

The background of the cover is a photograph of two hands holding a purple globe. The globe has a textured, marbled appearance with darker purple and red veins. The hands are positioned at the bottom and sides of the globe, with fingers visible. The overall color scheme is dominated by shades of purple and red.

*aiw*

Issue No. 1  
2008

# **Asian indigenous women: Responding to Climate Change**

- Indigenous Women and Climate Change

- Food Security and Biodiversity
- Secretariat's Report



# Note from the Secretariat

ong vehicle cues along Nepal's major streets lining up for days without guarantee of gas availability once they reach the pump; women, children and men patiently lining up in the sidewalks daily in the Philippines just to be able to buy, at most, two kilos of rice; lack of rice, the staple food in Asia; escalating prices of oil and basic commodities; relentless disasters from extreme weather conditions resulting to massive flashfloods and mudslides.

These are the multiple crises greeting us as the year commenced. Exacerbating all these is climate change. Not that we have not been forewarned. Our grandmothers have told us many stories of nature's wrath when displeased with man's activities. But, unfortunately, these warnings have not been heard nor heeded.

Indigenous peoples, closely related to their lands and resources, have not been remiss in pointing out the cumulative, multiple, long term and devastating impacts of massive resource extraction, unabated use of fossil fuels, land use conversion and other development projects which are undeniably based on profit. Clearly, indigenous peoples have always asserted their belief in the interrelation between man, nature and the sacred as reflected in their belief and practice of "inayan" by the Igorots, "matai pakur" among the Tripura and the "tagal" system in Sabah, to name a few.

This is the nexus from which indigenous peoples' sustainable agricultural and resource management systems revolve around, proof of which is the fact that most of the remaining mega biodiverse areas in the world are found in indigenous peoples' territories. This demonstrates that indigenous peoples, in the spirit of sustaining the land for the future generations, have been effective stewards of mother earth. They have also contributed the least to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which is the primary cause of climate change. Carbon dioxide from fossil fuels such as coal and oil account for majority of these GHGs.

What has climate change got to do with food, energy and women?

Women are primarily responsible in making sure that there is food in the table for the family. To do this, there has to be something to cook, and water or oil and firewood to cook it with. When somebody in the family is sick, women forego other daily activities just to ensure that the sick is taken care of. But due to the lack of and prohibitive costs of medical services, women resort to available local remedies and resources. When the forests have been bulldozed for mining, fenced off as a protected area, or deforested for monocrop plantations, indigenous women lose a major source of additional food and traditional medicines.

One does not have to be a scientist to determine the proportional relations between the size of the land planted to food and the volume of expected harvest. The increasing conversion of agricultural land use from food to biofuel production, as alternative to fossil fuel, has depleted staple food worldwide. Next target: forests for carbon sequestration.

In response to the need for appropriate and timely information on climate change and indigenous peoples, we hope this issue will facilitate exchange of stories and analyses of the many facets of climate change and its impacts, especially on indigenous women. Equally important is to highlight the roles and different initiatives of indigenous women in combating climate change, without or with least compromise to the principles of life and sustainability. As Gina Shangkam, President of the Indigenous Women's Forum of North East India says, "We hope to restore our rivers, mountains and forests and bring back the harmonious relationship we used to have with our natural environment but the control and management of our resources are not in our hands."

We call on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, International Financial Institutions, intergovernmental bodies, private corporations and states to heed our wake up call. We have already been counting corpses from extreme weather disturbances worldwide. Mitigation and adaptation to climate change requires responsible governance that respects life and the rights of peoples over and above carbon emission credits. For indigenous women and their peoples, this means the recognition and fulfillment of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



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Suffering the Most...

# Impacts of Climate Change on Indigenous Peoples



By  
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**Climate change has been occurring over the past decades but its impacts have remained minimal until the past several years. Already, the effects of climate change have become apparent and intense. Lands and ecosystems where indigenous peoples live have not been spared of this. Paradoxically, indigenous peoples have contributed less to climate change, however, they suffer the adverse consequences more than anybody else.**

Indigenous peoples coexist with land, forest, water, and nature. They live in places where the effects of climate change are readily felt and observed. These include the polar ecosystems; dry and subhumid ecosystems, which consists of the deserts and savannahs, arid and semi arid lands, grasslands, and Mediterranean landscapes; forest ecosystems which include tropical and sub tropical forests as well as boreal and temperate forests; high altitude and high mountain ecosystems; agricultural ecosystems; coastal and low-lying areas and small-islands, inland water ecosystems; wet plains; and mangrove areas.

Climate change is more than just global warming. When weather patterns become very erratic, we do not need to be scientific about it. Common people know that these are nature's way

of speaking to us of the need to change our ways in dealing with our land and atmosphere. Nature is taking its toll as a result of unsustainable, high consumption lifestyles, so that inaction on our part will eventually result to unimaginable disasters and consequences. Certainly, the impacts of climate change are extensive and its implications on our survival very alarming.

In the movie *The Inconvenient Truth*, one can only watch with mixed feelings of awe, fear, sorrow, and worry as Al Gore realistically shows and narrates the glacial melts in the Himalayas, and sea level rise in the Mediterranean sea and all about its probable consequences in the near future. In the Arctic region, there appears to be no time to wallow in misery for the indigenous peoples need to act fast to save whatever is left of life, land,



culture, and their subsistence. It is not only physical bodies that are at stake here but also their culture and identity.

We take special notice of the Arctic Region where several indigenous peoples live because climate change practically ceased to be a mere theory for them. According to Sheila Watt-Cloutier (Paradigm Wars, 2006), what will happen in the world first happens in the Arctic. Indigenous peoples in the Arctic Region live farther than anybody else and so the experience of climate change is so severe and rapid, that they may not outlive this circumstances with innovative means. While the government and industries are wallowing in denial of the possibilities of extinction of a nation, the people in the Arctic Region are already suffering the devastation of climate change.

A minimal rise in temperature means loss of livelihood and life. In the Arctic where climate change is initially observed, as stated by Salyck and Byg (2007), the Inuits are the best known victims next to polar bears. Henriksen (2007) likewise stated that the significance of the Arctic's unique nature and sensitivity in the changing climate are already a warning of climate change. The Arctic indigenous peoples are therefore especially vulnerable. Life and culture in the Arctic is inseparable from their physical environment, their life depends on the cold so that a shift away from this may mean extinction.

According to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, (Chapter 3, 2004), weather in the Arctic region has become more variable and less predictable. It shows that indigenous communities experience severe freezing

up and thinning of ice caps. Erosions caused by thawing permafrost and large and angry waves caused the ground to drop, destroying the subsistence of indigenous peoples. Such phenomena forces inhabitants to evacuate.

Such changing patterns in weather have dramatic impacts on the villages that threaten security and even life. Meanwhile, the experience of relocation also means death in another form. Such action disrupts the life of indigenous peoples and strips them of their identity. For the Arctic indigenous peoples, life outside their home and environment is not life at all.

Indigenous peoples of small islands states in the Pacific, like Tuvalu, are likewise very vulnerable to climate change. Because of its low lying location, Tuvalu's greatest problem is sea level rise. There is apprehension and fear that the island will be the first sovereign country to disappear because of the island's vulnerable location and situation. Tuvalu is a very small island with around 10,000 population, with no industries, and creates less carbon pollution. Sadly, they are in the front lines of climate change.

With the realities of climate change, the Tuvaluns will be among the first to become climate refugees. Their culture is threatened, and the idea that everything will have to be transplanted is already being considered. Other Pacific Islanders will soon find similar fate. Other affected islands, besides Tuvalu, are the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and Vanuatu.

From several case studies arose a common theme significant enough to tell the world that, indeed, climate change is not

*“The experience of relocation also means death in another form. Such action disrupts the life of indigenous peoples and strips them of their identity. For the Arctic indigenous peoples, life outside their home and environment is not life at all.”*



simply a change in the weather. Seemingly, there arise feelings of betrayal when fish and animals fail to appear in places where they are supposed to be found. There is anxiety when there is no food to bring home to their families.

Fear escalates when animal species classified as predators appear especially in reindeer herding communities. Elders have difficulties in making decisions because of unpredictability of weather conditions. Older people in the Arctic are losing community respect and confidence on their traditional knowledge in interpreting their environment

Look around, let us take heed of global impacts of climate change. Several articles, case studies and written materials reveal that these impacts are happening in different ecosystem that indigenous peoples inhabit, regardless of geographical location. Each case is not an isolated one. These impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples are specifically outlined by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Aqqaluk Lynge in a paper [E/C.19/2008/10] presented during the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Seventh Session (New York, 2008):



- Massive floods, hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons which apparently lead to all sorts of physical suffering for indigenous peoples, their land, forest, rivers, and ecosystem.

*The cyclone that struck Bangladesh sometime in 1991 and again in 2007 led to numerous deaths, including indigenous peoples. Presently, one can feel the yearly typhoons to be harsher and angrier.*

- Frequent and prolonged drought and desertification which affect food security and subsistence.

*The deserts in arid lands are becoming hotter and drier, causing the disappearance of plants and organisms. Increased numbers of forest fires in tropical and sub-tropical areas cause rapid loss of forest cover and biodiversity.*

- Salt water intrusion and drying up of water sources that lead to impoverishment, hunger, and even death, considering indigenous peoples' capacity to find and dig fresh water source is limited due to poverty.

*Lack of fresh water leads to more gastro-intestinal disease, skin diseases, and other health problems, among others.*

- Increase of pests and vector-borne diseases and those caused by extreme cold spells all due to climate change inevitably affect agriculture, livestock, fishing, and other livelihoods, and significantly, health of indigenous peoples who live in tropical, high altitude and high montane ecosystems.

*For instance, in the Cordillera region in the Philippines, cold spells destroy temperate vegetable which are the main source of income for many indigenous farmers.*

- Changes in the behavior and migration patterns of birds which have been used traditionally to guide hunters and mark agricultural seasons are causing disorientation of hunters and gatherers and shifting cultivators.
- Cultural disruptions are globally happening because of abandonment of sacred areas or groves, practice of traditional livelihoods cannot continue and cultural rituals related to agricultural and forestry practices are practiced less and less.
- Undermining and violations of land rights and customary land tenure systems are likewise present as officials, the elites, and the state abuse and take chances of the situation, not to forget the perpetuation of dominant development model as characterized by individualism and unsustainable production and consumption.
- The disruption of traditional agricultural cycles because of late or early onset of rains and short durations of wet seasons are causing a decline in crop yields and poor performance of rainfed root crops.
- Indigenous people's cultural heritage sites are also threatened because of changing temperatures (for instance, the Ifugao Rice Terraces in the Philippines, Machu Pichu in Mexico, to name a few).

*Intruding water will damage the Sundarbans mangrove forest, a world heritage site, covering about one million ha. in the delta of the rivers Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna and shared between Bangladesh (60%) and India (40%), and is the world's largest coastal wetland.*

- The warming of the earth forces indigenous peoples to farm at higher altitudes like in the Andes, which forces Andean indigenous peoples to go to higher land, therefore risking their cultural survival.



“*They cannot harm these physical elements for in doing so, they will be harming themselves. Indigenous peoples have an intricate relationship with land and the ecosystems where they have thrived.*”

Indigenous peoples contributed less to climate change. This is becoming a classic statement because of its truthfulness. They have been living on earth respecting their land, waters, forests, and ecosystem; because to them, these are life itself. This reflects indigenous peoples' intricate relationship with land and the ecosystems where they have thrived for generations. They would not contravene the very nature of their existence.

While the Western world indulges in unsustainable production and consumption, and unabated use of fossil fuels, in-

digenous peoples who contribute less to climate change—their livelihoods, culture, traditional knowledge—are continuously at risk because of impacts of climate change. Even measures that are aimed to mitigate the effects of climate change are impacting them in negative ways. The effects of the changing climate, especially on indigenous peoples, are so pressing and should not be ignored anymore. Developed countries, who account for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, must cut their emissions drastically and should do this now. **aiwn**

# What is Climate Change?

- Climate change refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity (anthropogenic causes). Climate change can result from the interaction of the atmosphere and oceans. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) puts more emphasis on human activities which cause climate change.
- Changes in the world's climate are not new. In fact, this is one factor which has influenced the course of human history and human evolution. Historically, humans have been able to cope and adapt to these changes.
- The climate change we are experiencing now is brought by humanity's massive dependence on fuels, particularly carbon-based fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas. These fuels bring about greenhouse gas emissions.

## What are greenhouse gases and what is the “greenhouse effect”? How are these related to global warming?

- Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are chemical compounds such as water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide found in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is the main GHG and its emissions mainly come from burning fossil fuels.
- These greenhouse gases absorb some of the infrared radiation (heat) which reflects back heat that gets trapped by the greenhouse gases inside our atmosphere is necessary to make the earth warm, otherwise, it will be too cold. The atmosphere acts like the glass walls of a greenhouse, which allows the sun's rays to enter but keeps the heat in.
- This natural process is called the greenhouse effect. As humans emit more carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the greenhouse effect becomes stronger and global warming occurs.
- **Global warming** is the noted average increase of the earth's surface temperature and oceans as compared to previous centuries. This is a result of the continuous trapping of heat within the earth's atmosphere due to increased quantity of greenhouse gases. Global warming is one of the key aspects of climate change.
- Levels of some important greenhouse gases have increased by about 25 percent since large-scale industrialization began around 150 years ago.
- A brochure made by the US Department of Energy says “The U.S. produces about 25 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels; primarily because our economy is the largest in the world and we meet 85 percent of our energy needs through burning fossil fuels. It further states “...in the U.S., our greenhouse gas emissions come mostly from energy use. These are driven largely by economic growth, fuel used for electricity generation, and weather patterns affecting heating and cooling needs. Energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, resulting from petroleum and natural gas, represent 82 percent of total U.S. human-made greenhouse gas emissions”

\* Excerpts from **Guide on Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples**, published by Tebtebba, 2008.



# Asian Indigenous Women and Climate Change



By  
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**Why do indigenous women in Asia matter in climate change? More than half of the estimated 150 to 200 million indigenous peoples in Asia are women. For many generations, they have been the storehouse of indigenous knowledge on cultural and environmental systems which have sustained the well being of their families and communities. Practice, through the years, of their traditional knowledge on environmental protection and preservation and on biodiversity have greatly contributed to ecological balance that contributes to mitigating climate change.**

If climate change has huge impacts on indigenous peoples as a whole, indigenous women are more disproportionately affected. Inaction to arrest the cause and effects of this phenomenon poses a grave threat to the lives, welfare and roles of one of the most vulnerable sectors on whose hands partly depend the sustenance and wellbeing of indigenous communities in Asia.

To the indigenous women in Asia, the impacts of climate change are multifaceted. During cyclones or typhoons, more women are killed because of gender impositions upon them. Being a woman in some indigenous communities bars women or girls to go to public places where early warnings are posted, rendering them unprepared from raging disasters. Girls and women are also not taught to swim and

are prohibited to go out from their dwelling unaccompanied by male relatives which lessens their chance of survival in times of disasters. And, in most cases, the women are left behind to rescue or to look after young children or elderlies.

Not only do women lose their lives but lose their livelihood and face food insecurity, as well. Disrupted rainfall or incessant drought finds women without water to irrigate their rice fields and traditional farms, resulting to less or no yield. An indigenous woman from the province of Benguet in the Philippines who was present during the December 2007 UN conference on climate change in Bali, Indonesia recounted how their situation changed from bad to worse. "Sometimes our fields are flooded and sometimes we expe-

rience drought,” she said. Farm harvests are also affected by increase in pests due to changing temperature.

Livelihood of indigenous women who live along coastal areas subsisting on fishing are also at risk because of changing water temperature in seas and oceans and the intrusion of saline water in freshwater systems with the rise of sea level. Marine lives are affected which hurt roles of women as food collectors. Women in Aceh, Indonesia whose daily routine includes collecting shellfishes in the mangrove forest and in Maluku where women collect shellfishes in productive tidal areas would find scarcity of these marine lives if temperature changes and salinization continue.

As their livelihood is threatened by climate change, indigenous women also face health risks. The resulting food insecurity forces women to eat less even if they are pregnant or nursing mothers. This situation makes them susceptible to illness and diseases with the unborn and the newborns facing malnutrition. The women are also prone to water-borne diseases during floods. Even frequent forest fires cause health problems and destroy traditional sources of medicines provided by the forests.

With the destruction of their resources as a result of climate change or the denial of their access to these resources in various efforts to address climate change, indigenous women stand to lose their traditional ecological knowledge, practices and sustainable livelihoods. The loss of traditional plants or medicinal plants due to droughts, floods and forest fires would find the next generation of indigenous women ignorant of the traditional health knowledge and other traditional

practices that their predecessors have preserved and practiced for years.

The continuing climate change would push indigenous women to exert more time and effort to discharge their productive and reproductive roles in the family and community at the risk of their own health and well-being.

As water become scarce, women’s chores would also increase, thus limiting their chances of participation in social or local life or in pursuing other alternative sources of income. If it is not the women who get sick of water-borne-diseases, it is their relatives. As primary carers or caregivers of the family, the women have to spend more time caring sick family members.

Women also have to exert great efforts collecting, storing, protecting and distributing drinking water. In the discharge of their roles, indigenous women and girls face violations of their rights. Women and girls trekking for a distance to look for water, food and firewood are open to various forms of harassments or threats. Girls also have to drop out from school to find water and wood and food sources in distant places or care for sick relatives.

While women walk long distances to fetch waters for cooking, for washing, for irrigating their farms, for cleaning and healing, they also would come into conflict with other women over depleting water resources.

Food insecurity due to drought or flooding would likely drive migration that interrupts and limits opportunities for education. Families headed by women as a consequence of migration of men looking for jobs—seasonally or for a number of years—experience poverty

with the resulting increase in their workloads. Whole families migrating to overpopulated spaces are at high risk of getting HIV/AIDS. Indigenous women are also exposed to higher risks of trafficking, exploitation and gender-based violence.

Even without being necessarily dislocated or displaced, the total impact of climate change on indigenous women is the erosion of their world views, culture and identity which are intricately woven into their relation to the land and resources.



## Adapting to climate change

How are indigenous women in Asia adapting to climate change?

Just as indigenous women are the most vulnerable to climate change, they are also the most ready and, in fact, already acting to cope with it. During floods, women have been in the forefront of looking for relocation sites for their affected families and community members. In the Terai area of Nepal, before floods come, women take their assets and livelihoods to higher places, sometimes, including their livestock. Those who have enough resources increase the foundation level of their houses or homesteads to protect their belongings from damage. They also build community shelters.

Women farmers also switch to cultivating crops that can be harvested before flood season. Others grow rice varieties that grow above water when the floods come. Even the seedbed preparations and seed selection are altered to ensure crop survival. Women also increasingly share practices of using alternative energy-related technologies such as solar, biogas, and improved cooking stoves. They also use less labour-intensive technologies; multiple cropping and intercropping practices; changing cultivation to easily marketable crop varieties or flood and drought resistant crops; and investing in alternative irrigation facilities.

To combat emerging financial challenges and issues of food security, women are putting up self-help organizations, while at the same time, establishing networks and partnerships with other indigenous women's groups. In addition, the women actively participate in trainings to enrich their skills in food and

livestock production, to increase their livelihood. They even seek professional support in order to increase their knowledge and skills in combating climate change.


Women are also in the forefront of reforestation initiatives. In the Bangladeshi village of Kaijuri, although the women have the rights to the trees since they are the planters, they do not cut trees that are not intended for firewood.

## Mitigation or Exacerbation?

How are mitigating measures for climate change affecting indigenous women?

Governments, the UN and its agencies, multilateral bodies and international financial institutions and even non-government organizations are working to reduce the effects of climate change. However, these initiatives often have huge impacts on indigenous women. The state-centric and market-based approach to mitigation threaten indigenous peoples' rights to ownership, access to, use of and enjoyment of the benefits from their traditional lands, territories and resources. The denial of these fundamental rights means many to indigenous women.



  
“To combat emerging financial challenges and issues of food security, women are putting up self-help organizations, while at the same time, establishing networks and partnerships with other indigenous women's groups.”



They face disenfranchisement from their productive and reproductive roles and from their traditional spaces and at the same time suffer deprivation from the benefits of environmental services due to incompatible climate change mitigation measures. In India, women lose power and control of forest management with the introduction of "participatory" Village Forest Joint Management.

As providers and collectors of family sustenance, indigenous women would find difficulty securing water, fuel or wood, alternative food and medicinal resources in distant places. This is evident in plantation areas in Indonesia where women who traditionally collect vegetables found in the forest find difficulty in securing their food and firewood. Clearing forests for the plantations destroys the forest vegetables and leaves available to the women, only the edible forest plants and firewood found in the deepest parts of the forest. Their vulnerability to wild beasts and other difficulties make them become dependent on men to collect necessary food and firewood.

In the race to find alternative energy sources to fossil-based fuels, multinational biofuel companies are encroaching into indigenous peoples lands and territories. This has resulted in the displacement of indigenous women and their families. Violence, intimidation and murder are employed by some biofuel companies to drive indigenous women and their families away from their lands and resources. The unabated support of governments to expand biofuel production, such as jathropa, oil palm, corn and sugarcane, often results to connivance between biofuel multinational corporations and



the government's armed forces to drive indigenous peoples away from their lands.

Conflicts between indigenous communities who till the land for food and corporations who want the land for plantation crops such as genetically-engineered (GE) trees would put indigenous women in a more vulnerable position. In Kalimantan, Indonesia, between 1998 and 2002 alone, 479 people were reported as having been tortured in conflicts related to oil palm plantation development. Women joining groups resisting these plantations are forced by policemen to flee their homes on the accusation that they were damaging company property and, at the same time, are threatened with arrests should they return.

Widening palm and other biofuel plantations not only dislocate them but rob them of their indigenous agricultural systems and livelihood. This has forced indigenous women to look for work in neighboring countries or to engage in local prostitution. This was seen in some Dayak communities whose lands are appropriated for large scale mining or big-scale oil palm plantations. In West Kalimantan, young women who went abroad to work returned home as unmarried mothers and eventually opened

cafes with back rooms used for prostitution. Presence of such establishments caused the increase of children out of wedlock. There is also an increasing number of karaoke bars following oil palm plantations.

Another serious concern that comes with biofuel plantations is the health of women and their children. Children bathing in the rivers have developed rashes. The River Soi in East Kalimantan has turned black and is no longer suitable for drinking due to waste disposal from oil palm processing plants. Women are sometimes accidentally contaminated with pesticide sprays from oil palm workers spraying nearby subjecting them to health problems.

The deforestation as a result of clearing of vast forestlands for biofuels would also increase women's work loads. As nurturers or providers, the women would trek over long distances to collect food, water, and firewood which open them to sexual harassment or any violence along the way. Plantations consume larger volume of water that deprive women of water which has become more scarce during the dry season. Not only would women's chores increase in biofuel production—which often involves clear-cutting of forests to pave way for fuel crops—but would



cause disappearance of diverse forest species that they depend on for their nutrition, healthcare, cultures and economies.

In Sarawak, Malaysia, due to logging and oil palm plantations, Dayak women face issues related to food security, water shortages and loss of traditional knowledge as a result of deterioration of biodiversity. They have noticed decline of wild animals in logging areas and of fish supplies due to river pollution. Loss of biodiversity due to deforestation would also cause loss of traditional knowledge of preserving the forests, traditional health practices and others.

Biofuel plantations of genetically-engineered trees are not beneficial to indigenous women and could be catastrophic as contamination of the soil and native trees and plants continues. If this contamination does not stop, traditional herbs or medicines used by indigenous women in curing illnesses would be extinct and their traditional health knowledge would vanish. Indigenous women would become dependent on pharmaceutical companies and contemporary experts for healthcare. This implies the need for additional financial resources to access such services.

Much have been lost by indigenous women as a result of climate change. Even the solutions that are being peddled are impacting indigenous women negatively and disproportionately. But in spite of these, indigenous women are confronting this global phenomenon, arming themselves with their traditional knowledge and skills. Their efforts need to be supported and enhanced. Their rights as indigenous peoples and as women need to be recognized and respected. For after all, in their hands lie the future of generations to come. **aiwn**

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“If this contamination does not stop, traditional herbs or medicines used by indigenous women in curing illnesses would be extinct and their traditional health knowledge would vanish.”



# The Female Face of Climate Change



By  
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## Is climate change gender neutral?

**Speaking in two separate side events sponsored by the Asian Indigenous Women's Network and the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network during the 7th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York last April 2008, indigenous women prove otherwise. Climate change is not just affecting the environment, but humanity in general. The devastating impacts of climate change is more disproportionate among indigenous women who are already marginalized because of gender and ethnicity.**

"Pygme women are proud in their roles as providers and in sustaining forests resources. The disappearance of resources, however, has developed a feeling of unworthiness and guilt for not being able to provide."

This is according to Mwavita Siyapata Elsy of Dignite Pygme in the Democratic Republic of Congo as she explicitly articulates the erosion of dignity of indigenous women resulting from climate change. Increase of extreme weather conditions, changes in rain regimes and increased forest fires added to intensive deforestation and degradation, is a daily problem confronting women. These have caused rapid loss of biodiversity including food and medicinal species such as mushrooms, birds, caterpillars and fish, among

others, that women collect.

Ms. Lucy Mulenkei, Executive Director of the Indigenous Information Network, described how prolonged droughts lead to degradation of lands, lack of food, poor health, migration and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. These are mostly felt by the agropastoralist peoples. Livestock, a major economic source for agropastoralists that are very vulnerable to drought, have to be moved for pasture and water. This is usually done by men so women are left at home. Production of milk, the secondary but alternative income and food source, also declines as a result. All these add up to the incidence of poor health.

Decreased opportunities from livestock raising further influenced migration, especially of men, to cities to look for employ-



ment. Migration and employment comes with challenges. Living in the urban centers influence negative values especially among men. In the context of a polygamous society, women and girls in the communities are put at risk of HIV/AIDS.

On the other hand, rains, when these occur, bring a set of other problems like water-borne diseases which equally affect man and the remaining livestock. Equipped with no water storage and treatment facility, water is usually collected from the rivers for livestock and domestic use. Contamination and spread of diseases are highly probable from man to animal and vice versa in these conditions.

Among the Tin Hinan people in Mali, for example, Fati Aboubacrine deplored how they lose lands when they seek water sources in times of scarcity which is now becoming more often. Indigenous women's survival in these harsh desert environment is so much affected by both internal and external movements and competition for resources. Indigenous women find themselves at risk of violence and crime. Begging in cities has become an option for survival.

In the Andes region, agriculture and health are the primary impact areas of climate change. Increase in rainfall has led to flooding in the lower areas where people are not accustomed to rainy and cold weather. Children and elders have been most vulnerable to pneumonia. Moreover, the agricultural cycle has been disrupted by the cold weather spell.

"We know when and where to sow beans and rice. Last year, we failed," says Ms. Bilda Tovar, an Ashanika from Peru, as she expresses alarm on an impending food and health crisis this

may result to if not acted upon immediately.

Similarly, in the Arctic, the Saamis are confronting the consequent changes in their economic and cultural milieu. "We feel like stepping into another's garden..," this is how Gunn Britt Retter described how climate change has impacted on Saami women's roles in food and health security and cultural integrity. While the melting of snow caps in the Arctic has facilitated longer growing months in Norway, it has also resulted to the fast disappearance of blueberries that is closely associated to traditional Saami food and culture, aside from its medicinal value.

Blueberries are a rich source of vitamin C and antioxidants for the Saamis. Gunn Britt recalls how seven to eight years ago, birch trees and blueberries were dominant plants in the areas around their neighborhood. Today, most of the birch trees are dead, and though the ground is rich with vegetation, blueberries have been becoming more scarce. Now, they have to drive some distance away from their usual picking grounds for blueberries.

Gunn Britt further underscores the deeper impact this has on culture and traditional knowledge. Blueberry picking by Saami women is an educational venue where daughters learn from their mothers and grandmothers about the different plants and their food, medicinal and cultural values. This also include stories associated with the plants and places where they gather berries. This implies that not only is nature disturbed by climate change but also the transmission of traditional knowledge—a vital aspect of Saami identity. She also expressed fear about the health implications of turning to fast-



*"We know when and where to sow beans and rice. Last year, we failed," says Ms. Bilda Tovar, an Ashanika from Peru, as she expresses alarm on an impending food and health crisis this may result to if not acted upon immediately.*



*“I feel like I lost part of myself, part of my language, culture, identity and economy” with the diminishing practice of berry picking.”*

foods as alternative food source as a result of the threatened fishing economy of the Saamis.

“I feel like I lost part of myself, part of my language, culture, identity and economy” with the diminishing practice of berry picking, confirmed another young Saami lady.

From the Pacific, Malia Nobrega has not only warned of the obvious threat of rising sea waters to the small island states and coastal communities. Mothers in Hawaii and the Northwest Pacific, Nobrega says, are culturally obliged to bring home the placenta of new born babies and bury it. Their burial grounds are in the coastal areas which are now threatened to be washed out and desecrated by the rising sea waters.

Mina Susana Susetra of the Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), discussing the impact of oil palm plantations among indigenous peoples in Indonesia, said that Asia hosts the

world’s biggest oil palm production. Indonesia accounts for 44 per cent while Malaysia, 43 per cent, based on 2006 figures from GAPRI. Indonesia is forecasted to produce some 18.3 million metric tons of palm oil from 2007 to 2008.

According to Indonesia’s Department of Agriculture, there are 27 million ha. of unproductive forestlands in Indonesia suited for conversion to oil palm, while no less than 19,840,000 hectares of land have already been slated for oil palm development in provincial land use plans. Most of these, Susetra says, are found in indigenous peoples’ territories where there is a reported increase of land conflict cases from 140 in 2003 to 514 in 2007.

Monocrop agriculture, aside from facilitating environmental degradation through loss and pollution of resources and pest resurgence, impacts on the economic capacity and food security of indigenous peoples as



it heightens competition for resources and transmigration, she further added.


With a government that has not fully recognized indigenous peoples, these pose serious threats to the individual and collective rights of the masyarakat adat (indigenous peoples), especially in the use of these global climate change approaches that disregard the complexity of the local/national problems. The right to free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples should be respected when it comes to any development interventions that affect or involves indigenous peoples, their territories and resources, Susetra underscores.

Marginalized and vulnerable as they are, however, these women are not succumbing to climate change. Despite the additional burden and associated risks to their well-being indirectly resulting from climate change, indigenous women are finding ways and means to adapt, while at the same time, forwarding their perspectives on how to combat climate change. Indigenous women have the knowledge and skills to adapt to climate change, i.e., by using drought resistant crops and livestock. These should be developed, used and supported.

From the panel to the halls and corridors, indigenous women have commonly identified the following challenges in combating climate change:

- Lack of information – though climate change is not a new phenomena for indigenous peoples who have their own initiatives and innovations consistent with their sustainable resource use systems, the frequency of unprecedented extreme weather conditions has rendered indigenous peoples at risk in their already

vulnerable environment. Lack of information on the matter (e.g., What is climate change? What is mitigation? What is adaptation? How are these particularized in their communities/countries?), moreover, is marginalizing them further especially in the light of women's general low literacy level and multiple domestic work;

- Need for disaggregated data on gender and ethnicity;
- Effective participation of women in climate change discussions and the recognition of their roles and efforts in mitigating and adapting to climate change;
- Defining effective measures to address the disabling conditions of economic desperation;
- Develop traditional knowledge as sustainable, culture sensitive adaptation/mitigation measure;
- Establish mechanisms for traditional knowledge (working group) within the climate change convention (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change or UNFCCC);
- Network and strengthen alliances between and among indigenous peoples' organizations and others groups;
- Fulfillment of state obligations to international human rights standards, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and its effective implementation in the national and local levels; and
- Adoption by states, inter-governmental organizations, UN bodies and private and financial institutions of the UNDRIP as the framework of any climate change policies and programmes affecting indigenous peoples. 

*“Despite the additional burden and associated risks to their well-being indirectly resulting from climate change, indigenous women are finding ways and means to adapt, while at the same time, forwarding their perspectives on how to combat climate change.”*



# Naga Women and Climate Change

**The Naga indigenous peoples of Manipur State live in the four Hill Districts of Manipur. Manipur is situated in the North Eastern part of India. It shares borders with Myanmar in the East, Nagaland in the North, Assam in the West and Mizoram in the South. It covers an area of 22,327 square km. The State has five hill district and four valley/plain districts. Almost 70 per cent of the total land area of the State belong to the Nagas.**

Culture and tradition tell us that the Naga indigenous peoples of Manipur depend on natural resources and cultivation for its livelihood. Women play a major role in traditional agricultural practices in determining what seeds to grow on a particular season. They also maintain medicinal plants growing in the forests for their wellbeing. For these reasons, indigenous women are bonded to land and their resources.

Nowadays, due to climate change, the Naga indigenous women of Manipur suffer in many aspects.

## Impacts of Climate Change among Naga Indigenous Women

With the increase in temperature, summer has become hotter year after year. This has caused a reduction in the stream flow. Most of our Naga villagers do not get enough drinking water which is one of the basic needs for human survival. So the women have to walk 3-4 km from the village to fetch water and return

home carrying heavy pots of water on their head.

In the Maring Naga villages of Machi and Laipham Chandel District, Manipur, women do not have enough time to earn for their family subsistence since they are burdened with more responsibilities like fetching water for the family from far distances.

Due to climate change, the rainy season occurs at different times and has become uncertain. In July 2004, landslides and mudslides in two places at Senapati District Manipur occurred. In Mao Gate, 124 private houses and three Government houses were affected. Again, mudslides at Kangpokpi area affected 10 villages, damaging 115 houses and 415 hectares of paddy field. During the planting season, rains only come for a short period while flooding occur in harvest time. As a consequence, agricultural productivity is diminished.

In 2006 and 2007, natural calamities damaged the harvests of Senapati and Chandel Districts of Manipur State. Around 300 households could not harvest their crops to meet their needs for the whole year. They were

By  
**MARIGOLD  
MARING  
KEISHA\***



*\* Vice-president of Naga Women's Union in Manipur, Northeast India. She belongs to the Maring Naga indigenous group.*

forced to go out in search of food to neighbouring villages. As a result, most of the paddy fields could not be cultivated anymore. It became barren land.

In the eastern part of Manipur, malaria and diarrhea are common diseases. Indigenous peoples have depended on traditional medicinal plants for first aid which was easily obtained from surrounding forests. But now, it has become difficult to find them because of forest degradation.

## The Role of Indigenous Women

Climate change has affected the role of indigenous women in Manipur. The peasants living in interior villages could not produce enough food to last them for the whole year. The people are thus forced to migrate to urban areas for livelihood opportunities. As a result, women are subjected to work as vendors, wage labourers and commercial sex workers, leading to many problems such as HIV/AIDS and mental trauma, among

others. It has also become difficult to give attention to child-rearing and has lessened time for household chores and in fulfilling the traditional roles of women in the community.

Climate change has also increased the rate of poverty and has affected indigenous women's health because of the increased workload and responsibilities in the family. They carry everything on their head and walk for 5-6 km from the village to meet their daily needs. This curtails women's recreation and development of other skills.

#### **Low Awareness on Climate Change**

Naga indigenous women of Manipur are still unaware of the causes of climate change. When many different weather conditions happen, they interpret these as punishment for human wrongdoings.

In July 2004, landslides and mudslides occurred at Senapati District, Manipur, India. Many houses, school and paddy fields were damaged and the National Highway-39 was completely blocked for a month. Local people believed that the calamities took place because of the bloodshed during the Kuki and Naga conflict in those two areas.

In the religious point of view, many Christian indigenous peoples interpreted these as a sign of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Scientifically, however, climate change is exacerbated by forest degradation. Trees and bamboos were

cut down for commercial purpose and the forests were burned for commercial cultivation and grazing.

#### **Ways and Means to Lessen the Climate Change**

Indigenous women in our State are not very much aware of the impacts of climate change. The Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM) is undertaking an awareness program by conducting workshops on Empowerment on Natural Resource Management.

In the workshops, many participants expressed that they learned the need to preserve and protect indigenous lands and forests and decided that every household should plant at least five trees a year.


Indigenous women organizations have started plantation programs like banana, pineapple, potato, cabbage, etc. with the aim to supplement family subsistence by selling the fruits and also to promote the planting of these crops. Every year, each household planted 10 fruit trees in their respective villages. Apart from paddy plantation, indigenous women also grow seasonal fruits and vegetables which they sell in the market.

Naga indigenous women of Manipur, however, still need to increase their capacities to identify alternative crops that can be planted in time of crop failures due to drought and floods.

#### **State Government Initiative**

The Central Government and the State Government of Manipur have initiated and are implementing several programs such as the Joint Forest Management (JFM), social forestry, watershed, irrigation, green house, etc. in the hill districts and valleys. So far, there has been no program or law passed by the State government geared particularly to help indigenous women affected by climate change.

In fact, the JFM projects have taken away our rights over our lands. Ownership has changed from us, indigenous peoples, to the Government. The social forestry, on the other hand, are mainly monoculture plantations and do not belong to the communities.

All these programs are also being implemented without consultation with the communities. Awareness on climate change is not being undertaken by government but by NGOs. This situation has led to branding by government of these initiatives as anti-government and anti-development. 

*From our indigenous sisters in Latin America...*

# Climate Change: Consequences for Indigenous Peoples in Nicaragua\*

The effects of climate change on natural resources as well as on human populations are well known today, and these effects are among the most debated topics of the last decade.

Along these lines, we also know that Indigenous Peoples have one of the smallest ecological footprints in the world—for example, we are some of the lowest producers of greenhouse gases—yet we are suffering the environmental consequences of other peoples' behavior. These environmental changes have a grave impact on our traditional forms of life and on our livelihoods.

The consequence of an increase in global temperature has also had repercussions for the Indigenous Peoples of Nicaragua. The increase in ocean temperature affects the fishing yield and directly relates to the growth of hurricanes and tropical storms in the last hundred years.

The frequency of storms has decreased and the strength of their winds has increased. The floods caused by "Fifi" in 1974 and by "Irene" in 1971 do not compare with the force and damage caused by Hurricane Juana in 1988. Later, in September 2007, Hurricane Felix lashed the coastline and mountainous regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, resulting in the destruction of more than three hundred Miskitu and Mayangna indigenous communities and destroying the foundation for local subsistence: the forests and the fishing zones of the coastline.

This time more than 1 million hectares of deciduous and coniferous forests were affected, as were marine ecosystems and mangroves. The problem continues to be that international organizations and conservationist groups see the effects of natural disasters only for the impact they have on natural resources and not for the effects they have on the livelihood of the people that depend on these resources.

The loss of forest areas through desertification leads to forest fires that result not only in the loss of biological diversity but also impact the agricultural, forestry, and hunting and gathering systems of Indigenous Peoples. The Indigenous Peoples of the Coco River region face an increase in plagues and disease—for example, plagues of rats that threaten cultivated fields. These plagues have a direct relation to the disruption of ecosystems.

The consequences of climate change also affect the social fabric and traditional world view of Indigenous Peoples. In the first place, often the loss of livelihood pushes men, women and young people to migrate to other rural and urban zones in search of work. These so-called "environmental refugees" are increasing every day. In the second place, climate change affects sacred areas of encounter between Indigenous Peoples and the natural world are affected, which leads to the loss of this direct relationship and the disruption of traditional belief systems.

Indigenous Women also suffer the effects of climate change in our daily lives. Looking at water collection, for example, women sometimes have to walk two or three hours to find clean water. Many times Indigenous Women no longer have close access to basic medicinal plants because, due to the disturbance of nearby forests, these plants are found ten days' walk from the communities, a situation that also applies to certain animals that are basic sources of protein for Indigenous Peoples.

State policies to mitigate the effects of climate change on natural resources often have a strong environmentalist profile that does not take into account the impact of these policies on Indigenous Peoples. A common strategy is to establish protected

areas, which leads to restrictions and controls that, instead of giving incentives for the care and adequate use of resources, result, perversely, in the illegal exploitation of resources. This strategy negatively impacts the livelihoods and organization of Indigenous Peoples around these resources. Authorities see these protected areas as areas of ample biological diversity, but they do not consider the existing population, much less value our cultures, and in many cases they work under a centralized system of government that disqualifies traditional forms of management of natural resources that Indigenous Peoples have implemented for hundreds of years.

This centralized model of management for protected areas weakens local organizations and limits autonomous processes of development, since it does not take into account the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples. We see this in the case of the Miskitu and Mayangna Indigenous Peoples in relation to the Biosphere Reserve of Bosawas and in the case of the Ramas peoples in relation to the Indio-Maiz Biological Reserve, two protected areas that defined and managed by the central government in spite of existing regional autonomy. As of this date, central authorities have not spoken with inhabitants about climate change and its consequences.

Today we find ourselves facing a new threat in the guise of "bioproduction," the boom of agro combustibles to be developed in indigenous territories. These agro combustibles could be a threat to the traditional lifestyles of Indigenous Peoples as well as to the ecosystems from which Indigenous Peoples obtain our resources, which in turn could lead to our displacement from our ancestral lands. We have to look for the relation between these systems of exploitation and climate change.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the situation Indigenous Peoples face in terms of the imminent impact and effects of climate change on our traditional systems of life, as well as the measures of mitigation adopted by States, we consider the following recommendations to be necessary:

- States, in cooperation with development organizations, should provide resources to strengthen the ability of Indigenous Peoples' institutions to participate in sustainable environmental management and in the definition and application of proposals for mitigation, and to respond to the impact of natural disasters.
- States should adopt measures that ensure that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for discussing, agreeing to and implementing management processes for protected areas and concessions of resource extraction (this includes forest resources, hydrocarbons, mining, carbon trading, mitigation measures, etc.).
- We must ensure the direct participation of Indigenous Peoples and our institutions in carbon trading markets through sustainable management of the forest resources of our territories and our right to autonomy and Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

\* On the occasion of the Seventh Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Climate Change, Biocultural Diversity and Forms of Life: The Guardianship Role of Indigenous Peoples and New Challenges. New York, April 2008. Contact: Mirna Cunningham Kain, President, CADPI.



# Nibutani Declaration of the 2008 Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Mosir



## INTRODUCTION

Iramkarapte – “Let me touch your heart softly in greeting” in the Ainu language. We, Indigenous Peoples from Japan and around the world have gathered in Ainu Mosir, known as Hokkaido, Japan, in the traditional land of the Ainu people, for the 2008 Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Mosir in advance of the G8 Summit in 2008. We represent over 600 participants from Ainu Mosir (Hokkaido), Uchinanchu (Okinawa), the United States, Canada, Hawai’i, Guam, Australia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Norway, Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Taiwan, and Aotearoa (New Zealand).

We are united as Indigenous Peoples because we share each other’s fundamental values and understandings of our place in the world which includes our reciprocal relationship with nature. The theme of our summit is Mawkopirka which means in Ainu “Good Luck” or “Be Happy,” and which underscores our Indigenous values and notions of well-being, and illustrates the good faith in which we approach this Summit and all the peoples gathered.

This is the first time that we, Indigenous Peoples, have gathered around a G8 Summit, to reflect on the issues addressed by the G8 and analyse how these relate to us. This Summit was made possible by the Ainu through the Indigenous Peoples Summit Steering Committee and we thank and congratulate them for their commitment and work to make this happen.

With our collective wisdom and knowledge we discerned and agreed on the key messages we would like to relay to the G8. We learned more about the situation of the Ainu and about each others situation and aspirations. We are also gathered to celebrate the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on September 13, 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly. This is a historic



landmark and a collective achievement of Indigenous Peoples movements from the local to the global.

We welcome the “Resolution calling for the Recognition of the Ainu as Indigenous Peoples of Japan” passed by the Japanese House of Councillors and the House of Representatives on June 6, 2008, and accepted by the Prime Minister’s office also on June 6, 2008. We celebrate this gain with the Ainu people which results from their centuries’ old struggle.

## OUR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

We want to express our profound concern over the state of the planet. Mother Nature nurtures us.

We believe that the economic growth model and modernization promoted by the G8, which suggests that we can control and dominate nature, is flawed. This dominant thinking and practice is responsible for climate change, the global food crisis, high oil prices, increasing poverty and disparity between the rich and the poor, and the elusive search for peace, the themes which the G8 nations precisely want to address in this Hokkaido Toyako Summit. Some of our issues and concerns are the following:

- continuing egregious violations of our civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights.
  - ◊ militarization of our communities, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings of indigenous activists and use of national security and anti-terrorism laws to criminalize legitimate resistance actions against destructive projects leading to increasing conflicts in our territories;

- ◇ grabbing of our lands by the state, corporations and landlords;
- ◇ continuing racism and discrimination against us and against our use of our own languages and practice of our cultures;
- ◇ non-recognition of our collective identities as indigenous peoples;
- ◇ theft of our intellectual property rights over our cultural heritage, traditional cultural expressions and traditional knowledge, including biopiracy of genetic resources and related knowledge;
- ◇ desecration and destruction of sacred and religious sites;
- adverse impacts of climate change and actual and potential negative effects of climate change mitigation measures which include:
  - ◇ displacement from our lands because of expansion of biofuel monocrop production, establishment of carbon sinks in our forests, building of more large scale hydro-electric dams;
  - ◇ market-based mechanisms such as emissions trading leading to more centralized, topdown management of our forests under the reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) scheme;
- food crisis and increasing hunger due to:
  - ◇ decreased control and access to sources of subsistence (forests, hunting grounds, agricultural lands, waters, grazing lands, etc.) and basis of traditional livelihoods;
  - ◇ dumping of highly subsidized, cheap agricultural products from the rich countries to the poor countries;
  - ◇ the shift away from production of food crops to crops for biofuels;
  - ◇ hoarding and speculation on food commodity prices;
  - ◇ aggressive promotion of chemically intensive industrial agriculture and use of genetically-modified seeds;
- increased extraction of oil, gas and minerals from our territories, in violation of our free, prior and informed consent, leading to more environmental degradation, forced displacements and poverty in our midst.
- increasing loss of indigenous languages and cultures decreasing further the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world.

## OUR PROPOSALS TO THE G8

It is in our values of reciprocity, mutual respect, regard for the earth as our mother and all creation as our relatives, collectivity and solidarity; in our indigenous cosmologies and philosophies; in our traditional livelihoods, lifestyles and sustainable consumption practices that we can find the most effective paths to a sustainable world. We sadly note that these values and practices are being marginalized in a highly commercialized, consumerist, atomized and individualistic world when they could instead be a guide not only for Indigenous Peoples but for the rest of humanity.

We therefore call on the G8 to do the following;

1. Effectively implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and use this as the main framework to guide the development of all official development assistance (ODA), investments and policies and programmes affecting Indigenous Peoples.
2. That the Governments of Canada, the United States and Russia, respect the demands of the Indigenous Peoples in their countries that they adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and press the Governments of New Zealand and Australia to do likewise.
3. Ensure and facilitate the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in all the processes of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and establish a Working Group on Local Adaptation and Mitigation Measures of Indigenous Peoples.
4. Jointly assess and evaluate with Indigenous Peoples the adverse impacts of climate mitigation measures on them and their communities and undertake actions to address these.
5. Remove, as part of renewable energy sources, large hydro-electric dams and stop all funding for these. Reject proposals to include nuclear energy as clean energy.
6. Promote and support the development of small-scale, locally-controlled, renewable energy projects using the sun, wind, water and ocean tides in our communities through technical and financial assistance.
7. Reform migration laws to allow for the migration of Indigenous Peoples who are forced to leave their countries because of the impacts of climate change, such as the submersion of small-island states and low-lying coastal areas, the erosion and destruction

of their lands due to melting of permafrost, strong typhoons and hurricanes, and desertification due to droughts.

8. Provide financial support for our campaigns to get corporations and national governments to compensate us, through financial and other means, for the environment services (clean air, clean water, fertile soils, etc.) we are providing to the world because of our sustainable management and use of our forests, watersheds, and our conservation of biological resources to ensure maintenance of biodiversity.
9. Protect, respect and ensure our rights to food, to subsistence, to practice of our traditional livelihoods, and to self-determined development. This means the following;
  - Ensure our control and access to our sources of subsistence and traditional livelihoods such as rotational agriculture, pastoralism, hunting, gathering and trapping, high mountain agriculture, marine and coastal livelihoods, handicraft development, etc.
  - Stop the dumping of cheap, highly subsidized agricultural products in our communities.
  - Implement a moratorium on the expansion of biofuel production on our territories unless our free, prior and informed consent is obtained.
  - Strictly regulate speculation on food commodity prices.
  - Criminalize hoarding of food by food cartels and syndicates.
10. Stop the promotion of chemical-intensive industrial agriculture in our communities and the dissemination of genetically modified seeds in our territories. The continuing use and export of banned toxic chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides to Indigenous communities, especially in the developing countries should be banned and criminalized.
11. Stop facilitating the entry of transnational corporations involved in extraction of minerals, oil, gas, coal, etc. in our communities without ensuring that the free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities are obtained. Corporations from G8 countries which have been involved in environmental destruction of our territories and who have committed human rights violations against us should be brought to justice and should be required to compensate the communities where they have polluted or otherwise caused damage.
12. Support our campaigns against the militarization of our communities, extrajudicial killings and stop the labeling of Indigenous activists as terrorists and the use of laws such as national security acts and anti-terrorism to curtail our legitimate resistance against destructive projects and policies.
13. Support, through technical and financial assistance, our efforts to bring our complaints against States, who are violating our rights, before the Treaty Bodies of the United Nations, the regional commissions or courts on human rights such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the African Commission on Peoples and Human Rights, and the European Commission on Human Rights.
14. Support the inclusion of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Charter on Human Rights and ensure that this becomes an integral part of the newly established ASEAN Commission on Human Rights.
15. Provide support for establishing more cultural centres and museums in our communities, and for educational institutions and programmes promoting intercultural and bilingual education, use of Indigenous learning and teaching methods—including education through the traditional oral mediums of Indigenous Peoples and through honouring local ways of learning and knowing—as well as language courses to teach Indigenous languages.
16. Give effect to the protection of Indigenous Peoples' sacred sites in recognition of their human rights and intergenerational responsibilities to practice, teach, and maintain their spirituality and indigeneity through their traditional languages, customs, ceremonies, and rituals to ensure the continuity of the sacred in the futures of those yet to be born.
17. Stop the theft and piracy of our traditional Indigenous knowledge, traditional cultural expressions (which include indigenous designs, arts, crafts, song and music), bio-genetic resources including our human genetic resources, by biotechnology corporations, cultural industry, and even by States and individual scientists and researchers.
18. Reform national intellectual property laws and global Intellectual Property Rights regimes including the TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Substantive Patent Law of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), among others, to respect and protect the collective traditional knowledge and cultural expressions of Indigenous Peoples.
19. Stop nuclear proliferation and the use of depleted



uranium as a weapon. Stop the dumping of radioactive nuclear wastes as well as other toxic waste in Indigenous Peoples' territories.

20. To strongly support the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in each nation, and to ensure that the marginalization of and violence against Indigenous women, minority women, and all other women will be stopped.
21. Remove US military bases located in Indigenous Peoples territories and bring to justice the military personnel who have been charged with rape and sexual assault of Indigenous women. The forced drafting and recruitment of Indigenous youth to the military should also be stopped.
22. To strongly encourage the Japanese Government, jointly with the Ainu community, to interpret the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for implementation in Japan as national law, and to further develop concrete actions and policy reforms to amplify and clarify the Resolution recognizing Ainu as Indigenous Peoples. We protest the fact that there is only one Ainu out of 8 persons included in the panel to discuss further the implementation of this resolution. We call on the Government to increase the number of Ainu representatives in the Panel.

## **PROPOSALS TO OURSELVES, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

We also discussed what we should do as, Indigenous Peoples, to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to strengthen our solidarity with each other and with support groups and NGOs.

1. Establish a network of Indigenous Peoples to continue the task of organizing summits in connection with the G8 Summits in the future. Indigenous Peoples in Canada are encouraged to organize themselves so that they can host an Indigenous Peoples' Summit during the 2010 G8 Summit in Canada. We will also encourage the advocates of Indigenous Peoples rights in Italy to try to organize a summit for Indigenous Peoples at the 2009 G8 Summit in Italy.
2. Ensure that we, Indigenous Peoples all over the world, take up the responsibility to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, themselves, and enter into constructive

dialogue with States, the UN System and the other intergovernmental bodies to discuss how they can effectively implement the Declaration at the local, national, regional and international levels.

3. Use the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, as mechanisms to monitor and ensure the implementation of the UNDRIP by the aforementioned actors.
4. Ensure widespread dissemination of the UNDRIP through the use of multimedia, the translation of this into languages understood by Indigenous Peoples, and the preparation of popular versions which can easily communicate the substance of the UNDRIP.
5. Work towards getting the UNDRIP integrated as part of the education curriculum of schools starting from pre-school to higher learning institutions.
6. Establish and replicate the experiences of the Maori and others in setting up language nests where Indigenous Peoples can learn how to speak fluently their languages to arrest the loss of indigenous languages in the world.
7. Organize and sponsor more education and training-workshops for our peoples where they can learn more about the UNDRIP, how to implement it and learn more about the existing instruments and mechanisms within the United Nations, the regional human rights bodies and courts on human rights where they may bring their concerns if the UNDRIP is not adequately implemented by States.
8. Establish international tribunals to hear and address Indigenous Peoples' issues and adjudicate issues which are not adequately addressed under domestic and international law.
9. Establishment of an Indigenous Peoples Green Fund to support the initiatives of Indigenous Peoples to establish and strengthen their traditional livelihoods, their arts and crafts and other forms of development which are consistent with their visions of their self-determined development.
10. Support the fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples to practice and to enjoy their cultural history and the right to protect and to teach their cultural heritage through the establishment of Indigenous-owned and controlled cultural centres within states and local jurisdictions.

11. Support the struggle by Indigenous peoples for land justice and for the return of forests and traditional lands to the ownership and control of Indigenous peoples.

The implementation of the Declaration will not only benefit Indigenous Peoples but will also benefit the earth and the rest of the world. If we are allowed to continue practicing our sustainable ways of caring for the earth and caring for our relatives, not only human beings, but also plants, animals and all other living things, these practices will redound for the benefit of everybody. If we are able to continue speaking our languages and practicing our diverse cultures, then the world's cultural heritage will be enriched. If our diverse economic, cultural, spiritual, social and political systems are allowed to co-exist with other dominant systems then we can bequeath to our children and our children's children a more diverse and viable world.

Agreed upon on July 4, 2008 by the following representatives:

Asia:

**Ainu (Japan):** Ukaji Shizue, Kayano Shirô, Hideo Akibe, Shimazaki Naomi, Yûki Kôji, Sakai Mina, Kibata Kamuisanihi, Kibata Hirofumi, Hitoresi (Kawakami Hiroko), Sakai Atsushi

**Ami (Taiwan):** Sing 'Olam

**Igorot (Philippines):** Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**Kanakana'ey - Igorot (Philippines):** Joan Carling

**Juma (Bangladesh):** Dipty

The Pacific:

**Chamoru (Guam):** Fanai Castro

**Hawai'i:** Puanani Burgess, Puaena Burgess

**Ngati Maniapoto (Maori, Aotearoa):** Hohepa Rauputu

**Ngati Ranginui, Ngati Tutwharetoa (Maori, Aotearoa):** Zack Bishara

**Nga Puhi, Ngati Kahu, Te Rarawa (Maori, Aotearoa):** Eddie Walker

**Ngai Tahu (Maori, Aotearoa):** Steven Kent

**Taranaki, Te Ati Awa, Ngati Maniapoto, Te Ati Haunui A Paparangi (Maori, Aotearoa):** Liana Poutu

**Uchinanchû (Japan):** Nakaima Kenta

**Yorta Yorta (Australia):** Wayne Atkinson

Europe:

**Saami Nation:** Magne Ove Varsi

The Americas:

**Maya Kachikel (Guatemala):** Rosalina Tuyuc

**Miskito (Nicaragua):** Rose Cunningham

**Nauha (Mexico):** Marcos Matias Alonso

**Cherokee (USA):** Jacqueline Wasilewski

**Comanche (USA):** Ladonna Harris and Laura Harris

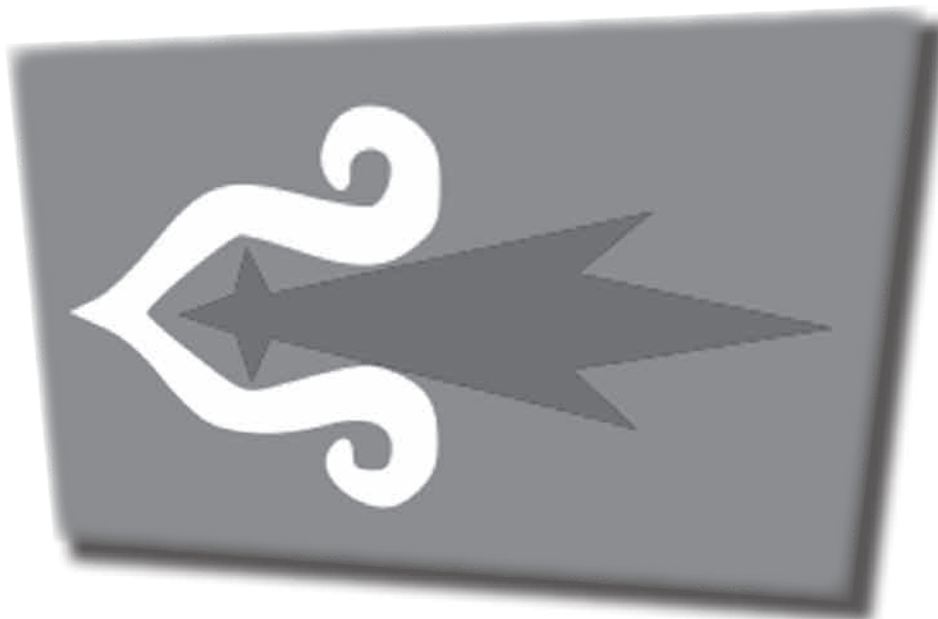
**Isleta and Taos Pueblo (USA):** Ron Looking Elk

**Jemez Pueblo (USA):** Paul Tosa

**Mohawk (Canada):** Ben Powless

**Lakota Sioux (USA)**

**St'at'imc (Lil'wat) (Canada):** Attila Nelson



*Flag of the Ainu people, designed by Bikki Sunazawa in 1973.*

# Indigenous Women vis-à-vis Food Security

By **MARIBETH V. BUGTONG**

"Before, we were the producer of red rice and there was no dependence on commercial rice, but now we depend on commercial and National Food Authority (NFA) rice."

This was lamented by an indigenous woman who hails from upland Kalinga Province, northern Philippines, during the women's caucus on women and food security held last Cordillera Day 2008 in Poblacion, Licuan-Baay, Abra in the Cordilleras.

## **Tightening the Belt**

With the soaring food prices—particularly rice—is the realization that life is becoming harsher for indigenous women, not only of the Cordillera, but of other places. They are used to hardships but the present realities of food insecurity put them in a quagmire of circumstances which they did not thought will ever happen. The sudden upsurge of rice price and other commodities brought more difficulty to the already impoverished women. A kilo of rice before the increase was between 16 to 25 pesos (\$.35 to \$.55) but now it costs P18.50 to P45 (\$.41 to \$1.00).

Even the condition of rice production has changed. For instance, indigenous communities in upland Abra produced and supply rice before to the lowland communities but the condition is now reversed. The women have to buy commercial or NFA rice which they claim is not palatable and less nutritious unlike the rice they previously produced. NFA is the government agency that overseas rice stockpiling and distribution in the Philippines.

With the low rice yield is the loss of income for indigenous women who do almost all farm works. Sometimes, no income is derived because of high

price of inputs, high interest rates to credits and other factors. Most indigenous women admitted that they have to sacrifice basic kitchen needs like cooking oil or sugar just to have enough budget for rice. They do not mind eating unsavory viand so long as there is rice on the table, especially for their children. Rice is the staple food and the primary source of carbohydrates of indigenous communities who are mostly engaged in agriculture, whether subsistence or commercial.

The effects of food shortage devastate indigenous women as producers and nurturers of their families. With the escalating prices of rice and food in general, they have to budget whatever income they generated within the day. Accordingly, the wage of a woman per day—which is P80-100 (\$1.78-\$2.22)—is not enough for the whole family, so they have to sacrifice other kitchen amenities.

Others said they do not take their snacks anymore just to save for the coming days. Reacting to the advocacy of the government to reduce rice intake as another means to combat food shortage, the women opined that such measure is unacceptable. Accordingly, reduced rice intake is not enough to give them their needed strength as most perform heavy farm works.

The increasing hardship they endure is also fueled by the trade liberalization policy of the government which opened up the Philippine markets to foreign goods and services. However, this policy provided only limited or no safety nets for domestic products. The influx of cheap vegetables and other goods caused losses in income to indigenous women relying in small scale vegetable farming. Their little produce from their *uma* or swidden farms compete with the cheaper products from China, Australia and others.

Peddling their little produce within or nearby communities or in the local market is not enough to earn them an income. Even if they try to engage in commercial farming, the so-called "suicide seeds"



need high input of pesticides and fertilizers which entail expensive farm capital which eventually will reduce the returns. While others may be able to produce large quantity of vegetables, they still face the challenge of low price due to reduced tariff on imported vegetables and the unabated vegetable smuggling.

### Changing Values

The current concerns of women on food security is coupled by the changing social values of people. Providing no statistics, the women said they observed an increase of domestic violence. Wives who cannot set enough food on the table for their husbands and their children are hit or verbally abused by their husbands. It is noted from a local newspaper in Baguio City that there are cases wherein wives, who are financially well off than their husbands and can provide food for their family, are violated by their partners. The feeling of insecurity by husbands from not being able to maintain their status as family providers reduced them to wife batterers which adds misery to the hardworking mothers.

INNABUYOG-Gabriela, an indigenous women's federation in the Cordilleras, observed that "beating women is always a good reason for men to vent their anger and frustration" over the economic crisis they are experiencing. It also surfaced during the caucus that parents who are desperate of securing their family's future survival are encouraging their undergraduate children to seek employment abroad.

And many indigenous women are now flocking to other countries as caregivers or domestic helpers to ensure that their families will eat.

### Fighting for Life

The women claimed that with the crisis on rice supply the country and the whole world is facing, they have to resort to several means to sustain their families. The women sell vegetables they harvested from their swidden and backyard farms in flea markets and even along the roads or highways. This often puts them at risk to accidents. Others sell charcoals or firewood. A mother from Kawayan, Asipulo in Ifugao province mentioned that they plant sweet potatoes and *gabi* (taro) as substitute food in times of food shortages.

The women agreed that they plant these "emergency food" in their *uma* or swidden farms even before the present problem on food security. To increase their produce, they widen the area of their *uma*. Those who do not have lands and are only working on someone else's lands are experiencing a very grim life of hunger and poverty. The women who are living near the rivers teeming with fish market these, especially during summer.

Amidst the food crisis, the women from upland Kalinga province said they have some means to survive. Through Eight Wonder, a Montana-based organic food supplier set up by Mary Hensley, a Peace Corps volunteer assigned in Kalinga in the 1970s, they sell *unoy* for export to the US. *Unoy* is a traditional and locally grown special variety of red rice harvested and pounded into grain by hand. It was sold for \$5 (P225.00) a kilo when it was introduced in Montana, USA compared to P50 (\$1.11) value in the domestic market. A demand in this set up is for the community to sell only whole grain *unoy*.

According to the women, selling all their *unoy* produce is a deviation from their practice where they sell only the excess of their produce after keeping a certain volume for a year or for a particular period for their own consumption. This time, they sell all their *unoy* to the exporting entity, then buy commercial or NFA rice.

A concern that forces them to sell all their *unoy* even if they will have to eat commercial or NFA rice is the education of their children. They are not bothered even if they will not eat *unoy* so long as the needs of their children are provided.

With the increase in rice price and declining rice production in indigenous communities is the decrease of market price of products which should supplement the source of income for indigenous women. For instance, bananas which are grown without any inputs, are sold cheaply in the market. This, they claim, adds to the difficulty.

### Life in the City

The crisis in food does not only hugely impact indigenous women in rural areas but more so indigenous women in urban areas. The lure of the city for a better life encouraged them to leave their villages but what they found are contrary to what they hoped for. Currently, they are experiencing hunger and deeper poverty and misery which they

have not been experiencing while in their home villages.

A weaver kept her loom and threads because she did not gain enough for her family from selling woven products. These indigenous women from the villages cannot secure a more gainful work in the city due to lack of eligibilities or low educational attainment.

A lady peddler in the City of Baguio claimed that their poverty tripled after coming there. In the city, they have to work every day like peddling vegetables, fruits and other wares. However, the income is usually not adequate. Those who have enough capital sell ready-to-wear goods or second hand clothes along the city's thoroughfares. These indigenous women in the urban areas do not bother at what time to market their goods, with some even selling at night time.

Those who cannot find a space in the city market or are afraid of police arrest for peddling would put their day's products in a basket or rattan winnow which they carry on their heads while roaming the city to sell. This they do under chilly rain or burning sunshine.

A whole day of selling would bring them P50 to P150 (\$1.10-\$3.30) which they budget for their daily needs. Those who are strong enough take the courage to work in construction sites as water carriers or to do other tasks. They lamented that

they are paid P150 (\$3.30) a day, which is lower than what men receive. Accordingly, construction firms like to employ them because they are industrious and do not indulge in vices. To add to their income, they would also do laundry services or fetch water.

The women said that their husbands are also working far away, so the responsibility to look for food for the family is left in their hands.

Children of these indigenous women in urban areas are not spared of these difficulties. But even if this is the case, their children also try to help source out income for their food and other needs. The children peddle plastic cellophanes inside the city market, scavenge for plastics, papers, tin cans and other things that could be sold in junk shops, or help their mothers peddle goods in the market, in the overpass, in parks or along the streets.

The children's health also suffer from the hardships indigenous women experience. They suffer malnourishment, have goiter and other diseases but are unable to avail of hospitalization due to lack of money.

The women and their children are also confronted with local government policies. The city's anti-peddling ordinance puts them in conflict with the authorities. If they are caught by the police peddling their wares and produce, they will be penalized P1,000 (\$22.00).

In case they are able to redeem their goods after paying their fines, they would find their goods either lesser in quantity than when these were taken by the policemen, damaged, or rotten and wilted. Even if they like to do business legally, the women cannot afford to pay the business permits which, they claimed, is expensive.

In the light of these experiences, the women resolved to work together to fight the forces behind food insecurity and poverty and to help bring up solutions to this crisis. The initiatives of indigenous women to secure their survival utilizing



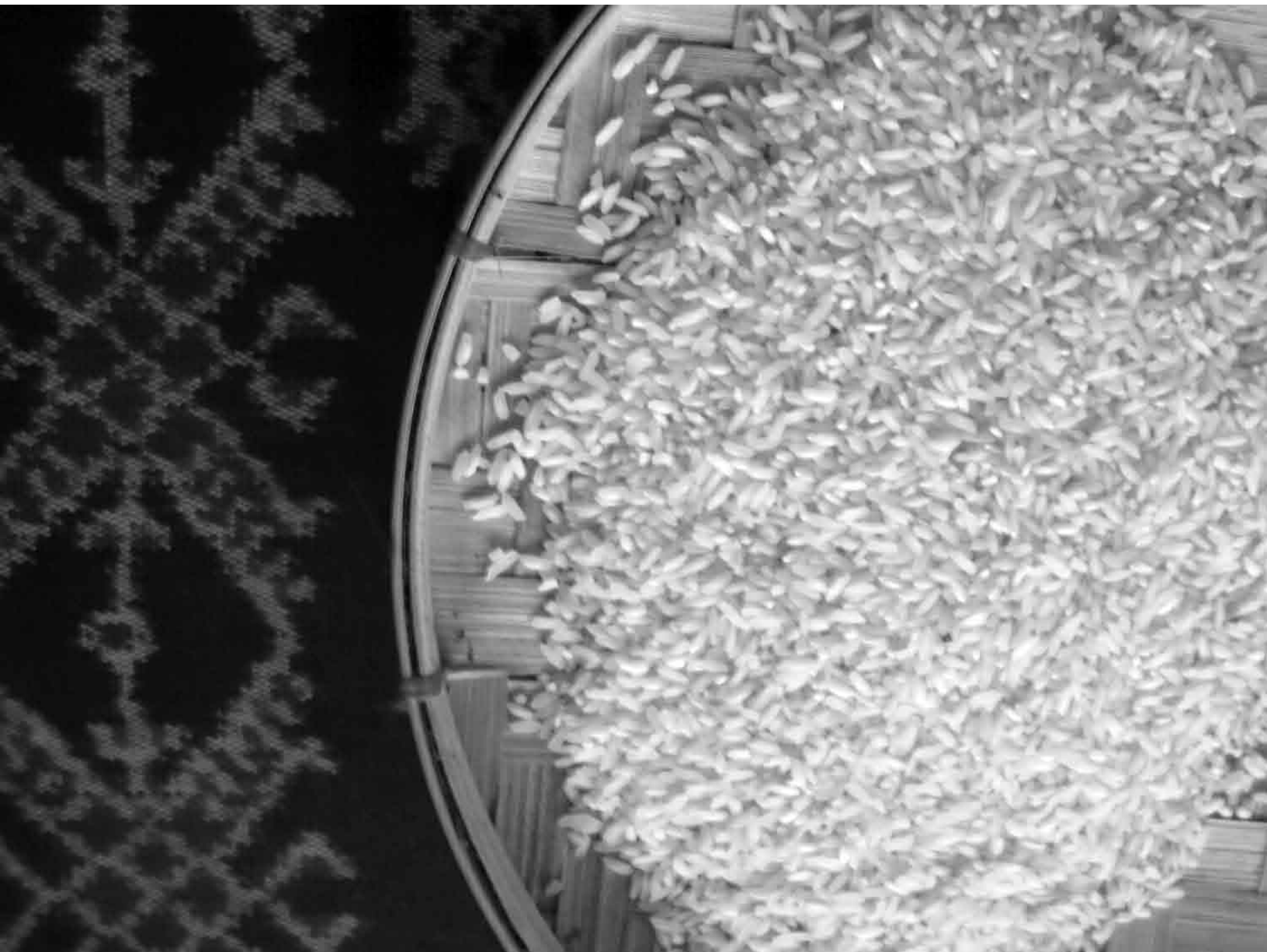
their traditional knowledge and skills call for solid support from the government and non-government institutions. Giving a blind eye on their real situation and not framing a genuine and realistic approach to combat the heightening food crisis would further endanger them and their children.

Ultimately, for indigenous peoples, the paramount consideration in dealing food insecurity is the recognition of their rights over their land, territories and resources which, when violated, aggravates their deplorable condition. *aiwn*

Sources:

"Rising rice costs seen good for terraces" by Vincent Cabreza. Philippine Daily Inquirer. First Posted 22:38:00 03/26/2008 accessed on June 25, 2008.

"Women's Front: The impact of global hunger" by INNABUYOG-GABRIELA. The Northern Dispatch Weekly. <http://www.nordis.net/blog/?p=2693> accessed on June 25, 2008.





# Negotiating Traditional Knowledge and Access and Benefit Sharing

By Ruth S. Batani

A side event on the International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) and Traditional Knowledge (TK) was held on May 21, 2008 during the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of Parties of the Convention of Biological Diversity. This was organized by the Indigenous International Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) and Tebtebba.

Joji Cariño of Tebtebba, Alejandro Argumedo and Malia Talakai highlighted issues and concerns that indigenous and local communities (ILC) should watch out in the on-going negotiations. Cariño talked about the simplicity, as well as complexity, of the on-going ABS negotiations—the transparent rule making on TK and, at the same time, the negotiations of more complex issues involving trade and monopolization of genetic resources vis-à-vis human rights and biodiversity.

In this situation, the question of how can the human rights of indigenous peoples be respected is in order. Cariño pointed out that lands, territories and resources under the sovereignty principle of the CBD and talks about sovereign rights with rules and regulations pertaining to access, become important. This is likewise the central theme in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), so that anyone who enters indigenous territories is required to respect these rights.

These rights include the recognition of the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples. She further said that, in this context, the sovereignty principle can be harmonized with indigenous peoples' rights since states have the responsibility to recognize these rights. With the CBD providing the legal framework for negotiations, the ABS regime can then serve as benchmark for the ILCs on whether or not these rights are respected. In a situation of biopiracy, the development of "user measures" might be the answer. This is important since it is not enough to have laws if there is no enforcement of the user measure and if there is not enough checkpoints.

A final point raised by Cariño is on customary law governing the use of resources vis-à-vis national legislations and international regime. Cariño stressed that there is a need to harmonize these three sets of rules as national and international regimes have to respect customary laws, based on human rights standards. Cariño ended her talk with a reminder to ILCs of the goals of the present engagement: to ensure that the rights are respected and that indigenous peoples can benefit.



Alejandro Argumedo, the second speaker, talked about CBD as one of the most advanced avenue for promoting indigenous peoples' rights. The CBD 2010 Targets focused on the conservation and on ABS. Issues on genetic resources and biotechnology are linked with trade. Alejandro warned that trade interests appear to be dominant in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). This situation may reduce the TK issue only to mere commercial application. There is then a need to expound on the benefits and the protection of lands, cultural rights and heritage. The challenge lies at the community level where there is an urgent need to look into inherent protection mechanisms via local registries and indigenous institutions and how these can be protected.

Malia Talakai, the last speaker, talked on the findings of a study commissioned by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on traditional knowledge with the objective of looking at guidelines or protocols and best practices in the Pacific. Findings show, that apart from Australia and New Zealand, there are two countries in the Pacific that have protection mechanisms and best practices in place. Talakai noted that, somehow, this ensures the fair and equitable sharing of benefits, as well as technologies. The Pacific regulation system is an example of a sui generis system—and the challenge lies on including other practices that are more specific.

Questions arising from the floor reaffirmed the need to strategize at the international negotiations, particularly because the modern western laws look at access and benefit sharing as compartmentalized and specific. There is also a need to make clear positions on issues that take into account specificity of situations. Estebancio Castro Diaz, who moderated the side event, ended with a note that, indeed, there is a need to take note of the dynamics of certain regional situations and agreed that there is a need to strengthen local communities and local protection mechanisms. *awm*

# Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network [IWBN] Statement For COP 9, Bonn Germany

May 28, 2008

Indigenous women are food producers, providers and guardians of the gene pools of food crops for future generations. In our daily interaction with nature, we have developed a profound understanding of different ecosystems. Keeping the balance has been our way of life. Therefore, empowering indigenous women is an important prerequisite for environmental and poverty eradication.

However, as indigenous women, we are continually being marginalized at local, national, regional and international levels. Parties at this meeting have contributed to this marginalization by failing to put closure to the Gender Plan of Action at this COP9 and to allocate resources to it. We see the formalization of this document as instrumental to the full and effective participation of women, especially indigenous women, to all aspects and work of the CBD.

We want to remind parties that they have established in the preambular to the CBD, the "vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for full participation of women at all levels of policy making and implementation for biological diversity conservation."

Therefore, indigenous women call on parties to take note and to act on the following items:

- That Climate Change is a serious threat for indigenous women's food security and food sovereignty. We want parties to say no to false solutions to climate change such as REDD and CDM.
- Indigenous women do not want the establishment of any new national protected areas on indigenous lands and territories until our lands, territories and resources are fully recognized and respected. We call on parties to stop the encroachment of protected areas into our territories.
- Indigenous women experience marginalization in terms of heavy workload in harsh and impoverished situation. We want parties to put the Gender Plan of Action as a priority and allocate resources for its implementation and to ensure the full and effective participation and capacity building of indigenous women.
- We reiterate that Traditional Knowledge is fundamental to indigenous women and to the success of the Convention. We strongly support the renewed focus on the completion of concrete items such as the elements of sui generis systems, so that TK is protected and transmitted to our children.
- With the entry of development projects that result in conflicts and directly affect women and biodiversity such as mining, mega dams, logging and gas pipelines, militarization, HIV/Aids, rape, domestic violence, forced migration and drug addiction. We, therefore, demand parties that for any development projects undertaken on our territories, free and prior informed consent must be obtained.

Finally, indigenous women believe in biodiversity use, protection and conservation for the people by the people. Thus, it is crucial that the Gender Plan of Action is given top priority and resources are allocated for its implementation.





Statement by the:

## **Asian Indigenous Women's Network, Asia-Pacific Indigenous Youth Network and the Asian Caucus**

To the

7th Session of the UNPFII,  
21 April – 2 May 2008,  
UN Headquarters, New York

### **RE: Agenda Item 8: Ongoing Priorities and Themes and Follow-Up**

The Asian Indigenous Women's Network and the Asia-Pacific Indigenous Youth Network, with the endorsement of the Asia Caucus, forward the following recommendations towards further realization and meaningful implementation of past recommendations on women, youth and children.

#### **General Recommendation for Women and Youth**

Support to capacity building initiatives and activities towards full and effective participation of women and youth especially in engaging governments to comply with their obligations under international human rights law:

1. This means intensive education and information activities on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international human rights law, how to use these towards better implementation and its practical translation in the national level policies and programmes;
2. Strengthen the institutionalization of indigenous women and youth's participation in all UN and intergovernmental processes and mechanisms;
3. UN agencies, intergovernmental bodies, financial institutions, multilateral agencies and states to develop/establish strong mechanisms/tools, including allocation of funds, inclusive of youth and women in defining programmes towards the implementation of recommendations to the UNPFII and as commitments to the 2nd Decade for the World's Indigenous People;
4. UN agencies, international organizations and states to support the 3rd Asian Indigenous Women's Conference to be held this year through the provision of their expertise, technical, logistical and moral support.

In the implementation of the Program of Action for the 2nd Decade of the World's Indigenous People and the newly adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we call on:

#### **All the States to:**

- Factor in gender and ethnicity variables in national census and in the monitoring and impact assessment of programs/projects and international commitments, e.g, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals;



- Ensure effective participation and representation for indigenous women and youth in all levels of engagement and decision making in state structures, plans and programmes through the establishment of funds in support of capacity building and to enable the participation of indigenous women and youth;
- Develop and strengthen national education policies/programmes appropriate for indigenous youth and women which are sensitive to their development needs within their own territories and support the development of indigenous peoples' economies;
- Facilitate the strengthening of the Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN) as well as the Asia-Pacific Indigenous Youth Network (APYIN) and their member organizations in its cultural exchange and skills sharing programmes through the provision of expertise, logistical, technical and moral support;
- As part of their international human rights obligations, states should nullify and/or amend existing policies on indigenous peoples or enact policies in its absence, consistent with the UNDRIP;
- Human security for indigenous women means the adequacy of food, health, economic, social and cultural and physical integrity—not guns and soldiers in the guise of anti-terrorism or roads encroaching into our forests and farmlands in the guise of development. This entails the security of our lands and territories and our access to our own resources to enable us to fulfill our roles of nurturing our children, families, communities and nature. Appropriate development policies, therefore, based on the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples, and with special attention to the perspectives of women and youth should be enacted and properly implemented in partnership with indigenous communities and organizations.

#### **For the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality:**

- Review experiences from the UNIFEM-led regional inter-agency group on indigenous women in Central America with a view to duplicating this in Asia, especially in relation to support for Asian states to ensure data disaggregation based on ethnicity and gender;
- Support capacity building for indigenous women towards full and effective use of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in terms of awareness building and skills training especially in monitoring state compliance, including the use of the communications, shadow report and Special Rapporteur mechanisms;
- In relation to the above, we reiterate a previous recommendation for the Commission on the Status of Women to monitor and report on the implementation of its resolution 49/7 reflecting state parties' efforts in compliance.

#### **To the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women:**

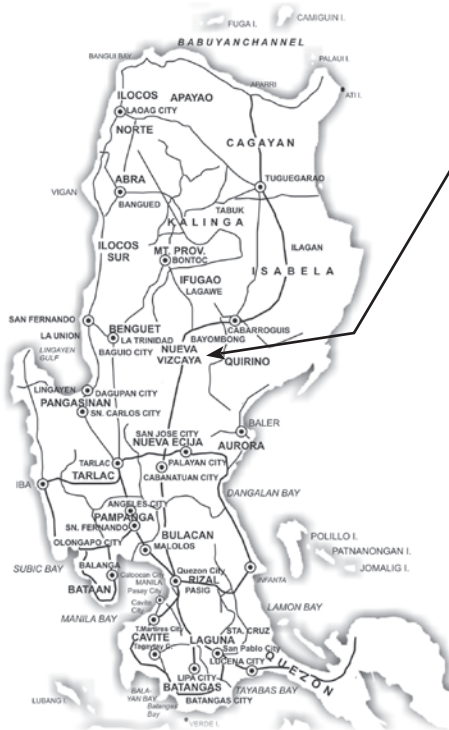
- Strengthen the systematic inclusion of indigenous women by ensuring that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is taken on as a working framework in state implementation of the CEDAW, its monitoring and report;
- To undertake an in-depth study of the pervasive and escalating violence experienced by indigenous women arising from development aggression as a follow-up to the UN Secretary General's earlier study on all forms of violence against women towards identifying strategies for the full and meaningful implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, without prejudice to indigenous women; and to inform the formulation of a general recommendation on the elaboration of VAW and women's rights.

*aiwn*



# NEWS BITS

## PHILIPPINES



### Mining Operations Suspended

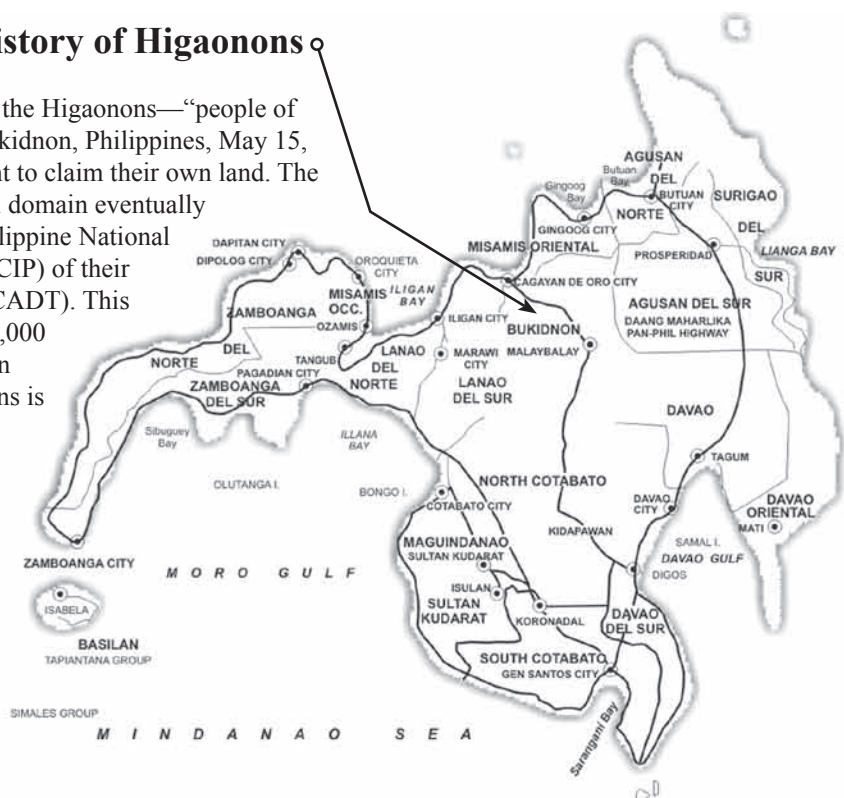
Sometime last June 2008, Australian mining firm Oceanagold Philippines Incorporated suspended its operations in the village (barangay) of Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. The suspension is a temporary victory for indigenous peoples of Nueva Vizcaya.

Since the entry of large-scale mining firms in the area of Kasibu, indigenous peoples in the communities have experienced conflict between and among community members and with local officials. They have conducted numerous protest activities, as well as education and awareness raising activities in the local and national arenas, to stop the mining activities. This victory is therefore an affirmation of their unity in asserting and defending their rights over their lands and resources.

### A Significant Day in the History of Higaonons

May 15, 2008, what day is it to us? For the Higaonons—"people of the living mountains"—of Northern Bukidnon, Philippines, May 15, 2008 marks a historic event in their fight to claim their own land. The long struggle in claiming their ancestral domain eventually bore fruit with the awarding by the Philippine National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) of their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). This title covers a total land area of about 14,000 hectares. The process for the recognition started way back in 2003. The Higaonons is the fourth tribe awarded with a CADT.

The Higaonon tribe are found on the northern regions of the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. They exist harmoniously with nature, and live in the forest. Their code of conduct is based on customary laws which speaks of love and peace. For a very long time, they tirelessly pursued to protect their forest from destruction while continuously struggling for the recognition of their right to self-determination.



# JAPAN

## Victory for Ainu, Victory for Indigenous Peoples!

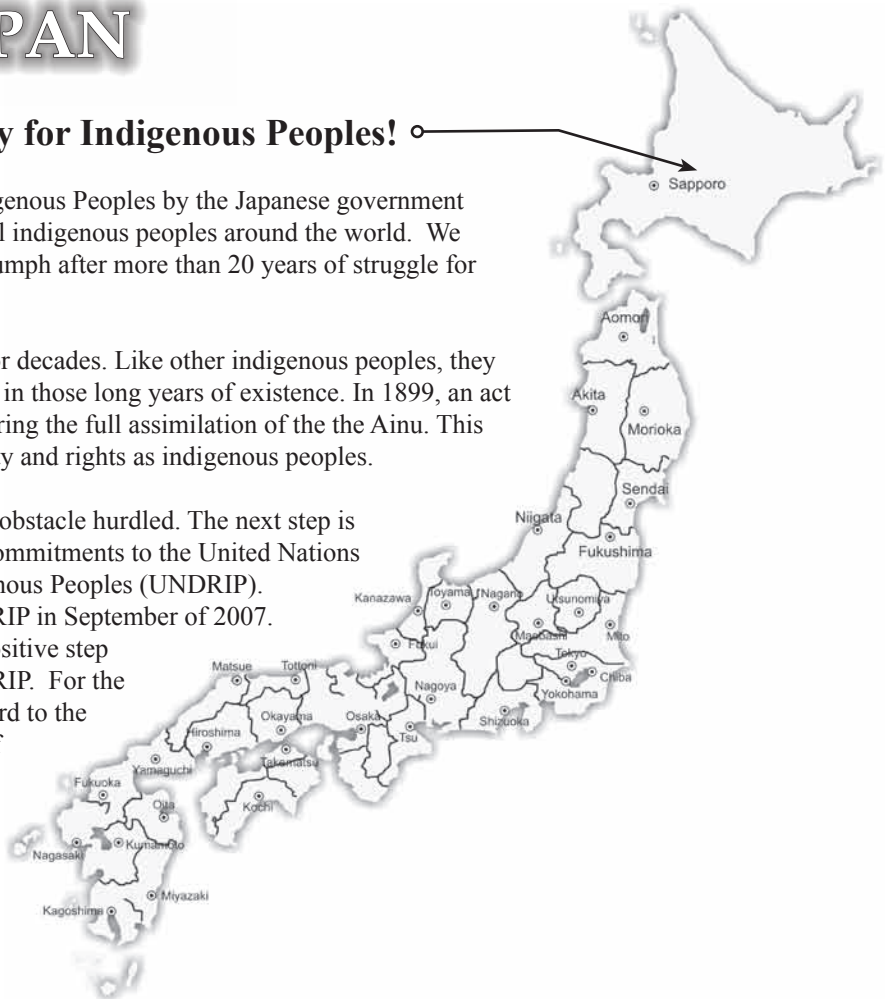
The recognition of the Ainu as Indigenous Peoples by the Japanese government on June 6, 2008 spells victory for all indigenous peoples around the world. We celebrate with them as they reap triumph after more than 20 years of struggle for recognition.

The Ainu have lived in Hokkaido for decades. Like other indigenous peoples, they suffered discrimination and poverty in those long years of existence. In 1899, an act was passed by the government ordering the full assimilation of the the Ainu. This denied the Ainu their distinct identity and rights as indigenous peoples.

This recognition represents one big obstacle hurdled. The next step is to test the Japanese government's commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Japan voted in support of the UNDRIP in September of 2007.

The Japanese Diet resolution is a positive step towards the promotion of the UNDRIP. For the Ainu, they can therefore look forward to the full and effective implementation of the UNDRIP, even as the scars of yesterday are not yet fully healed.



# INDIA

## Blatant Discrimination on Indigenous Peoples

*The facets of personal humiliation and embarrassment may mirror a nation's rage when discrimination happens inside its own backyard.*

Delhi, India - A young woman photographer who hails from Nagaland was denied entry to Urban Pind, a lounge bar in this capital city, simply because her face and the place where she came from does not fit the "right profile." This happened on June 19, Thursday, an "expat nights" for foreigners working in India. This made her feel so belittled while bearing the stares of people around her. The incident triggered a protest, in July 3, denouncing such discrimination against the adivasis (indigenous peoples). The Naga Lawyers' Guild has also considered a legal suit on this matter.



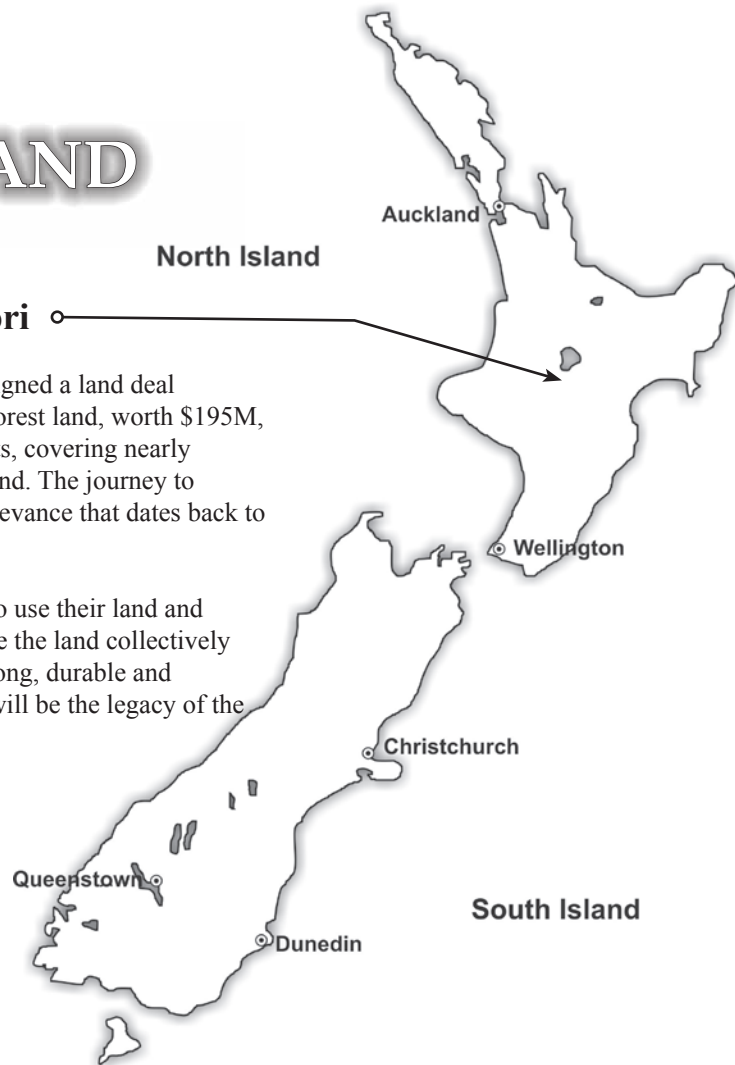


# NEW ZEALAND

## A Historic Journey for the Maori

In June 2008, the New Zealand government signed a land deal transferring the ownership of huge tracts of forest land, worth \$195M, to the seven Maori Iwi. This covers nine forests, covering nearly 435,000 acres of land in the Central North Island. The journey to claiming this land settles indigenous Maori grievance that dates back to the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi.

The Maori indigenous people are guaranteed to use their land and resources, and between them, they will manage the land collectively with the objective to provide tribes with “a strong, durable and sustainable economic life.” Accordingly, this will be the legacy of the present generation to the next.



## OTHER NEWS

### UNSCR 1820: Measure Against Rape as a Weapon of War

The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1820, classifying rape as a weapon of war and demanding an end to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, in June 19, 2008. This well-meaning instrument addressing terrorism in the form of sexual violence is long overdue.

Looking into the history of armed conflicts, rape has been and is being used as a means to perpetuate fear among the “enemy.” Countless cases of indigenous women and girls raped in the name of counter-insurgency by government soldiers in North East India, the Philippines, Burma, Bangladesh, among others, have been told and retold by communities and advocate organizations. In North East India, mass rapes have been committed in front of the victims’ family and community members, with some cases happening inside the church. As explained by several writers and analysts, it is more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in armed conflict situations. Further, rape is always torture, as recognized by Manfred Nowak, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Nothing can compensate for the act of rape and its effects. The damage is irreversible. For indigenous people, rape is not only considered a personal violation but an affront to their collective honor and dignity as a people.

While there is no illusion that the resolution is a cure, it is one big step in the quest for just peace.


# REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

January – June 2008

The Secretariat has been engaged in strengthening participation in three major areas of advocacy and lobby work during the first six months of the year. This is on top of the daily coordinative and information activities being conducted. These areas are in the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women or CEDAW.

In January this year, the Secretariat was invited to participate in the “CBD Workshop to Develop the Gender Plan of Action.” This workshop aims to define the roles of the CBD Secretariat in the promotion of gender equality and equity in its work and program. Consistent with the recommendations during the “Asia Workshop on Gender and Environment: Indigenous Women and the Implementation of the CBD” held in Baguio City, Philippines last 15-19 August 2007, the need and support for capacity building particularly for indigenous women towards effective participation in CBD processes and decision making was taken on as an identified target in the CBD Gender Plan of Action which resulted from the said workshop. This was later presented last May 29, 2008 during the Conference of Parties in Bonn, Germany. The Secretariat has also taken on the opportunity to strengthen linkages with the Indigenous International Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) and the Indigenous Women’s Biodiversity Network (IWBNI).

In late February, the UNIFEM’s South East Asia Programme approved our proposal on “Capacitating Indigenous Women in Asia to Monitor State Obligations to CEDAW.” This is a follow-up to the “Study Session on the CEDAW and Indigenous Women” held for AIWN members in 2005. Though very limited in scope, we hope to use this as a venue to build our capacities in using various mechanisms and opportunities open to us, as well as to widen and strengthen linkages with other organizations in pursuit of the recognition of our rights as indigenous peoples and women. This 1-year project covers several training and data gathering activities in Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines.

For this year’s 7th Session of the UNPFII, the Secretariat facilitated a workshop on women and children during the Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting in Nepal which inputted to a statement on indigenous women and children in Asia. This statement was presented to the UNPFII last April. It also facilitated the participation of some AIWN country focal persons to the said activity and successfully coordinated and implemented a side event on the “Impacts of Climate Change on Indigenous Women.” This side event had speakers from Asia as well as from other regions, e.g., Anglophone and Francophone Africa, Latin America. On June 7-12, 2008 the participation of women in the Asia Regional Workshop on the Implementation of the UNDRIP held in the Philippines was ensured through the AIWN where a back-to-back meeting was held to discuss the planned AIWN 3rd Conference. 

## **A REJOINDER to “Education-Information Activity on Indigenous Women’s Rights” published in the AIWN magazine, Nos. 1-2, 2007, pp. 19-22.**

A large number of residents not only in Malabing Valley but of the whole Kasibu and other municipalities in Nueva Vizcaya came from Ifugao province. Based on an interview with Director Marie Grace Pascua of the Philippine National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the Ifugaos in Kasibu, though they are indigenous peoples, are considered migrants to the area. Being migrants, they are not entitled to claim the right to ancestral domain in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya. Only the Bugkalots, another indigenous peoples’ group, who are the recognized original peoples of the area are entitled to ancestral domain and whose free, prior and informed consent are sought.

Administrative Order No 1, s. 1998 Rules and Regulations Implementing Republic Act No. 8371 otherwise known as the “Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997” defined the scope of indigenous cultural communities or indigenous peoples whose free and prior informed consent is required:

*It shall depend upon the impact area of the proposed policy, program, projects and plans, such that: a) When the policy, program, project or plan affects only the particular community within the ancestral domain, only such community shall give their free and prior informed consent; b) When the policy, program, project or plan affects the entire ancestral domain, the consent of the concerned ICCs/IPs within the ancestral domain shall be secured; and c) When the policy, program, project or plan affects a whole range of territories covering two or more ancestral domains, the consent of all affected ICCs/IP communities shall be secured.*

Consequently, since the area is recognized as ancestral domain of the Bugkalots only, the Ifugaos are denied the right to free, prior informed consent. In the light of the onslaught of big mining companies in Kasibu, NCIP poses that the Ifugaos and other migrants in Kasibu can only assert their right to be consulted and that only the Bugkalots can exercise the right to free prior and informed consent.

However, migrant Ifugaos’ right to land can still be recognized by virtue of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 Chapter III, Section 12 Option to Secure Certificate of Title under Commonwealth Act 141, as amended, or the Land Registration Act 496 which states that:

*Individual members of cultural communities, with*

*respect to individually-owned ancestral lands who, by themselves or through their predecessors-in-interest, have been in continuous possession and occupation of the same in the concept of owner since the immemorial or for a period of not less than thirty (30) years immediately preceding the approval of this Act and uncontested by the members of the same ICCs/IPs shall have the option to secure title to their ancestral lands under the provisions of Commonwealth Act 141, as amended, or the Land Registration Act 496.*

Most of the present adult population in Kasibu were born in the area and have considered it their home. Recalling their parents stories, unverified claims have it that parts of Nueva Vizcaya, including the present town of Kasibu, are part of the hunting grounds of the Ifugaos. Unless they can prove without doubt—through material and oral evidences that can withstand the tests of court—that they or their forefathers have been in Kasibu since time immemorial, they will be classified as migrants, Pascua elucidated.

What is at stake now is the recognition of the rights of the Ifugaos over their lands that they have occupied and developed. These include the resources they have managed sustainably as their own and with the permission of the Bugkalots in Kasibu against the large-scale mining projects of foreign mining companies.

Reaffirming international human rights conventions, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the Philippines adopted, posits that:

*States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representatives institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources (Article 32, Par. 2).*

Favoring the interest of a foreign mining company over the fundamental right to peaceful and dignified life and sustainable development as envisioned and practiced by these peoples does not speak well of a nation that boasts of being the first country to enact a law on the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples. As one hand purports to promote, the other takes back what little there is left for the people.



# Announcement

## **Regional Consultation with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UNSRVAW) and UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous People (UNSRIP)**

In consideration of the recommendation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) from its Sixth Session (PFII 2007 report, E/2007/43 E/C. 19/2007/12 at para. 105), a regional consultation with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UNSRVAW), Dr. Yakin Erturk, and UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People (UNSRIP), Professor James Anaya, on **"VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN THE ASIA PACIFIC"** will be held on October 15-16, 2008 in New Delhi, India.

This opportunity calls for all indigenous women and peoples' organizations, and other NGOs to start a process of documentation and analysis of their own situations, including all forms and causes of violence that harm or endanger the collective and individual rights (economic, cultural, social, political) of women in their community/country. In the process of analysis, it is important to link the causes of the violations to existing policies that facilitate such violence or the absence of policies that ensure the respect of indigenous peoples/women's rights. Specific and practical recommendations are likewise expected.

The AIWN Secretariat can help consolidate your reports to the Special Rapporteurs during the consultation, which our Convenor and UNPFII Chair Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, will present. These will be the basis for our Convenor to articulate and call for action on our situations. **It will be most appreciated if you can send us your inputs on or before 15 September so we will have time to prepare these for the consultation.**

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To **Ms. SHEFALIKA TRIPURA** of the Khagrapur Mahila Kalyan Samity ("Tireless journey towards women empowerment") in Khagrachari District, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh for garnering the "Annanya Super Ten 2006 Award" in April 2008. This award is given by the national magazine Annanya to deserving women who have achieved remarkable success in their areas of work. Ms. Shefalikja Tripura has been cited for her outstanding work in education, sanitation and land rights movement among indigenous women. Ms. Tripura, Chairperson of the KMKS, has been actively engaged in development work for indigenous women in the CHT while responding to the numerous incidents and cases of violence against women in the region.

To **Ms. JOAN CARLING**, for being elected as the new Secretary General of the Asian Indigenous Peoples' Pact (AIPP). Joan was the Chairperson of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance, an alliance of indigenous peoples organizations in the Cordillera region, Philippines.

## *Congratulations*

To **Ms. JANNIE LASIMBANG** (Malaysia), the outgoing Secretary General of the AIPP, and Atty. Jose Molintas, (Philippines), Jose Carlos Morales (Costa Rica) and John Henriksen (Norway) for being confirmed by the UN Human Rights Council as members of the new Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – a subsidiary body under the Human Rights Council.

To **Ms. LUCKY SHERPA** who has been elected as member of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal. Lucky has been a very active member of the AIWN and was instrumental in organizing the National Network of Indigenous Women (NNIW) of Nepal in 2007 which demanded the recognition of other unlisted indigenous peoples in the country and women's participation in the new government.

*aiwn*

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