous Youth Media Network to promote capacity building among Indigenous youth. Their vision is for Indigenous youth to have solidarity, prosperity, and wide access to information, and their goal is for Indigenous youth to have the capacity to produce media, network, and build collective Indigenous voices in Cambodia.

Our joint activities are capacity building, networking, producing media, research, documentation, dissemination of information, and advocacy for Indigenous rights. Capacity building areas include film and audio skills, news writing, digital literacy, photo design, relevant laws on human and digital rights, legal analysis, and engaging with non-indigenous journalists.

Challenges include government control and surveillance and limited freedom of expression, and community radio stations have been shut down by local authorities. Media and digital literacy are low, and people are susceptible to fake news. Indigenous youth hope to build networks at the national and regional levels for learning and sharing, and to build long-term advocacy strategies.



Bangladesh Country Situation and Challenges to IPNEWS by Satej Chakma of IPNEWS Bangladesh



Photo Credit: Hpuji Nawng/AIPP

From 1971-1997, Indigenous people were neglected in mainstream media in Bangladesh. Most mainstream outlets address Indigenous people as tribal people, ethnic-minorities, small ethnic groups, etc., which Indigenous people consider demeaning. Mainstream media don't cover news that goes against corporate interests or the military. Most often, they present information in distorted and fragmented ways. There has been much propaganda against Indigenous people.

Indigenous People's News (IPNEWS) is a Dhaka-based online news portal that works for the promotion and protection of the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Bangladesh. IPNEWS was established in 2016 to secure the right to information and ensure freedom of expression of Indigenous people. UNDRIP guarantees that Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination. Under UNDRIP, states must take effective measures to ensure that state-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity. States must ensure full freedom of expression, and should encourage privately-owned media to adequately reflect Indigenous cultural diversity.

Challenges that IPNEWS currently faces include lack of official recognition, funds, skilled manpower, proper office space, tools, and access to internet in remote areas. In addition, IPNEWS has had to change IP addresses many times due to being blocked after covering news of the military, which has added to expenses.

Recently, IPNEWS has faced threats from different agencies, hindrance in online platforms, intimidation of individuals involved with IPNEWS, threats to different stakeholders (academics, mainstream journalists), and the IPNEWS website has been shut down frequently. In addition, IPNEWS is experiencing a loss of readers/viewers, and is struggling to earn money online.



Investigative Reporting with Cases by Thamir Kashyap



Photo Credit: Argho Sku and AIPP

Adivasi (Indigenous) people in the Chhattisgarh region of India face battles both within Indigenous groups and with the state. The resulting state violence has displaced people, and prevented them from going back home again. The violence was so vicious that approximately 99 women were raped and 100 people murdered. The tactic is to scare people so badly that they don't dare to resist. 1 million Indigenous Peoples were displaced, and violence continued in the refugee camps. The case reached the supreme court, but the court ruled that the victims were outlaws and Naxalite terrorists. Officials tell the Adivasi refugees to go back home, but when they go back, they are targeted again.

Thamir Kashyap goes into remote areas with no google map assistance to cover these stories. The locals do not trust outsiders, as they have been betrayed so much in the past. This is a main challenge that journalists face. There is constant surveillance, with successive groups perpetuating violence. Thamir Kashyap shoots these stories with his own money, as no news outlets dare to cover the stories. He has no press card, and is thus subject to harassment by police and local authorities. He must thus devise resourceful ways to cover stories. There has of now been no follow-up to these incidents; they have been ignored by the state.

Reclaiming Narratives as an Indigenous Woman by Jacinta Kerketta



Photo Credit: Argho Sku and AIPP

An Indigenous woman journalist from Jharkhand State, Jacinta Kerketta told the story of why she became a journalist. An incident changed her life when she was in class 8, and her relatives were jailed under false charges. The incident was covered in the media, but no journalists covered the story from the Adivasi perspective. Jacinta Kerketta thus decided to become a journalist to write stories from the Adivasi side. She studied Mass Communications, and her mother mortgaged the family's land to fund her education. Working in mainstream media, she realized that she could not cover relevant issues. She thus started traveling village to village, writing on her own from the local perspective. She came to know more about Indigenous people's movements to protect their land, forests and rivers, and received a fellowship to visit communities around Jharkhand.

Jacinta Kerketta started writing journalistic articles and poems, publishing her work on her Facebook profile page until she was approached by a publisher. Having received positive recognition, she now writes for several media platforms. She visits Indigenous communities throughout the country, covering stories not covered by mainstream media, thus contributing to society.

In addition to writing stories, Jacinta Kerketta organizes story-sharing sessions in local communities Adivasi women and girls, and discusses issues related to their livelihoods such as the dangers of urban migration. The articles she writes helps to gain support for the communities. She initiated a festival for 25 Adivasi communities to gather to exchange information in their own languages, sing, and dance, brings academics and activists to attend and share. The community members now organize the event on their own every year, and support one another's community forest initiatives. They began to collectively thinking about who to vote for, raising local political awareness.

Jacinta Kerketta also writes books for children, and turns pain into poetry.





Photo Credit: Argho Sku and AIPP

**“They are waiting for us to become civilized
while we are waiting for them to become humanized.”**

Summarizing Discussions and Forward Action Plan and Deliverables





Photo Credit: Argho Sku and AIPP

Top IP Stories:

- Bangladesh: land grabbing
- India: land grabbing
- Malaysia: Ulu Papar Da, NCA (carbon trading)
- Nepal: Hydro dam
- Philippines: Gen-ed dam, appropriation of culture, palm oil in Mindanao

Action plan:

- Initiate co-sharing publication: Indigenous Voices Asia
- Monthly news bulletin
- At least one or two news pieces each by 3rd week, by the 25th of every month
- Newsletter will include not only print but video and audio
- Publish at the end of each month
- Can be thematic, or by priority trends
- Pitch to international publications
- Cultural Survival Quarterly or Online
- Intercontinental Cry magazine
- Mongabay, non-profit which publishes stories on conservation and environmental issues
- The Guardian, Al Jazeera
- Nina can help with contacts
- Network with existing contacts
- Submit stories
- Maximize newsletter

Capacity building

- Online trainings
- Mobile journalism training (in person)
- Cyber security
- Film analysis
- Content creation
- How to develop story ideas
- How to decentralize our dependence on mainstream media
- Fellowships
- Exchanges

In addition,

- Support existing Indigenous representation in the UNESCO by providing profiles of Indigenous media and stories to further awareness and lobby for funds to make these media outfits sustainable
- Become members of the Indigenous Media Caucus
- Start documenting cases and create a database of Indigenous journalists who have been harassed, research legislation to protect Indigenous journalists and their work
- Create IVAN Media Clearing House, a clearinghouse for Indigenous media creation, development, and dissemination



Step 1: Members sign up and submit all kinds of media, along with a pitch to AIPP, target audience, message

Step 2: Set up an IVAN secretariat in addition to AIPP secretariat to develop and process submissions, for example, provide translations of media, add subtitles to films, etc.

Step 3: Trace our progress on translation, readiness for publication, etc.

- Create an interactive mechanism to serve as a home for Indigenous journalists and media practitioners
- Request capacity building support on digital security, AI, collaborations and exchanges
- Share information regarding funding sources
- Provide solidarity support, Indigenous media fellowships, and pitching opportunities



Visit to Mon Jam Community



Photo Credit: Argho Sku and AIPP







PHOTO: AIPP

Photo Credit: Argho Sku and AIPP

Speakers: Mr. Vichit, mayor of Mae Raem sub-district, an elected position
 Mr. Surin, head of Nong Hoi village, an elected position
 Mr. Phanasit, head of the village cooperative

Mon Jam is made up of three villages, with a total population of 3,500 and a land area of 2,800 rai. Each resident has less than one rai of land; not enough to make a living. 99% of residents belong to the Hmong Indigenous group.

Before Hmong people settled in the area, Indigenous Lua people lived there. Over one hundred years ago, Hmong community members grow opium for sale, which was legal at the time. They planted rice for family consumption, and corn for animal feed. 40-50 years ago, the government initiated an opium substitution program. 4,000 rai of agricultural land was reduced to 2,800 rai.

The transition away from opium production was smooth, as the community followed the state's directives.

Community members began building homestays fourteen years ago. At the same time, the military government promoted a policy to increase forest cover. The government began declaring the homestays illegal encroachments on conservation forest land. The local people surrounded the forestry officials to prevent them from tearing down their homestays. In retaliation, the government cut off the community's electricity, water, and satellite signal, and filed 30 criminal charges against community members.

Mr. Vichit said that community members can earn much more money from tourism than from agriculture, and reduce the use of agricultural chemicals. The government claims that tourism destroys the environment, and wants community members to go back to doing agriculture only. Community members can control the price of homestays, but cannot control the price of cash crops, making homestays a more attractive livelihood.

Mr. Vichit added that the government sees itself as having power over the management of conservation forests. Community members, however, feel that they have been here before the conservation forest was declared. Traditional Hmong ways of conserving the forest such as the maintenance of "dong seng" spiritual forests are not recognized by the state.

100% of community members own homestays. Mr. Surin reflected that the current conflict revolves around the benefits of tourism. Before, Thai people in the cities benefitted from tourism in Indigenous areas. Now, Indigenous people are benefitting directly. The law is being used as a tool to further discrimination against Indigenous people. The Thai National Human Rights Commission came to the community to conduct an investigation, and found that the state was guilty of violating the law and the community members' human rights.

The strength of the community lies in the fact that 100% of tour operators are from the community. "We have solidarity; as we are shareholders, not competitors." Despite interference in the justice system on the part of the state, the court has so far ruled in favor of the community members in 3 out of the 30 cases filed against them.

Journalists have supported the community's struggle by covering the stories from the community's perspective. The community received no help with lawsuits; community members have studied law, and Mr. Vichit himself holds a law degree.







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