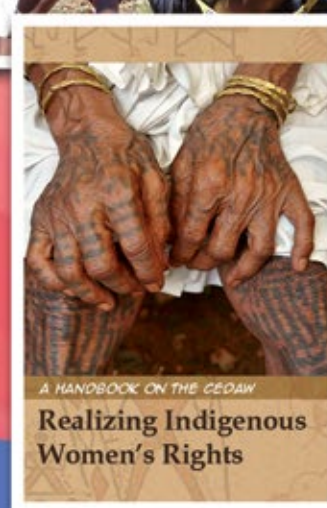


aiwn

2014



Counting the Milestones





Letter from the Secretariat

We are very proud to announce the appointment of our convenor, Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, as the new United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Congratulations, Vicky!

This year is marked with a lot of international processes related to development, human rights and biodiversity that are relevant to indigenous women and indigenous peoples. Among these major processes are those related to the Sustainable Development Goals, that will replace the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This offers a good opportunity to make indigenous peoples, including indigenous women, visible in the development agenda by putting forward our vision and priorities on sustainable, self-determined development.

Equally important are the United Nations High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in September 22-23, 2014, and Beijing +20 in 2015. We must lobby our governments to support our priorities as identified in the Alta Outcome Document for the WCIP. We should also ensure that we actively engage in Beijing +20 to be able to surface the situation and recommendations of indigenous women in Asia, 20 years after governments committed to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action to promote gender equality, development and peace.

This year is also a review year on the implementation of 179 state members who signed the Programme of Action that emerged from the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Results of the review will inform the Sustainable Development Goals/Post-2015 Development Agenda discussions.

There are also meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Engagement of indigenous peoples, including indigenous women, in the climate talks are very crucial specially as states now lay the groundwork for a new agreement in 2015. There is a need to ensure that gains that we have achieved are carried over to the next agreement.

Aside from these are the reporting processes under the different UN Treaty Bodies where Mongolia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam are expected to report. This provides opportunities for us to engage governments in addressing our human rights situation.

In this issue of our magazine, we also highlight stories of indigenous women that are making a difference in their communities. These are stories of the Garo women of Bangladesh and the women in a village in Benguet, northern Philippines.

These stories inspire us to continue our work to empower ourselves and our peoples, and strengthen further our communities. These are our contributions to a society that fully respects and fulfills our rights as indigenous women and as indigenous peoples.

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aiwn magazine is published by the Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN) with support from Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) and Brot für die Welt-EED.

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We welcome comments, suggestions, manuscripts, photographs and art materials from contributors.

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Printed in the Philippines
by Valley Printing Specialist
Baguio City, Philippines

ISSN No.: 2094-0807

Stakes of Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations

A n U p d a t e

by Maribeth Bugtong-Biano

The United Nations is no doubt one of the arenas where indigenous peoples can engage with policymakers. If, by default, they would fail to engage with these policymakers, indigenous peoples would find themselves surprised by global policies, which could turn out to be unfriendly. Worse, these policies could also threaten their well-being and undermine their dignity and rights.

Of course, indigenous peoples themselves must assert their right to participate in these arenas at the UN. It was a good thing that, through their assertions themselves, indigenous peoples could participate in various processes and meetings at the UN where they could ventilate their issues and concerns.



But compromises are part of the game at the UN. Indigenous peoples thus cannot expect to win the battle all the time. Still, indigenous peoples can celebrate victories as a result of their long years of engagement.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or UNDRIP was a good example. While it took indigenous activists more than 20 years of engagement before the UNDRIP was finally adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2007, those long years, which were a quarter of a lifetime, were not wasted. Failing to have not engaged at all would have been a greater tragedy.

And armed with their rich traditional knowledge and values, indigenous peoples have an important message for the world. As always articulated by AIWN Convenor Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, one of the biggest challenge of the 21st century and beyond is whether or not we continue with the current dominant mode of consumerist-driven and highly extractive development, which is badly hurting the planet and all life forms.

The newly-appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would particularly cite that with their traditional knowledge and wisdom, indigenous peoples, for example, have preserved and protected their forests, thus showing the world how they have helped shield the planet from climatic changes.

Indigenous peoples, therefore, have more than a thousand reasons to engage in the various processes and mechanisms at the UN. Whether helping respond to the challenge of climate change, asserting women's participation in policy making, helping end poverty or helping reshape and redefine a kind of development for our children, indigenous peoples could prove that they have something to contribute to the world.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Like other bodies at the UN, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is one of the avenues where indigenous peoples are able to effectively participate. Their participation is granted by international agreements such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or UNDRIP.

In the climate change talks, indigenous peoples have been asserting that their “full and effective participation” would be meaningless unless they could directly access funds, technology and resources to



help them adapt to climate change impacts.

During the November 2013 19th Conference of Parties in Warsaw, Poland, there were seven agreed decisions relating to REDD Plus—the “Warsaw Framework for REDD Plus.” REDD Plus refers to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest

degradation and their role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

One decision was a work program on “results-based” REDD Plus finance in which the Conference of Parties reaffirmed and recognized the need to provide “adequate and predictable” financial and technology support to developing countries that aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss.

Another decision was establishing an information hub to contain data on the results of REDD Plus activities and corresponding results-based payments. It will also house information on the assessed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels expressed in tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year and a summary of information on how all the safeguards are being addressed and respected.

Giving incentives to non-carbon benefits (NCBs) or the multiple functions of forests for the long term sustainability of REDD Plus was another important decision. Still another significant decision was establishing “modalities” for measuring, reporting and verifying anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, and forest area changes resulting from REDD Plus implementation.¹

These decisions are expected to enhance mitigation initiatives at the same time protect the indigenous peoples and their environment.

In relation to non-carbon benefits, indigenous peoples are bringing forward their positions to the UNFCCC to ensure that multiple functions or co-benefits

resulting from the implementation of REDD Plus activities will further ensure their rights and benefit them.

For instance, Tebtebba and the Global Indigenous Peoples Partnership on Forest, Climate Change and Sustainable Development in their submission² reiterated that non-carbon benefits “should further enhance and support social, economic, cultural, spiritual, environmental and governance benefits including respect, protect and fulfilment of indigenous peoples rights, embedded in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).”

Said submission also categorized non-carbon benefits as follows: 1) Improved socio-economic benefits and alleviation of poverty should come about as results of REDD Plus activities; 2) Increased environmental benefits which include the range of actions consistent with “incentivizing” or giving incentives to indigenous peoples’ efforts in conserving and protecting natural forests and



¹ Maurice B. Malanes, *Indigenous leaders count gains from UN climate change meet*, http://www.indigenousclimate.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=207%3Aindigenous-leaders-count-gains-from-un-climate-change-meet&catid=3%3Anews&lang=en.

² Available at <http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/293-submission-on-non-carbon-benefits>.

biodiversity; and 3) Improved governance benefits which includes several elements.

onvention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

During the negotiations on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) in Nagoya, Japan last October 2010, the ABS Protocol, known as the Nagoya Protocol,³ was adopted which recognizes the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities (Article 8j). The Nagoya Protocol has also noted and affirmed the rights of indigenous peoples in its Preambular paragraphs 25 and 26, respectively.

Article 8j states:

“Each contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate:

Subject to national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge innovations and practices.”

What were the gains of indigenous peoples in the Nagoya Protocol? First, consent of indigenous peoples must be obtained when rights to genetic resources are recognized. Second, consent must be obtained when traditional knowledge is accessed or when traditional knowledge led to the discovery of genetic resources.

Third, customary laws of indigenous peoples are being recognized.

Fourth, indigenous peoples can be included in the compliance mechanisms. Hence, indigenous peoples and local communities including their relevant competent local authorities may grant access to traditional knowledge including their genetic resources.

With the Protocol, there is now room for indigenous peoples to assert their rights and there is an opportunity to require governments to recognize and respect rights of indigenous peoples to their traditional knowledge and genetic resources. The Protocol requires that indigenous peoples must benefit from the use of genetic resources by pharmaceutical companies or the rich countries.

Indigenous representatives are also consolidating their efforts in making Article 10(c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity benefit them. They wanted Article 10(c) to become a new major component of the revised work program on Article 8(j). Article 10(c) states that, each contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate:

“Protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements...”



³ For more details, visit <http://www.cbd.int/abs/>.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development known as Rio+20 held in Brazil in 2012 resulted to a clear agreement by the Member States to pursue what are called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs will build upon the Millennium Development Goals, a set of eight goals launched in 2000, foremost of which was to “eradicate extreme poverty” by 2015.

A post-2015 sustainable development agenda resulting from ongoing intergovernmental deliberations is expected to be adopted by UN Member States at a Summit on September 2015.

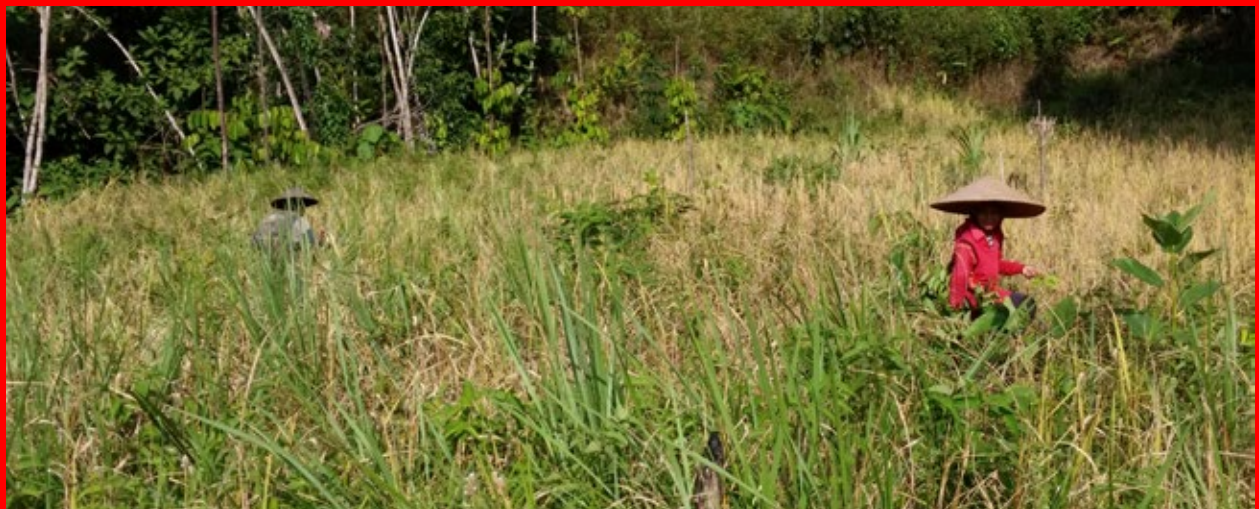
The process of coming up with the SDGs is an “inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process” open to all stakeholders, with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the General Assembly. The proposals on the SDGs are within the functions of a 30-member Open Working Group (OWG) of the UN General Assembly. For more information and updates on the SDGs, please visit <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.html>.

The indigenous peoples as part of the Major Groups (known as IP-MG) are actively engaging and giving inputs in the processes of building up the SDGs. The Major Groups are the nine sectors of society serving as “the main channels through which citizens could organize and participate in international efforts to achieve sustainable development through the United Nations.”

Rio+20’s *The Future We Want* declaration stressed the participation of indigenous peoples in sustainable development. At the same time, the UNCSD recognized the importance of the UNDRIP in the context of global, regional, national and sub-national implementation of sustainable development strategies.

The organizing partners of the indigenous peoples as a Major Group include Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples’ International Centre for Policy Research and Education) in the Philippines, Indigenous Information Network (IIN) based in Kenya and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) in the US. For more information on the ongoing engagements and inputs of the IP-MG, please visit <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=165>.

As of this writing, the IP-MG has put forward its position paper on the vision and priorities for the SDGs. One thing indigenous representatives are pushing to be integrated



as a cross-cutting and fundamental dimension of sustainable development is culture. This dimension is very significant protecting and respecting cultural heritage, traditional knowledge systems and practices of indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples have been calling for a human rights-based approach to the SDGs. At the same time, they note “that cultural diversity, including diverse knowledge systems, and biological diversity underpin the adaptive capacities and resilience of societies and the natural world as complex inter-related systems.”

Furthermore, they reiterated that for the SDGs to be truly universal, the States “must be attentive to overcoming systemic barriers to respecting Indigenous Peoples’ rights to lands, territories and resources and self-determination and must affirm their central contribution to addressing 21st century problems of social exclusion and poverty, loss of biological and cultural diversity, and climate change.”

The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP)

On March 2011, the UN General Assembly decided (A/RES/65/198) to hold a high level plenary meeting to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), which will be held on 22 and 23 September 2014 in New York, USA. Member States and representatives of indigenous peoples are invited in an open-ended consultation “in order to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, (and) to pursue the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

The Conference is expected to come up with a concise, action oriented outcome document, which “should (help realize) the

The Conference is expected to come up with a concise, action oriented outcome document which “should contribute to the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, pursue the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and promote the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals.”

rights of indigenous peoples, pursue the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and promote the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals.”

Indigenous women, young people, older persons and persons with disabilities are encouraged to participate in the WCIP. In this connection, the Commission on the Status of Women in its 56th session (2012) resolution (Resolution 65/4) encourages the States to support the participation of indigenous women in the Conference.

To prepare for the WCIP, indigenous peoples thus have been meeting and consulting each other as regional and national bodies. And in accordance with a UN resolution, the indigenous peoples held the Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference in Alta, Norway last June 2013 and other regional preparatory meetings.

To facilitate the works towards WCIP, an Indigenous Global Coordinating Group (GCG) was formed. The coordinating group is tasked to lobby for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the



UNITED NATIONS
**WORLD
CONFERENCE ON
INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES**
A HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY
MEETING OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

preparatory processes towards, during and after the World Conference. It shall also raise funds, disseminate information, and plan preparations within their respective region or caucus.

On March 5, 2014, the President of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly decided the following: 1) appointing of two Member States (Costa Rica and Slovenia) to assist him with the required consultations with Member States; and 2) requesting the UNPFII, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples groups, to provide names of indigenous representatives to assist him with the consultations. Previously, the President appointed H.E. Crispin Gregoire of the Commonwealth of Dominica as the focal point on the World Conference in his Office.

Recently, the Global Coordinating Group of Indigenous Peoples submitted two nominations of indigenous representatives to serve as the indigenous advisers to the PGA. They are Ms. Myrna Cunningham Kain of Nicaragua and Mr. Les Malezer of Australia.

To effectively participate in the processes leading to the WCIP, indigenous peoples can get updates from and link through <http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples/WorldConference.aspx>, <http://wcip2014.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/WCIP2014>.

**HEALTH
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ICPD Beyond 2014 Review/Cairo +20 Conference

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)⁴ was organized in Cairo, Egypt in 1994 to address the challenges posed by the burgeoning world population and the call to effect sustainable development in every region of the world. The Conference resulted to a forward-looking 20-year Programme of Action or simply the Cairo Consensus focusing on population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development as well as emphasis on women's health, education and status.

Adopted by 179 countries, the Cairo Consensus recognized that reproductive health and rights and women's empowerment and gender equality are foundations of population and development programs. By 2014, the Cairo Programme of Action would have been implemented and expected results are achieved.

For indigenous peoples, the Cairo Consensus highlighted conditions besetting them and provided several calls of actions specifi-

⁴ Official report of the Conference containing the Programme of Action is available at http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2004/icpd_eng.pdf.

cally outlined for them. A specific principle on indigenous peoples is included in the consideration of the numerous actions in the Programme of Action, to wit:

“In considering the population and development needs of indigenous people, States should recognize and support their identity, culture and interests, and enable them to participate fully in the economic, political and social life of the country, particularly where their health, education and well-being are affected” (Principle 14).

To identify progress and achievements of the goals set in 1994, a review⁵ is set throughout 2014 which the world leaders from the governments and civil society can engage to create a new consensus building on the evidence of achievements and challenges in achieving the goals of the ICPD. The review will culminate with the UN General Assembly Special Session on ICPD Beyond 2014 comes September 2014.



One of the world conferences on women where the indigenous women actively participated and strongly voiced their positions was the Fourth World Conference on Women⁶ in Beijing, China on 4 to 15 September 1995. To highlight their distinct concerns and calls, they put up the Indigenous Women Tent.

The conference resulted to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which “aims at accelerating the implementation

⁵ Review timeline can be seen at <http://icpdbeyond2014.org/key-events/view/15-icpd-beyond-2014-review-timeline>.

⁶ For more details, visit <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/fwcwn.html>.

of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.”

Though the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was widely accepted and supported by governments and the civil society, the indigenous women were critical of it coming up with the *Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women*, which analyzes their situation as indigenous women at the same time points out the gaps in the said Conference document. It also contains their standing calls for indigenous peoples and for indigenous women in particular.

To determine the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 years since its adoption in 1995, the Commission on the Status of Women will review what has been achieved thus far in its fifty-ninth session. There will be national, regional and global reviews before the 59th session at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 9 to 20 March 2015.

For indigenous women, the review processes are best opportunities to participate and feed significant and relevant data, at the same time, forward recommendations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.



Looking Forward to the WCIP ...

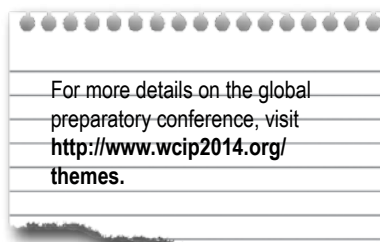
Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference

Over 600 indigenous peoples, advisors, observers and representatives of media outfits attended the global preparatory conference of the indigenous peoples in Alta, Norway on 10 to 12 last June 2013. The indigenous peoples who converged came from the seven regions of the world—Asia, Africa, North America, Central and South America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia, the Arctic, and the Pacific.

Organized by the Sami Parliament, the preparatory conference aimed to strengthen mutual cooperation of indigenous peoples and to identify and coordinate important efforts and initiatives around problems and issues affecting them such as those that safeguard their human rights.

By consensus, the Alta Outcome Document was adopted by the delegates. The document identifies overarching themes and forwards recommendations for the WCIP. As a rallying docu-

ment, indigenous peoples are lobbying for it to be included in the interactive hearing, in the high level plenary meeting and the expected concise, action-oriented outcome document. In fact, the Alta Outcome Document is now considered an official document of the UN (A/67/994) after nine Member States signed the letter requesting the Secretary-General to make it document an official document.



World Conference of Indigenous Women

Held in the City of Lima, Peru from 28 to 30th of October 2013, the conference was a strategic space for the indigenous women coming from Africa, the Arctic, Asia, Latin America, North America, the Pacific, and Russia.

In view of the Beijing +20 Conference on 2015, Cairo +20 Conference, the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples on 2014, and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the more than 200 indigenous women agreed on a unified position as their platform towards the above world conferences.





Lima Declaration of the World Conference of Indigenous Women

We, Indigenous women from the seven sociocultural regions of the world, met at the World Conference of Indigenous Women - *'Progress and challenges regarding the future we want'* in Lima, Peru, from October 28-30, 2013. Our gathering included elders and youth, urban and rural, knowledge holders and healers, activists and artists. We were honoured by the participation of our allies and supporters, including UN agencies, donors, governments and organizations in solidarity. We shared our stories, struggles, victories, challenges and proposals to move us forward building upon what we have already achieved.

We based our discussions on the contributions of those women who came before us, as well as our aspirations for future generations. We celebrated the strength, beauty and expertise of indigenous women at this gathering and around the world.

Indigenous Women assert our right to self-determination, which encompasses the direct, full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples, including the vital role of Indigenous women, in all matters related to our human rights, political status, and well-being. We

endorse the principle: *"Nothing about us, without us,"* and further declare *"Everything about us, with us."*

Indigenous Women affirm our responsibility to protect the Earth, our Mother. Indigenous women experience the same pain and impacts from the physical abuse and excessive exploitation of the natural world, of which we are an integral part. We will defend our lands, waters, territories and resources, which are the source of our survival, with our lives. Protection of Mother Earth is an historic, sacred and continuing responsibility of the world's indigenous peoples, as the ancestral guardians of the Earth's lands, waters, oceans, ice, mountains and forests. These have sustained our distinct cultures, spirituality, traditional economies, social structures, institutions, and political relations from time immemorial. Indigenous women play a primary role in safeguarding and sustaining Mother Earth and her cycles.

Today, at this time of compounded crises of climate change and impending irreversible loss of biological diversity, Indigenous Women underscore the duty of States to protect the territories of Indigenous Peoples, as critical areas for the social, cultural and ecological recovery and resilience of humankind and the natural world.

For Indigenous Peoples, our lands and territories comprise not only the geographical and physical areas of our lands, waters, oceans, ice, mountains and forests, but also the profound cultural, social and spiritual relationships, values and responsibilities, that connect us to our ancestral homelands.

Indigenous Peoples' sovereign jurisdiction over our lands, territories and resources is the foundation of our rights to self-determination, self-governance and free, prior and informed consent. State violations and failure to uphold these rights are a primary source of conflicts and overlapping claims by extractive industries, forest concessions, energy programmes, and other harmful projects arising from a failed and exploitative model of economic growth and development.

Indigenous women call upon states to recognize and respect our rights to lands, territories and resources as enshrined in Indigenous customary law, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other international human rights instruments. This includes our right to freely pursue our own economic, social, and cultural development.

There is an urgent need to implement the rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous women are active human rights defenders of all individual and collective human rights of our Peoples. We often bear the burden of social and environmental harms arising from the consistent denial and violation of our human rights and the lack of implementation and accountability of States.

Indigenous women and girls experience multiple forms of discrimination, lack of access to education and health care, high rates of poverty, maternal and child mortality. We are subject to all forms of violence, such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, including in the contexts of trafficking, armed conflict, environmental violence, and extractive industries.

As Indigenous women, we recognize the importance of sexual and reproductive health and education for all ages. This includes our associated rights to culturally appropriate health and education services in our communities, and the right to exercise, maintain, and control our own health knowledge and practices. We call for zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination, and all forms of violence against Indigenous Women and girls, which are among the worst and most pervasive forms of human rights violations perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples.

Finally, we affirm that Indigenous women have knowledge, wisdom, and practical experience, which has sustained human societies over generations. We, as mothers, life givers, culture bearers, and economic providers, nurture the linkages across generations and are the active sources of continuity and positive change.

In regard to forthcoming global events,

We call upon the WCIP to include the proposals in the Alta Outcome Document for the establishment of effective mechanisms to hold States accountable to their human rights and other obligations.

We call upon the WCIP to prioritise the issues and concerns of Indigenous Women in all the themes, organizational arrangements, outcome documents, and to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women, including elders and youth.

We call upon States, the UN system, and all relevant actors to ensure the effective implementation of the Plan of Action and Recommendations arising from the World Conference of Indigenous Women, including through the provision of sufficient financial resources and other support within the frameworks and processes of Beijing +20, Cairo +20 and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

We thank our hosts, the Indigenous Peoples and the Government of Perú, in particular CHIRAPAQ, Centro de Culturas Indígenas de Perú, and the International Indigenous Women's Forum, Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas, Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact, Indigenous Women Africa, Alianza de Mujeres Indígenas de Centroamérica y México, Asian Indigenous Women's Network, Pacific Indigenous Women's Network, and Indigenous Information Network. Together, we will continue our movement forward.



Philippines' Indigenous Woman Leader Named to United Nations Post

James Anaya and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, center, current and incoming Special Rapporteurs, respectively, meet with the Asia Caucus during the UNPFII 13th Session at the UN Headquarters in New York in May 2014.

Filipino indigenous woman leader Victoria Tauli-Corpuz has been named as Special Rapporteur on indigenous peoples rights, a position in which she will assess the condition of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples worldwide.

United Nations Human Rights Council president Boudelaire Ndong Ella confirmed Tauli-Corpuz's selection on March 3, noting her "active involvement with United Nations and multi-stakeholder cross-regional bodies on indigenous issues and her past collaboration with and commitment to constructive engagement among governments and indigenous peoples."



The Council also considered “her vision for the mandate including a desire to extend the current Special Rapporteur’s work on sustainable and inclusive economic development would deliver particular benefits for the mandate” and “the value a gender perspective would bring.”

“It will be considered as agreed *ad referendum* by all Members, if there is no objection by close of business on Friday 7,” Ella said in a March 3 letter to Council members. The formal appointment of Special Rapporteur mandate holders, however, will

be announced on March 28, the last day of the 25th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

As Special Rapporteur, Tauli-Corpuz will conduct thematic research on issues relevant to the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples; visit countries to observe and hear about the challenges faced by indigenous peoples; and communicate with governments when human rights violations are alleged.

Tauli-Corpuz founded Tebtebba, a non-government organization which—since 1996 when it was founded—has been engaging with the United Nations on concerns such as indigenous peoples rights, sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity. She is also the convenor of the Asian Indigenous Women’s Network.

As an indigenous leader and activist, she was among those who lobbied for more than 20 years before the UN General Assembly finally adopted on September 13, 2007 the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

For her new post, Tauli-Corpuz will derive the wealth of her past experiences as former Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the highest advisory body on indigenous issues within the United Nations system, from 2005-2009.

She was also an Expert for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations.

She was a Philippine government delegate to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change as REDD Plus lead negotiator, and was a co-chair of the convention’s working group on REDD Plus under its Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA). REDD Plus refers to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests

and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

As she anticipates the demands of the work, Tauli-Corpuz intends “to embark on cutting-edge studies to surface indigenous peoples’ issues.”

Among these possible studies, she said, shall focus on the impacts of big business on the rights of indigenous peoples. She said many conflicts arise as big business such as plantations and big mining encroach into indigenous peoples’ lands and territories without public consultation and transparency.

Tauli-Corpuz thanked those various indigenous peoples and civil society organizations, which endorsed her to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights of the UN in Geneva.

Expecting a “daunting task” ahead, she said she expects to collaborate with other indigenous partner organizations in various parts worldwide, which expressed their support.

Aroha Te Pareake Mead of the Maori Victoria Business School in Wellington, New Zealand and chair of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy said the news of Tauli-Corpuz’s choice by the HRC president is “very fitting for you and us.”

“We look forward to seeing Victoria Tauli-Corpuz take on this considerable task and to continuing our collaboration with her in the future,” said the Copenhagen-based nongovernment International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in a statement. “We are certain that she will make excellent use of her expertise and experience in this important position, for which she has our full support.”

For more information on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, please go to the following link:

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ipeoples/srindigenouspeoples/pages/sripeoplesindex.aspx>



The new Special Rapporteur presents her priorities during discussions of Agenda item 4: Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, 20 May 2014, UNPFII 13th Session. Photo credit: UN Web TV



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

A witness and a voice for indigenous people

by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz

I got the final confirmation from the UN Human Rights Council for my appointment as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (SRRIP). Just thinking of what this means, overwhelms me.

I was a reluctant applicant as I know the work this position requires and I was not sure that this is what I wanted to do.

I was involved in drafting and negotiating the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) from 1987 until it was adopted in 2007 by the UN General Assembly. But that was only the beginning.

We have to continuously raise the awareness of governments, the UN and the society at large that there is this Declaration that sets the minimum international standards to ensure the survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous peoples.

The more difficult task is getting States and third parties, e.g. private corporations, to respect, protect and fulfill these rights. This is the daunting task which the Special Rapporteur is mandated to do.

She or he will monitor the human rights situations of indigenous peoples all over the world and promote ways to address the obstacles in implementing the UNDRIP and all relevant international human rights standards.



Implementation gap

The sad reality is that there is still a long way to go before we can say that the UNDRIP is effectively implemented in the Philippines and the rest of the world. There remains a big implementation gap.

Just this month of March, a series of killings of indigenous persons by unknown armed men. Among those who were killed is William Bugatti, a human rights activist and a Tawali from Ifugao, whom I personally know. He was shot in March 27 in Kiangnan, Ifugao while he was riding home in his motorbike.

Then a Tingguian family, Licuben Ligiw (father) and his two sons Edwin and Fermin, were killed in March 2 and buried in a shallow grave in Sukaw, Domenglay, Baay-Licuan, Abra. It was alleged that this was done by members of the 41st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army. Bugatti and the Ligiw family were associated with the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance, the body I used to chair in the early 1990s.

There will be many similar cases which will be brought to my attention when I will assume this post. How will I absorb all these tragic stories and still maintain my objectivity, independence and optimism?

What kind of help can a Rapporteur realistically do with such cases, outside of bringing this to the attention of governments and the UN? What kind of support networks should I reach out to or establish to help me do my work and how to set these up? There will be high expectations from members of indigenous peoples' movement from this position and I doubt if I can even meet half of these.

These and many other questions come to mind as I ponder on how I will effectively undertake my mandate as a Special Rapporteur.

Evidence needed

It is crucial that indigenous colleagues and human rights activists sharpen their documentation skills so that strong evidences will accompany complaints brought to me. Governments also have to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur.

One of the biggest challenges which Special Raporteur James Anaya identified in his final report is how difficult it is to get governments to officially invite him to their countries to look at the human rights conditions of indigenous peoples. He says that while many States have stated that they have standing invitations to Rapporteurs, it is still not easy to get one. I hope the Philippines will be one of the first countries to officially invite me.

I am very much aware of the great work done by Professors Rodolfo Stavenhagen and James Anaya, the first two Special Rapporteurs. In 2002, I helped organize the official country visit of Stavenhagen to the Philippines. I took part in some of the dialogues they held with indigenous peoples and others.

They have significantly raised the bar of what Rapporteurs can do. I need to build upon the achievements of these two men, both of whom I regard in high esteem.

My experiences of more than four decades as an indigenous activist doing community organizing, movement building and advocacy for human rights of indigenous peoples and women will no doubt help me.

Drafting and negotiating the UNDRIP and being the Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) from 2005-2009 are additional experiences which will come in handy. Strong support from indigenous peoples and governments, NGOs, the UN system, the academia and also faith-based groups and donors will be needed to sustain the task of a Rapporteur. I look forward to the conversations with all these groups. - <http://rappler.com/>



Violence Against Indigenous Women in

Asia¹



In behalf of the Asia Caucus, the Asia Indigenous Women's Network, in collaboration with the following indigenous peoples' and women's organizations, BAI-Philippines (Federation of Indigenous Women in the Philippines), Kapaeeng Foundation and Maleya of Bangladesh, the National Indigenous Women's Federation and National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal, would like to seek your attention to the unabated aggression on the rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous women in Asia. This situation continues to impede on our full development as women and as peoples, thereby impacting on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is sure to have dire consequences on the Sustainable Development Goals/Post-2015 Development Agenda currently under negotiation.

Information on rape and sexual violence against indigenous women to undermine community solidarity is alarming. In Bangladesh, at least 245 indigenous women were raped or sexually harassed since 2007, 211 of which took place in

the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), according to reports by the Kapaeeng Foundation, an indigenous peoples' human rights organization. Nineteen cases of rape of indigenous persons in the past four months, including 12 children, occurred in the CHT and two were subsequently murdered (both in Kagrachari). Earlier used as a weapon of war, violence against indigenous women is now being used to establish a climate of fear and facilitate land grabbing.

In Nepal, we are happy to note reports from the Free Kamlari Development Forum and the National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities that as of 2013, 1,200 kamlaris have been rescued from bondage since 2001, in conformity with the state's Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act. We commend the state of Nepal for this effort to address this issue of bonded labor, which has affected generations of the Tharu indigenous peoples due to impoverishment. However, among them, some 100 have reportedly returned into kamlari servitude due to lack of support services to enable them either to go back to school, seek employment or



¹ Intervention presented by Eleanor Dictaan-Bang-oa of the AIWN Secretariat during the 13th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Agenda Item 5: Half-day discussion on the Asian region, 12-23 May 2014.

undertake income generating activities. An estimated 900 kamlaris in the Districts of Dang, Bake, Burdya, Kohlali, and Kanchapur still remain bonded to their landlords.

Last April 2, in southern Philippines, some 307 Ata-Manobos families (1,353 individuals, 515 children) from their villages in Talaingod, Davao del Norte were forced to evacuate due to relentless military harassment, human rights violations and indiscriminate firing and aerial bombing around their community. Four pregnant women reportedly gave birth prematurely and a 12 day-old baby died from the stress of evacuation. Talaingod is being targeted for a mining, hydropower and oil palm plantation investments.

Furthermore, of the 43 documented cases of extrajudicial killings of indigenous peoples in southern Philippines since 2010, five (5) were women and six (6) were children. All these are related to the struggle of indigenous peoples against extractive industries. In the Philippines, military deployment is almost corollary to mining investment interest covering 957,530

hectares or almost 1/30 of the country's total land area. Over half of these are found in the territories and lands of indigenous peoples, some of which are also classified as Key Biodiversity Areas.

A glimpse of the situation of indigenous women in Asia reveals that prevailing aggressive development models—particularly of extractive industries, mega-hydro-power plants, monoculture plantations, etc. in collaboration with armed forces and entrenched by the gaps in implementing policies and programmes—have eroded the dignity and identities of indigenous women in the region.

Violence against indigenous women has severely impacted on their collective and individual rights to their land, resources and territories, as well as to their well-being, cultures and identities. The aggressive development model has been ravaging not only our lands and resources but also on our persons where mainstream patriarchal culture has been influencing unequal gender, marriage and family relations.



This Is Not The Kind Of Development We Want!

Our well-being springs from our collective lifeways that respect individual differences; from our lands and resources, which provide for our and our children's needs; and the security we derive from the trust and confidence we have on each other as indigenous peoples and communities. All these are being undermined by the lack of political will to genuinely respect, protect and fulfill the rights of indigenous peoples in the region.

We call on States:

1. For an immediate demilitarization of indigenous peoples' territories. States should instead put their attention to bringing justice to the historical discrimination and violence against indigenous peoples through repeal of policies and programmes that are not coherent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. States should institute independent and impartial inquiries into human rights violations against indigenous peoples and violence against indigenous women and girls; prosecute and punish the perpetrators; and ensure reparations for both victims and survivors of violence.
2. Stop intrusion of private/corporate investments into indigenous territories, including landgrabbing through social engineering and resettlement programmes.
3. We call on concerned international agencies to ensure that international standards are exercised and that their specific policies on indigenous peoples are strictly followed in the implementation of their mandates. This includes providing spaces and resources to empower or support capacity building for indigenous women and girls to be able to address their situations of marginalization and discrimination, ensuring full and effective participation of indigenous women in all levels, processes and matters that affect them, including the Sustainable Development Goals/Post-2015 Development Agenda and the upcoming World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.
4. We recommend that the UN Permanent Forum closely works with UN Country Teams and the States to address domestic violence in the context of each State's colonial history, political and economic structures, and ethnic and cultural diversity towards strategically eliminating all forms of violence against indigenous women. Such strategy should include provision and support for access to justice and culturally-sensitive reintegration of survivors of violence and families of victims.
5. We request the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to investigate the unabated violence against indigenous women and human rights violations related to their particular struggles as indigenous peoples.
6. We call on our own peoples and communities to recognize and address gender discrimination and violence in the name of tradition.



Her dream: a model community in organic farming and waste management

For Woman Farmer, Organic is Still the Healthier Alternative

By Maribeth Bugtong-Biano and Virgie Dammay

Photo credit: Innabuyog Cordillera



Growing up in the northern Philippine upland farming village of Ambiong in La Trinidad town, farmer Jocelyn Lannu has seen how agriculture has changed in her village in recent decades. The change worries her but she is hopeful that something good can still be done about her urbanizing community threatened by chemical farming and urban wastes.

“The organic approach remains the healthier alternative in my community,” said the 41-year-old mother of four.

Time was when Ambiong farmers used to rely on natural means such as decayed weeds and grasses and animal dung for their crops. But the intensive advertising campaign of agro-chemical companies since the 1960s, which the government’s agriculture department actually supported, drastically altered farmers’ traditional practices.

In no time farmers soon shifted to “modern” farming, which means intense use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides (including fungicides) and lately, herbicides (chemicals sprayed to kill weeds.)

Ambiong farmers have resorted to chemicals as the fastest and easiest way to raise vegetables. In recent decades, farmers have also begun cultivating cut-flowers, which also demand high chemical inputs to meet production targets. This is particularly so because Ambiong is barely four kilometers from the commercial district of Baguio City.

Ambiong, one of La Trinidad town’s 16 villages, had remained rural where everybody knows practically his or her neighbors. But the village’s population has increased in recent years, reaching at least more than 5,000 based on 2007 census.

Ambiong capitalizes on its proximity to Baguio, the country’s summer capital that draws tourists during holidays and the Flower Festival in February. No wonder Ambiong has attracted migrants from neighboring provinces to join the original Ibaloy settlers. As a result, more and more houses and other business structures are being built, making

the village practically an extension of Baguio City and the central business district of La Trinidad.

Both Ibaloy and migrants got attracted to the promising vegetable and cut-flower industry in Ambiong’s remaining farm patches. And both vegetable and cut-flower growers find it easier to use chemicals to meet their production targets during seasons when visitors flock to Baguio.

But to Lannu, learning new organic farming approaches must be promoted and propagated further. She thus felt fortunate to have been one of women farmers and housewives to train about vermiculture.

Vermiculture is the process of raising earthworms and harvesting the organic material they produce. The training in which Lannu participated specialized on how to raise a species of earthworms called “African night crawlers” (*Eudrilus eugeniae*).

This earthworm species, which is noted for its efficiency in composting, was introduced into the Philippines by Dr. Rafael D. Guerrero III, the acknowledged father of vermiculture in the country, via West Germany, the original cocoons courtesy of Dr. Otto Graff. But the origin of this species was West Africa, and, according to Graff, is now widely



Jocelyn, center, sharing her experiences on how she constructed her “vermi bed.”

distributed in both tropical and subtropical countries worldwide.

The vermiculture training Lannu participated in was part of a project being implemented by the Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center (CWEARC), a grassroots nongovernment development organization providing support to indigenous women's organizations in the northern Philippines' Cordillera region.

Supported by the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the project aims to "enhance the practice of indigenous knowledge in support of socio-economic survival of indigenous women in urban setting."

Serving as the Regional Coordinator for the IPAF projects in the Asia-Pacific region is the Baguio-based nongovernment Tebtebba or Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education.

Immediate application

Immediately after the vermiculture training, Lannu and the other participants were each given a "vermi kit." The kit contains ¼ kg of the African night crawler earthworm for each participant to take care and propagate.

Lannu in no time set up a "vermi bed," a place to propagate earthworms. Some soil and compostable waste are ideal for a vermi bed.

An abandoned pigpen in the Lannus' compound near a backyard garden initially served as vermi bed for the earthworms. She later transferred the worm bed to a wider space, which she fenced off with a net to protect it from the neighbors' chickens, birds and rats.

She also designed her vermi bed in such

a way that she could easily collect the "vermi tea" or the liquid leachate from the wastes, which could be used as foliar fertilizer. After two months, Lannu collected two liters of vermi tea, which she sprayed over her newly planted beans.

"I was excited as my beans bore more fruits and my chia (a kind of herb) plants became more robust, their stems were thicker and had more seeds," she said. "Flowers of my sweet peas emerged five days after I sprayed vermi tea."

But she lamented her garlic plants got burned. "I must have failed to get the correct solution but I was happy as I learned from my mistakes," she said.

(The recommended solution is one liter of vermi tea mixed with 15 liters of natural or rain water, said Moren Macay, a vermiculture trainer and organic farmer. If one has to use the city's chlorinated water, this must be stocked first for three days before it can be mixed with the vermi tea.)

Lannu has proved to be a scientist, too. She compared and contrasted the effect of vermi compost and vermi tea on her bell pepper and beans. She initially concluded that the effect of vermi tea was much faster than vermi compost.

"I still have to ascertain my initial observation and conclusion," she said, showing the attitude of a scientist.

But she was 100 percent certain about one thing: all her family's biodegradables are being converted into something useful – as food for her earthworms. As a bonus, she said she feels fulfilled as "I am helping clean up my community."

Before, her family's biodegradables would be dumped at certain points where the government's garbage truck would pick up. Now the Lannus collect and sell plastic containers and bottles; only plastic bags, Styrofoam, etc. are picked up by the garbage truck.

Through her example, Lannu is slowly winning converts. She cited her sister-in-law, who grows cymbidium orchids and was actu-

ally a former vermiculture practitioner but, for some reasons, stopped.

“I was able to convince her (sister-in-law) to go back to vermiculture,” said Lannu.

Timely

Lannu has long been advocating organic farming. But she had long been searching for an organic farming approach other than just relying on decayed material or compost.

The rich compost produced by African nightcrawler earthworms was what Lannu had been looking for. So the vermiculture training she participated in was timely.

The training came at a time when more and more people are looking for healthy and toxic-free vegetables, which Lannu has been seeking to produce.

At the same time Lannu saw the potential of vermiculture in helping reduce and manage her urbanizing community’s solid wastes.

The IPAF-supported CWEARC project has targeted more than 400 women in selected villages within the Baguio-La Trinidad area. Through the project, the women were oriented about what was expected of them, trained on how to manage their solid wastes, taught about vermiculture and encouraged to dialogue with local government officials.

CWEARC has noted the support of local government officials and the enthusiasm of other villagers to participate.


Mostly coming from neighboring indigenous communities where traditional or natural or toxic-free farming practices have long been part of their way of life, these women, who have migrated to Ambiong and nearby villages around Baguio and La Trinidad, are actually no stranger to organic approaches. The vermiculture training simply enhanced what the women already knew.

This was precisely the project’s aim: to

enable the women to appreciate more their own indigenous knowledge and values as they engage in self-driven or community-driven socio-economic activities, which can help uplift their lives in an urban setting.

Having seen the immediate impact of the vermiculture training in her own backyard, Lannu is upbeat about her community’s future. “I am hopeful that in the long run, our community will be a model in terms of waste management and that we will be known for our quality organic vegetables,” she said.





Getting to know Bangladesh's indigenous Garo women

Common Dream: Education for their Children

by Shalomi Sangma

There are more than 45 indigenous groups living in Bangladesh now. Of these numbers, two groups are matriarchal in their social system. These are the Garos¹ and the Khasis but who are different from each other.

As a Garo woman, I like to introduce our Garo community. We, Garos, have lived in Bangladesh since the very beginning of our history as a country. We are a small group with a population of about five million. Our Garo history says we came originally from Tibet a

¹ The Garos are mainly distributed over the Kamrup, Goalpara and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam, Garo Hills, a few in Khasi Hills in Meghalaya, and substantial numbers, about 200,000, are found in greater Mymensingh (Tangail, Jamalpur, Sherpore, Netrakona, Mymensingh) and Gazipur, Rangpur, Sunamgonj, Sylhet, Moulvibazar districts of Bangladesh. It is estimated that total Garo population in India and Bangladesh are about 1 million.

Garos are also found scattered in the state of Tripura. The recorded Garo population was around 6,000 in 1971. A recent survey conducted by the newly-revived Tripura Garo Union revealed that the number of Garos have increased to about 15,000, spreading to all the four districts of Tripura.

Garos also form a minority in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Dinajpur of West Bengal. In Nagaland, the present generation of Garos, who are a minority, do not speak the ethnic language anymore. (Wikipedia)

thousand years ago. Now, the Garos live in different places in Bangladesh. We live very close with the Bengali community. We speak the Garo language but we eventually learned Bengali as well. We are also 99 percent Christians.

Because of our matriarchal system, our surnames come from our mothers' surnames. Mothers head and lead the whole family. We also have a right to inherit family property, a right to travel, and a right to our own opinion. Women participate in every activity of the community and the church. Ever hardworking, most Garo women work in agriculture, some in NGOs, very few in the government service and some in handicraft. Many girls work in beauty parlors and as domestic helpers overseas.

Highly cultural, hardworking

We wear dakmanda as a skirt, a blouse and a scarf. Now, many girls don Western dresses. Our traditional ornaments are not available now. We use very simple ornaments now made of silver with some women wearing gold, depending on each woman's ability.

The Garo women are highly cultural and spiritual. We participate in different community programs like Christmas, wedding, New Year's celebration and wangala (harvesting). We cook, dance and sing. Some women make traditional drinks to be consumed with relatives and neighbors together during special occasions.

We do all field and domestic works as long as we can. We work in agriculture from planting paddy to harvesting, even in preparing rice to eat. We use traditional materials in cultivating the land. After harvesting, we

use our traditional system where we separate the rice from its hull when the rice grains come out of the machine (mill). Some women feel empowered as they have their resources, farm land, self employment, training, capital, education, and good wages (income).

Garo girls, who are in college or university for better opportunities, are increasing in number. But they face many challenges. As new comers in a school, they do not identify themselves as Garo but as another group for obvious reasons—discrimination and stereotyping. They struggle with a different culture while facing the challenge of not having relatives or friends to help them in school admissions, lodging and others. Girls who have financial resources stay in girls' hostels. But now girls' hostels are becoming expensive and lesser spaces are available.

To support themselves, some girls engage in part-time jobs in shopping malls and other



organizations. But getting a part-time job is difficult as there are not many available jobs and the competition is high.

Despite their predicaments in the city as a woman and as a student, they try to survive. Some win, some lose. Still, they continue to hope and dream, knowing full well that they are part of the next generation who will take on the responsibility to help build our society.

With their skills, talents, dedication and hard work, Garo women are helping build and strengthen their families, community and state.

Khusmoni Rema's story

Khusmoni Rema, in her mid-forties, lives in the village of Netrokana district. Her husband is cultivating a small land. They have three children—a girl and two boys who are all studying. The eldest is studying while working part time.

An agricultural worker, Khusmoni's day starts early. "As soon as I get up early in the morning, I go to church for my daily prayer," she said, suggesting where she gets all her inner strength. "After an hour, I come back to cook and break my fast before going to my farm."

To earn some extra money, she sometimes works in other women's fields. She says she earns the equivalent of at least US\$1.5 a day.

On the same day after working in another's farm, she spends whatever remaining daylight to tend her own vegetable garden. After the sun sets, she takes a bath, goes to the market to buy some needs before cooking dinner for her family.

Khusmoni has to work hard to send her children to school as her husband works only for some days. His income is not enough for them as he also spends most of his earnings in alcohol. Each day he goes home drunk.

With her husband not mindful of the family's well-being and the children's education, Khusmoni is practically raising the family solely by herself.

Despite the challenges at home, Khusmoni's big heart is not only confined to her own family. She regularly helps out the sick or any one in her community facing domestic problems. As part of community social

responsibility, she usually goes with other women to help others in need.

Unable to go to school as her parents were not conscious about education's value, Khusmoni recognized that education offers more opportunities and possibilities for people. "Now I know what a precious thing this education is! My life could have been different had I gone to school," she said, citing other available jobs she could not get because she was not qualified.

She does not have much land and does not have enough money to start something such as a small business. Although a member



of a microcredit program of an organization, she has only little savings and is not qualified to take big loans as she could not repay the loan with interest.

Now that she is sick, she cannot work hard. She started getting medication but stopped for lack of money.

Despite all, she remains hopeful. "I have a dream and I pray to God that my children will be educated and become good men," said Khusmoni. "I do not aspire for more in life (as long as my children get educated and become responsible citizens.)"



Participating Effectively *in the* **UN CSW 58**

by Eleanor P. Dictaan-Bang-oa



Photo credit: Yesenia Ticona



Photo credit: Yesenia Ticona

A panel discussion on how violence and discrimination against Asian indigenous women impact on their right to full development as women and as indigenous peoples was held during the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW 58).¹

Entitled “Development and Indigenous Women in Asia,” the side event focused on cases in Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Norma Capuyan, Bai-Kalumaran spokesperson, presented the escalating human rights violations among indigenous women and children in the Philippines. In recent years, mining industries, biofuel and monocrop plantations and hydropower dams have caused and continue to cause havoc in indigenous communities, especially in southern Philippines. She noted that military



deployment is almost corollary to mining investment interest covering 957,530.86 hectares or almost 1/30 of the country’s total land area. Over half of these are found in the territories and lands of indigenous peoples, some of which are also classified as Key Biodiversity Areas.

Highlighting cases of Lumad² women that have been killed, harassed or threatened, she said that of the 43 documented cases of

¹ UNCSW 58 was held on March 10-21, 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The side event, held on 11 March, was organized by the Asia Indigenous Women’s Network, in collaboration with the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (IIWF), and supported by the United Nations Fund for Gender Equality.

² Indigenous peoples in southern Philippines.

extrajudicial killings of indigenous peoples since 2010, five cases were concerning women while six cases were on children.

Bipasha Chakma, research staff of the Kapaeng Foundation in Bangladesh, called on the implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord and the establishment of the CHT Land Commission (including a Land Commission for indigenous peoples in the plains) consistent with the rights of indigenous peoples to their traditional lands. This, she stated, is a needed major step to address issues of conflict and violence experienced not only by indigenous women and girls in the CHT, but among indigenous peoples in Bangladesh in general. In 2007-2013, there were 226 reported cases of violence against indigenous women in the CHT but no perpetrators were prosecuted. Taking a closer look at this, Ms. Chakma said that in 2010-2011, only six out of 56 cases reported were heard in court. Despite verdicts against the perpetrators, nobody was reportedly punished.

In Nepal, Ms. Chanda Thapa Magar, speaking on behalf of the National Federation of Indigenous Women and the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, discussed how patriarchy interlocks with lack of access to basic services, participation and representation. She also analyzed the influence of globalized socio-economic frameworks differentially impacting on the overall well-being and identities of indigenous women. Among the persistent and urgent manifestation of this are the issues of bonded labor and trafficking among the Tharu and Tamang indigenous peoples, respectively.

According to the Global Slavery Index Report 2012, Nepal—despite its Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act of 2001—is fifth among 162 countries with high prevalence of modern slavery. The Kamlari system goes back some 50 years ago when Tharus lost most of their properties to higher caste groups coming into their communities. Due to the resulting poverty, they were forced to seek loans and send their children, some as young as six years old, as domestic and farm helps for a certain period agreed upon to pay off their debts (please see Box: “A Salute to the Kamlaris”). Kamlari refers to female bonded laborer while kamaiya refers to male bonded laborer.

Trafficking has been rampant among Tamang girls and women. Generally lacking in basic needs, Tamang women and girls, are smuggled into India, Southeast Asia and the Middle East with promises of jobs and income, sometimes by their own relatives.

These are just some of the issues that highlight how international agreements, covenants (i.e., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women or CEDAW), international human



Photo credit: FIMI

rights instruments and the Millennium Development Goals, have failed to address the particular situations of indigenous women. Thus, the firm and collective call to ensure full and effective participation of indigenous women in all processes that affect them as women and as indigenous peoples continues to be an urgent demand.

At the UNCSW 58, 31 indigenous women from the Arctic, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific convened as the indigenous women's caucus to promote and lobby for the adoption of the "Indigenous women's political position on the Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda," a document identifying indigenous women's key messages to the UNCSW. This is consistent with and is a follow through to the Lima Declaration of the World Conference of Indigenous Women held last 28-30 October 2013 in Lima, Peru.

The full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, including women and youth, has been a major concern in the processes leading to the UN High Level Plenary Meeting to be known as World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in September 2014. With this concern in mind, the indigenous women's caucus at UNCSW 58 requested an audience with the WCIP Focal Person, H.E. Crispin Gregoire, under the Office of the President of the General Assembly. In the meeting, the caucus reiterated the global indigenous peoples' call for full and effective participation in this significant event that would undoubtedly impact on their situations.

Part of the results of UNCSW 58 was the adoption of indigenous women's recommendations in its Agreed Conclusions (E/CN.6/2014/L.7), entitled "Challenges and Achievements in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for Women and Girls." In paragraph A (i) of the said document, the Commission urged all concerned governments, agencies and other entities to "Encourage the participation of indigenous

women and girls in the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, noting the contribution of that conference towards the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, bearing in mind that indigenous women and girls face particular challenges in achieving the Millennium Development Goals."³

A SALUTE TO

*Kamlaris*⁴

by Eleanor P. Dictaan-Bang-oa

Staring straight into space and without expression, Gita Chaudary recalls, "I was eight years old when I first served as a kamlari to a Brahmin landlord. I was tasked to do all household work, except cooking, for a family of 12. Aside from this, I was also tasked to collect fodder and firewood. I felt like I was not a human being. There were even times when I was sexually harassed by the landlord. I went home after one year but had to work under another landlord for two years."

The second landlord Gita was sent to was worse. In addition to household work, she had to take care of pasturing and feeding cattle while collecting cow dung for fuel. She was not given food. She ate the leftovers from the plates she was supposed to wash. She also had to endure beatings from the landlord's children and was not allowed to wash or take a bath.

As Gita unflinchingly relates her story, I literally got goosebumps all over as we listened in horror.

Kamlaris are girls who are bonded to labor to pay off the debts of their parents as domestic help to the landlord or as payment for the use of the landlord's property. This is common among the Tharus of Nepal.

Bishnu also related her bitter experience as a kamlari. Her father died when she was 11 years

³ E/CN.6/2014/L.7. Advanced Unedited Version, 21 March 2014.

⁴ Based on an interview during a field visit in Nepal on 20 August 2013.



From left, Manjita Chaudhary and Gita Chaudhary sharing the challenges among kamlaris during the “Training Towards Enhancing Indigenous Women’s Rights Using International Human Rights Instruments” co-organized by the Tebtebba, NEFIN and NIWF, with support from the UNFGE, last 24-30 August 2013 at Dhulikhel, Nepal.

old. She has a brother with broken legs who also served as a kamaiya. At 13 years old, Bishnu was sent to a landlord. Like Gita, she did all household work and collected fodder for cattle. Fortunately, their house is near the landlord’s house so she can sneak out to eat when hungry.

“I usually cry to my mother but cannot complain,” she said.

Gita and Bishnu are two of about 1,200 Kamlaris rescued from bondage since 2001 who are now leading the Free Kamlari Development Forum (FKDF). An estimated 900 kamlaris in the districts of Dang, Baki, Burdya, Kohlali, and Kanchapur still remain bonded to their landlords. The FKDF, with the help of advocacy and indigenous peoples groups in Nepal, are looking forward to freeing every kamlari and putting a stop to the said practice, once and for all.

Tharus trace the kamlari system around 50 years back when they experienced massive displacement from their traditionally-owned lands by the higher caste. With no land to till for food, they offered their services as tenants. Opportunistic landlords would demand one member of the

family to do household and other work for them as a condition or means of paying rental. Others, due to poverty, may approach the Brahmins/Chetris for loans. When the loans are not paid within a period agreed upon, they are forced to send any of their children as kamlari (for girls) or kamaiya (for boys) to pay off their debts. Generally illiterate, Tharus are often cheated in these deals. Worse, the lost childhood and abuse kamlaris and kamaiyas experience have effected lifelong scars on several generations of Tharu.

Unfortunately, only a few of the freed kamlaris are given opportunities to continue their education. Most of them get married instead. Many who do not get any support are left without options but to go back to their landlords. From the 1,200 freed Kamlaris in these five districts, about 100 have reportedly returned to kamlari servitude. The FKDF has established five cooperatives among the freed kamlaris in the said districts to facilitate their livelihood options, but support is nil. Government’s promised support, sadly, is still to be realized.

REALIZING INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RIGHTS: A HANDBOOK ON THE CEDAW

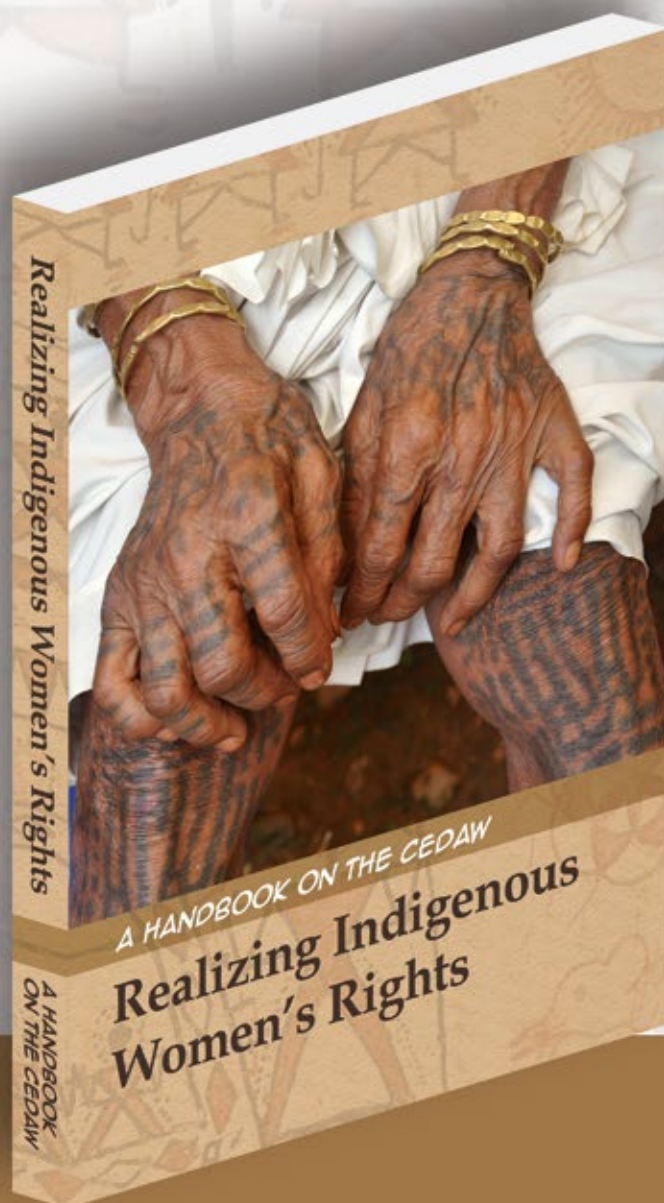
The indigenous women in Asia and in other regions of the world still lack the necessary knowledge and skills in asserting and making their rights a reality. To address this concern, Asian Indigenous Women's Network and its partners, Forest Peoples Programme and Tebtebba came up with a handbook on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Realizing Indigenous Women's Rights: A Handbook on the CEDAW provides information on the rights of indigenous women giving details on CEDAW as the only specific instrument for women. The handbook also provides brief overview of other human rights mechanisms the indigenous women can avail of.

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the particular situations of indigenous women in Asia, including the particularities of violence they are experiencing with the prevailing and existing conditions in indigenous communities and territories. Chapter 2 deals with the principles of human rights and the international human rights instruments providing for the rights of women. It focuses on the CEDAW as a specific instrument for protecting the rights of women.

Chapter 3 presents the different mechanisms and possible options that indigenous women may take to seek redress for discrimination or violence. It provides specific information and tools that have been developed

in aid of asserting human rights based on the mechanisms and procedures provided for under the CEDAW and other international human rights instruments. The final section, Chapter 4, provides a selection of previous jurisprudence from CEDAW that may assist in making arguments for future submissions to that body, or to national and other international legal instruments.



The handbook can be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.asianindigenouswomen.org>

NEWS TIDBITS

BANGLADESH, NOVEMBER 2013

A young indigenous teenage girl, Mala Tripura, was raped by four Bengali men in a village in Mirsarai Upazila of Chittagong District. Of the four identified perpetrators, only two were arrested. What added to the sad incident was the suicide of the victim's father upon learning of his daughter's rape.

In another instance, at least seven women sustained serious injuries and few women were sexually harassed during an attack by a gang of Bengali miscreants in an indigenous Chakma village in Palongkhali union of Ukhiya upazilla under Cox's Bazaar district. Such attack and harassment was made with intent to occupy an indigenous man's land.

BURMA, AUGUST 2013

Villagers in Phankar Village in Namkham Township have lost acres of lands to a Chinese company which confiscated and destroyed their lands as they dug for silicone stones without permission. Uninformed of the digging, the landowners were not compensated for the loss and destruction of their lands. Despite the claims for compensation and promise for compensation by the company, no payment is received yet by the villagers. The digging also clogged drainage to the farms. With all of that, the villagers could hardly have livelihoods.

CAMBODIA, DECEMBER 2013

Indigenous families are being displaced from their territories from sugar cane production by Chinese multinational corporations Rui Feng Co. Ltd. and Lan Feng Co. Ltd. in Pramer Commune in Preah Vihear Province. Not only that, their crops are burned, their animals are slaughtered and their houses destroyed. Many families are left poor and those who were displaced are forced to work in the sugar cane companies even including the children.

The Cambodian Indigenous Women demanded the implementation of a mechanism to protect the rights of the indigenous peoples particularly of indigenous women. Specific of their demands is the effective application of the free, prior and informed consent and the revocation of land concession in the region of Bunong.

INDONESIA, APRIL 2013

Mama Aleta Baun became a winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize. She received the 2013 Islands and Island Nations for her efforts in organizing hundreds of local villagers on a 'weaving protest' by peacefully occupying marble mining sites in Molo, East Nusa Tenggara.

She started her persistent work against marble mining after some years when the company started to clear the mountain and cut the trees. Remoteness of the villages made the task of organizing the people harder but Mama Aleta and other women she mobilized succeeded in convincing their fellow to fight against marble mining in their sacred mountains.



NEPAL, MARCH 2013

Indigenous organizations in Nepal and the Forest Peoples Program submitted a statement to the Commission on the Status of Women in its 57th Session with a priority theme of "*the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.*" The submission "*seeks to present political and economic context, evidence, current state of the practice and gaps and challenges regarding rights of indigenous women and girls, including some recent cases*" in the country.

One striking fact highlighted in the submission is the very minimal representation of indigenous women in major political parties with just 0.76 percent. This shows how severely-underrepresented the indigenous women are in decision making structures in the national level and also at the local level.

In addition, the statement mentions the lack of disaggregated data on indigenous women which show their actual condition, the marginalization in language of indigenous women in public communications systems which utilizes a single national language, and the continues appropriation of customary and traditional lands of indigenous women.

PHILIPPINES, NOVEMBER 2013

The typhoon Haiyan left thousands of indigenous families in the Luzon and Visayas islands heavily impacted with destruction and losses of their houses, boats and other properties. Farms and crops are also devastated. Worst hit and isolated from the government's relief operations, the affected indigenous families struggle to secure their supplies to survive at the same time gradually receiving reliefs from indigenous organizations and other support groups.



Photo credit: Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KAMP).



Photo credit: Glofie Baluntong

PHILIPPINES, MARCH 2014

On two separate occasions, four indigenous leaders were extrajudicially-killed in the Cordillera region. Freddie Ligiw, Edgar Ligiw and their father Licuben Ligiw were killed on March 3 in a village in Licuan-Baay, province of Abra in Luzon island. They were allegedly killed by the elements of the 41st IB of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The victims were staunch oppositions to the entry of large scale mining in their town at the same time members of indigenous peoples' organizations which are frequently under attack of the AFP's harassment and vilification.

On the other hand, William Bugatti was believed to be killed by AFP's operatives on March 25 in the town of Kiangnan, Ifugao province. William was a devoted human rights worker who was very diligent in working for the welfare of human rights victims. For his works, he has received threats and was included in the so-called 'target list' of the AFP and tagged as a member of an armed insurgent group in the country.

With those unjust killings, human rights groups and individuals are calling for justice and for the Aquino regime to bring into justice those responsible for the killings and to effect reforms.

MALAYSIA, NOVEMBER 2013

The Penans of Sarawak who were being forced out of their lands to give way to the almost finished Murum dam project protested the excessive use of force against them by the government armed forces. They claimed that riot police were sent aside from the local police already in their community to intimidate them into moving out of their native lands instead of protecting them.

Blockades set up to stop the project were being dispersed by the police. Food, water, medicines and other necessities being brought into the blockades were also prevented.

While the protests were carried on, negotiations were also on going. Government claims included that of already compensating the displaced Penans which the Penans do not acknowledge of receiving. The promises of monetary compensation, plot of land and other benefits were not actually given as claimed by the Penans.

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NE INDIA, MARCH 2014

Communities affected by the Mapithel Dam joined environmental activists and human rights organizations and advocates on the celebration of the International Day of Action for Rivers and Against Dams on March 14. A public consultation followed by a mass protest rally marked the celebration at Thoubal River (Yangwukong River) at Riha Village along Mapithel Range in Ukhrul District, Manipur.

Whilst the celebration was the observance of the importance of rivers in sustaining life, it was also a venue for the affected villagers and their supporters to voice out their opposition and raise their concerns as the construction of Mapithel is causing huge damage to the people and environment. They reaffirmed their call to "LET THE THOUBAL RIVER (YANGWUKONG) FLOW FREE." They also resolved to protect, preserve and ensure the Thoubal River to free flow and to defend their land and river at all cost.



Photo credit: Jiten Yumnam

Tebtebba Indigenous Information Service. *Philippines' indigenous woman leader named to United Nations post.* March 10, 2014.

Jiten Yumnam. *Stop Mapithel dam call resonates Int'l Rivers Day in Manipur on 14 March.* Email feed @indigenous_wssd, March 15, 2014, 10:51AM.

Windel Bolinget, *Cordillera Human Rights Alliance's Urgent Action Alert and Justice for William Bugatti.* Email feed @indigenous_wssd, March 28, 2014, 6:03PM.

Dates To Remember

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

58th Session

July 2014

Geneva, Switzerland

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws58.htm>

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

7th Session

7-11 July 2014

United Nations Palais des Nations

Geneva, Switzerland

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Pages/Session7.aspx>

Convention on Biological Diversity

12th Conference of Parties (COP 12)

6-17 October 2014

Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea

<http://www.cbd.int/cop/>

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

20th Conference of Parties (COP 20)

1-12 December 2014

Lima, Peru

<http://www.unfccc.int>

Special Session on ICPD Beyond 2014

69th United Nations General Assembly

22 September 2014

New York, USA

<http://icpdbeyond2014.org/>

World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP)

22-23 September 2014

New York, USA

<http://wcip2014.org/>

"Climate Summit 2014"

23 September 2014

New York, USA

<http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit2014/>

Commission on the Status of Women

59th Session

9-20 March 2015

United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015>

Sustainable Development Goals Summit

September 2015

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>



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Forging Unity Towards
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