

A BRIEFING PAPER

THE IMPACTS OF LAND DISPOSSESSION ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN



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This briefing paper is an outcome of the project “Strengthening the Documentation and Advocacy Capacity of Indigenous Women for the Advancement of their Rights and Welfare on Land” implemented in Cambodia, India and Indonesia in 2013-2014. This project was designed to strengthen the capacity of indigenous women (IW) to better advocate for their rights in the context of land related issues and the recognition of their vital roles in their communities that contributes to sustainable resource management, food production and security, strengthening social cohesion among others through documentation and strategic advocacy activities with relevant State agencies. Among the proposed activities to strengthen the capacities of indigenous women was the conduct of trainings on human rights documentation and advocacy at the national/local levels, follow up training on data processing and advocacy with focus on available mechanisms at the national/local levels for women in general to engage in with particular focus to policy makers.

Indigenous women in Cambodia, Indonesia and India were targeted for this project because massive land alienation and land concession projects are taking place in the name of development, which are adversely affecting many indigenous communities. Among the destructive projects that are being implemented in these countries are large-scale rubber and palm oil plantations and mining. These projects have led to systematic violations against the individual and collective rights of the affected communities such as forced relocation, threats and harassments against protesting indigenous peoples and loss of livelihood among others. Indigenous women have been working alongside their communities to defend their land and livelihood from destructive projects but have not been spared as they are also subjected to harassments, rape and sexual abuse.

There are opportunities in the said countries though for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples in general and indigenous women in particular. Through the project activities, capacity of indigenous women in the project areas has been enhanced. They have gained knowledge and skills, and confidence to document the situation of indigenous women to assert their rights. Moreover being in collaboration with the UN Women has opened up space for indigenous women to engage with the governments, intergovernmental bodies and processes, and other actors for the promotion and protection of their individual and collective rights.

Partners:**Cambodia**

The Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA) is an organization established by a group of Cambodian indigenous students in 2005 and was officially recognized by the Royal Government of Cambodia in 2008. CIYA's vision is to develop the capacity of the indigenous youth who are the upcoming leaders of their own peoples. Many of CIYA's members are working in the community level assisting the defense of their lands, territories and resources against the growing economic land concessions in Cambodia. CIYA is a partner of the Human Rights Campaigns and Advocacy Programme of AIPP in the project Strengthening Indigenous Human Rights Defenders in Asia which involves documentation, advocacy and monitoring of the human rights situation of indigenous peoples in Cambodia. CIYA is already an informal partner of the Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights Defenders & Advocacy Project (IPHRDAs) with AIPP, which has been funded by the EU. In June 2013, CIYA partnered with AIPP again on this Indigenous Women Project funded by UN Women. The two projects are interrelated especially on the rights of indigenous peoples, however the Indigenous Women Project is an additional effort to draw out and monitor the indigenous women's rights violations.

India:

Adivasi Women's Network (AWN) is a Ranchi based non-profit indigenous women organization. It was formed with a commitment to promote and protect the rights of 'Adivasi (original inhabitants of the land) women in Jharkhand and neighboring states within Chotanagpur region of India that include some part of Orissa, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It provides a platform for 'Adivasi women for the sharing their issues and concerns, counseling and also knowledge and experience sharing within the women group. Activities include education, trainings, consultation and networking among other women organization and civil societies. Though AWN is the project holder, the project is being implemented in three states of mainland India: Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Odisha in collaboration with Mahila Maha Sangh (MMS, Chattisgarh) and Samajik Seva Sadan (SSS, Odisha).

Indigenous Women's Forum of Northeast India (IWFNEI) is a network of indigenous women organizations in the North East India. It is a non-government and nonprofit organization established in April 2007. It has 11 units from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland and Meghalaya representing various indigenous women's organizations. IWFNEI's expertise on the issue of violence against women and girls is on training and education through its members organizations, research and documentation on the inter relationship of customary laws and the protection of women's rights with particular focus on VAW. Its other expertise is in peace building and conflict transformation.

Indonesia

Persekutuan Perempuan Adat AMAN (PEREMPUAN AMAN) is AMAN's autonomous women's wing established on April 16, 2012 with membership from 7 regions in Indonesia (Papua, Kepulauan Maluku, Bali-Nusra, Sulawesi, Java, Kalimantan and Sumatera). Perempuan AMAN functions as learning, coordination, sharing forum for indigenous women of the archipelago on issues related to oppression, exploitation and deprivation of their rights. It aims to mobilize, unify and act together to fight for sovereignty, prosperity and dignity of indigenous peoples in general and indigenous women in particular.

Danger in the Guise of Development



Indigenous women and children are vulnerable groups as development projects take over in a Cambodian village. Photo credits: Indigenous Voices in Asia

In many parts of Asia today, the alarmingly rapid and disturbing rate of development aggression is especially taking place in indigenous lands and territories that are land, mineral and natural resource-abundant. These areas, long inhabited and sustainably managed by indigenous peoples, are magnets for multi-national investments and capitalist expansion. The agenda of progress and development is questionable and contentious as who benefits from profits? Who reaps the gains from these gargantuan projects such as large scale or commercial palm oil and rubber plantations, logging concessions, hydro projects like dams and extractive undertakings like mines and oil exploration and drilling? At the opposite side of this development paradigm are indigenous peoples, forcibly alienated and dislocated from and dispossessed of their long-established territories, their environments damaged, their sources of livelihood rendered inaccessible and privatized and their socio-cultural practices and traditions disrupted or even endangered. These are all adversely affecting the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of indigenous peoples and especially indigenous women.

The historical injustice committed against indigenous peoples in the name of development has reinforced their marginalization. Consequently, mass scale systematic violations of their individual and collective human rights continue unabated today, committed by large corporate interests with State approval and government consent, and in some cases, collusion of both entities. In many documented cases, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) were not implemented or has been manipulated to coerce indigenous peoples to give way to the demands and benefit of corporate investors. On the other hand, the indigenous people's

response to this transgression on their territories is their fierce and sustained resistance. The indigenous communities' defense against the onslaught of development has been steered to a sustained and far-reaching indigenous peoples movement for self-determination in almost all Asian countries, even around the world. Indigenous peoples' resistance has been dealt with repression, with militarization as the State's response to quell restiveness and to allow development projects to proceed as planned.

To the indigenous peoples, land is life and they have existed harmoniously with their environment because of sustainable practices and systems. This, despite the neglect by their governments that have not provided basic services and development attuned to the indigenous peoples' needs and ways of life.

Generally, they have no voice in political processes and deliberations, no genuine representation in government, and their prior rights to their territories unacknowledged or outrightly disregarded. This non-recognition of their collective rights to survival has brought the indigenous peoples to the economic fringes, pushing them further to poverty and uncertain sustenance with the loss of their sources of livelihood, disruption of their traditional way of life, erosion of their essential culture. It is this condition that they are trying to hurdle and overcome. Indigenous communities



Indigenous women from the Cambodia during the documentation and advocacy training, 2014 Photo credits: CIYA, Cambodia

are facing adversaries posing as agents of development. Their exclusion from major decisions regarding their lands and resources which are the very sources of their survival as a people is a fundamental reason why they are waging a relentless campaign to assert their rights as distinct peoples with collective rights.

The massive violations of the collective rights of indigenous peoples especially to their lands, territories and resources, do not normally account for the violence committed against indigenous women. The very struggle of indigenous peoples to defend and assert their rights is also at the heart of indigenous women's struggles. However, many indigenous women are not yet fully recognized and acknowledged as indispensable partners in advancing indigenous peoples' movements. This includes recognizing indigenous women's vital roles in promoting sustainable resource management and holistic community development. It is imperative for indigenous women to raise their voice and claim their place within the development agenda.

The Indigenous Women's Burden

This briefing paper highlights the specific conditions of indigenous women, who comprise a major segment of indigenous communities where development projects are being implemented in India, Indonesia, and Cambodia. In the midst of restiveness against corporate take-over of their lands, territories and resources, the indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women, are grappling with the consequences of their resistance and finding means to forward the advocacy of the recognition and protection of their rights and welfare. The oft-repeated phrase "Land is life" never rang truer or louder than today among indigenous women, who have traditionally been bearers and keepers of seeds and that translate to food security of their communities. Indigenous women are mainly the bearers of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples in relation to the use, conservation and sustainable management of their natural resources, as well as on certain traditional skills in relation to the livelihoods and traditional occupations of indigenous peoples, such as shifting cultivation/ rotational agriculture, gathering of non-timber forest products among others

Already saddled by the burden of discrimination and marginalization because of their ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status, indigenous women in the three countries are facing more challenges as land alienation looms larger and as their lands are taken away and converted into large scale rubber and palm oil plantations, as in the case of indigenous communities in Indonesia. Dislocation and displacement, environmental degradation due to fuel and gas exploration and dam construction in Northeast India are also issues faced by the indigenous peoples, especially women. Economic land concession has disturbed the spiritual grounds and forest as sources of livelihood of indigenous women in Cambodia to favor rubber plantations. Indigenous women in these countries who are part of resisting and protesting communities, including their children, have been subjected to threats and harassments and other forms of violence.

The plight of indigenous women in these affected communities manifests through different stories gathered by AIPP's local partners in its UN Women supported project Strengthening the Documentation and Advocacy Capacity of Indigenous Women for the Advancement of their Rights and Welfare on Land: Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA) in Cambodia, Persekutuan Perempuan Adat Nusantara Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (PEREMPUAN) AMAN in Indonesia, Adivasi Women's Network (AWN) and Indigenous Women's Network for Northeast India (IWFNEI) in India.

One thing is certain and pervasive in all the cases and stories; it is the indigenous woman who experiences the tremendous impact of dispossession and displacement from her land. While indigenous women were previously decisive managers of their natural resources and were active participants in matters of sustainability in their communities, they now contend with the restrictions imposed by companies and government ordinances that have marked their traditional, communal, productive areas like forests and farms as private and off-limits to the community. The prohibition to access their own traditional means of livelihood has rendered them powerless against mighty private armed enforcers and state military forces.

The AWN and CIYA researches yielded the parallel cases of village women belonging to a scheduled tribe in the state of Jharkhand in India, and Kui women in the province of Preah Vihear in Cambodia. Almost the entire communities were forcibly transformed economically, from landowners and self-sufficient forest gatherers and farmers to low-paid laborers or factory workers on the subsistence level. Furthermore, women were the lowest priorities in job placements in the steel encasing company in Jharkhand.

In the matter of land compensation, their families sold lands in the names of women to the company but elderly women, widows and single women were excluded from the processing of land ownership papers. To make things worse, women faced harassment from company security forces who prevented them from accessing their source of clean and safe water for their daily domestic use. The women, whose responsibility it was to keep their family safe from health hazards, had to seek out alternative means as their water sources had been contaminated by the factory's sewerage outlets, and factory emissions of poisonous gases had caused illnesses in the community. The children had to go through a security checkpoint to reach their school, villagers subjected to routine inspection as the entire area had been appropriated by the company. Equally, the Kui women in Preah Vihear have experienced tremendous losses in their income as they could not go about their activities in the forests and gather traditional herbs for the community's use or tend to their livestock in the farms, due to harassments and threats from company personnel guarding the concession allotted for rubber plantation and processing.



Presenting the situation of Adivasi Women in Mainland India during 1st National Consultation of Adivasi Women in Delhi India, June 2014. Photo credit: AWN

This has transformed not only the physical landscape that indigenous women have nurtured for generations but likewise altered their way of life, as they are presently confronted with many challenges in ascertaining their basic rights. The Tangkhul Naga, and Kuki and other women in Manipur despair about submerged lands brought about by the Mapithel Dam construction that leaves them no choice but seek alternative means to survive. Neither customary laws nor government laws can guarantee them their rightful place in as far as stewardship or ownership of land is concerned. Ironically, it is even the Ministers of Environment and other relevant agencies who declare economic land concessions and order communities to give way to business ventures, lending crucial implication to the socio-economic conditions of indigenous women in their respective communities. This has happened repeatedly in recent history of Nagaland, where indigenous women are ordered out of their ancestral land by their government to give way to food, paper mills, and oil corporations. They have not received any compensation for their land, as promised. Still in Nagaland, a hydro project had to displace the entire village and the women had to make great adjustments in distance to reach their area of cultivation and agricultural production. This meant additional workloads that have affected their health. They were considered lucky compared to others, whose sources of livelihood were completely taken away from them.



Indigenous women from the North East protest against the rape of a girl from the region on November 29, 2010. Photo credit: Ninglun Hanghal

Many have opted for migration, or have been pushed to seek means of livelihood in other places that can accommodate them, but many face employment uncertainty. This is the sad fate of Adivasi women in Chhattisgarh, India, who were forcibly displaced and terrorized by a company to leave their land and reside in temporary shelters and settle for ad-hoc jobs to feed their families. No company's promise of resettlement or land compensation or employment was ever fulfilled. Children were barred from attending school. The company has not receded in its efforts to evict the residents from their already miserable place of dwelling. In Kampong Speu province in Cambodia, Suoy indigenous women who lost their land for farming and forests for their spiritual rituals and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) have become workers in a garment factory. They complained of delayed wage payments and of being forced to borrow money to support their families, especially as there are no health facilities or benefits they can avail of in times when they or their children are sick. Some have even stopped sending their children to school. Losing their land is a grave problem for the Suoy women but they are at the forefront of protest actions, as the men have encouraged and supported them.

This too, is the similar situation of the Bunong women in Mondulkiri, Cambodia whose forests and lands were declared for economic land concession by a private group investing in rubber tree plantation and manufacturing. The more vocal women who resisted the takeover of their land were ostracized and belittled by some sectors, specifically men of their tribe as they had already conceded to corporate take-over and view the women's opposition as fruitless. It has even become a source of conflict between men and women, as the latter are more persistent with their opposition because the impacts of displacement are worse for them and the children of the community. This is contrary to the outlook of Suoy men who think the women stand a stronger chance heading the frontlines of opposition.

The Curse of Feudal-Patriarchal Culture

It is the indigenous woman, who is doubly burdened owing to her ethnicity and gender, particularly in cultures where patriarchy is still dominant. In very rare cases, it is the community elders, traditionally male, who are targeted by companies and government entities to yield their lands. Yet, consistently, it is the women who are vocal oppositionists to this capitulation.

In various indigenous cultures in the three countries, the women assume similar roles in their communities but customary laws and traditions still generally reserve an inferior place for women as far as decision-making and assertion of rights are concerned. Particularly in Mainland India, the Adivasi or tribal women aspire for changes or review in the *Gram Sabha*¹ processes so they can have their right to land ownership, where women are deemed inferior and not deserving of ownership of land. Patriarchal values are so deeply entrenched that extreme measures are applied, such as Witch Hunting and murders to totally eliminate women who are potential inheritors of land properties. A case in point happened in Simdega District in Jharkhand, where an intense family feud over land ownership resulted to a man attacking and murdering his sister-in-law after an altercation with his brother. No resolution to the case was reported.

Another case of landgrabbing from a single Adivasi woman also happened in the same district. The woman was manhandled, threatened with weapons and brutally beaten while helpless neighbors witnessed the perpetrators forcing the woman to hand them over her papers that showed proof of her land ownership. Single women who own land or have properties in their name are vulnerable targets of powerful people with a patriarchal outlook and capitalist motive. This is a tragic fact that no serious government action has been taken, allowing this cruel punishment for women to go unabated. The perpetrators stand trial but with passage of time it has become evident that there is no pursuit of justice. Hate crimes continue while the cultural norm views the women as threats to the diminishing chance of owning land in the period of displacement by bigger capitalist threats. As more and more indigenous lands are fenced off for business ventures, some communities have to look into their customary laws and practices to reflect on how they can rally people together to oppose destruction, and not vent their frustration and resentment at women, who had prior rights to their own land.

How Indigenous Women are Facing the Crisis

Today, Indigenous women face difficulties and adversities on many fronts; They are striving hard to rise above their condition, as they are directly engaged in the production and management of resources from their land for their family's and the community's daily survival. They are struggling hard not to relinquish their role of stewardship over their territories, thus, reeling from the harsh consequences of capitalist incursion in their territories, the indigenous women have to contend with the minimal space allowed them in leadership in the local levels. There is no other recourse but to rise above the limitations dictated by custom and tradition and state laws, and threats of capitalist greed. In many provinces in Cambodia, a number of indigenous women in villages have been noted to be outspoken, even vociferous in fending off agents of land concession. The threat on their lives has never been as concrete as the direct take-over of their lands and their very survival.



Indigenous women and children in Odisha are guarded by administration forces after a protest action over a steel project. Photo credit: Deccan Chronicle

The alienation from their land has compelled Indigenous women to mobilise themselves into political action, but not without harsh reprisal from corporate and state enforcers. Data gathered by documentation training participants of AWN and AMMS cite the case study of Munda and Oraon women in Odisha, India who were tortured and brutally beaten when they attempted to fend off land occupation by non-tribals who wanted to claim their land for religious purposes in October, 2013. Seriously injured, they did not get any medical treatment from state authorities who should have intervened in the dispute, a dire impression that women should not “meddle” even if their lands and resources were at stake. Also in Odisha, women opposing the dam construction project that will inundate four villages attempted to stop construction work, but they were confronted by police units and were arrested.

Again in Odisha, indigenous women vocally opposed the expansion of a brick-manufacturing factory that had been causing disturbance, air and noise pollution, and water contamination in the community. While the company was in operation, it signified its interest for expansion, which was then denied by the community. Consequently, the factory owner resorted to landgrabbing. The women defied this and moved to avert the expansion by digging pits on the road to block the passage of trucks and machinery. They were threatened by police and pressured by village elders to desist from pursuing their protest action. The community clamored for a review by the Gram Sabha, whereby the elders did not go through a proper consultation process with the people. The consensus on the land issue and construction of the factory was reviewed. The approval to allow expansion was revoked due to the women's strong opposition. The women's greater voice in the Gram Sabha was recognized.

¹ Village Council in India

In the face of land displacement and violation of their rights, their marginalization and discrimination weigh heavily on the shoulders of indigenous women as they go about their daily tasks and duties of keeping their families together, bearing and raising children, problematizing about food security, helping keep the community together, defending themselves from domestic and state violence. Still, in varying degrees and forms, and due to the differing socio-cultural practices in the affected communities, there is persistence of violence inflicted on indigenous women and children. They are easy targets of sexual abuse and harassment, even murder by state forces and company security personnel. Sadly the destitution has even resulted to indigenous women and children being prostituted and trafficked by unscrupulous entities. The brutal practice of witch hunting² in some rural areas in India bears land-related reasons where state laws need to be enforced to curb this.

Indigenous Women Take the High Road to Rights Advocacy

The political landscape for indigenous women's rights advocacy and their clamor for land ownership varies in these countries. The political climate in countries like Cambodia has not helped ease the strife in distressed communities. Any semblance of organizational activity, such as training for women, is misconstrued as resistance. Despite this, the willingness and enthusiasm of indigenous women to know their rights and to understand their vital role in the growth of their community paved the way for activities to be implemented in the target areas of implementation. Even in the most remote districts and provinces, where communication technology is scarce, indigenous women have found ways to document their ordeals in the face of economic land concession.

Silenced by tradition and repressed by state institutions, the indigenous women from the provinces with much effort, found their courage to analyze their situation and articulate this, interact with other indigenous women's groups and form a web of linked networks so they would have strength to dialogue with government authorities. In fact, results of the indigenous women participants in the training on documentation and advocacy were immediately published and disseminated to the media for public information and awareness of land-related problems and their impact on indigenous women.

² In India, labeling a woman as a witch is a common ploy to grab land, settle scores or even to punish her for turning down sexual advances. In a majority of the cases, it is difficult for the accused woman to reach out for help and she is forced to either abandon her home and family or driven to commit suicide. Most cases are not documented because it is difficult for poor and illiterate women to travel from isolated regions to file police reports. Less than 2 percent of those accused of witch-hunting are actually convicted, according to a study by the Free Legal Aid Committee, a group that works with victims in the state of Jharkhand.^[66] A 2010 estimate places the number of women killed as witches in India at between 150 and 200 per year, or a total of 2,500 in the period of 1995 to 2009.^[67] The lynchings are particularly common in the poor northern states of Jharkhand,^[68] Bihar and the central state of Chhattisgarh. Witch hunts are also taking place among the tea garden workers in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal India.^[69] The witch hunts in Jalpaiguri are less known, but are motivated by the stress in the tea industry on the lives of the adivasi workers. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch-hunt>)



Participants during a National Consultation on Advocacy & Indigenous Women
Photo credit: AMAN, Indonesia

Among the indigenous communities, there remain traditional systems and customary laws that indigenous women are hoping to seek protection from. The recognition by the local communities of the vital contribution of their women is a compelling factor in allowing indigenous women's voices to be heard and amplified, for if the women's capacity and strength are given recognition as a decisive factor in indigenous communities' struggle against capitalist take-over of their lands, the solidarity among communities will be tighter, powerful, and more effective. In the histories of some Asian countries, indigenous women who found the courage to assert and advocate their rights against oppressive customary and state laws are proof that they can be at the forefront of the indigenous peoples' movement against capitalist plunder. They have shown to the international community that indigenous women bear the inherent trait of brave stewardship of their lands, territories and natural resources. There are platforms and avenues of opportunities that indigenous women in their respective countries can take advantage of and harness to advocate for the assertion of their rights and recognitions.

As there are existing customary laws that can be reviewed to reiterate the favorable position and regard for women, as in the case of the Adivasi women in India, these same laws are also being challenged to improve their status in their communities so they can better participate and contribute to the betterment of their embattled communities against the bigger adversaries, there are mechanisms and state laws they can use as leverage. There are state laws favorable to indigenous women and their ownership of land that are not being enforced nor cited when negotiating with corporations or government agencies.

For example, the Convention to End all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are international instruments that indigenous women are now gradually learning about, citing and integrating in their advocacy efforts. While these are milestones achieved internationally, the indigenous women are appreciating and putting importance to internal support from local organizations to help them strengthen their capacity to take full stock of their situation and rise above the odds they are confronting.



Indigenous women share a light moment in Chhattisgarh, India. Photo credit: SAMRAT MANDAL/UNDP INDIA

From the rough roads and deforested villages, from the remotest farms and mountain settlements come indigenous women who take their places in the protest lines and they have empowered themselves and linked up to form organizations. They are now able to go to the negotiating table to engage authorities responsible for the dispossession of their lands and violation of their rights.

The contention for land rights and resources is long and arduous. But the call has never been so accurate and challenging. That indigenous women must cease to look at themselves as victims, rather they should muster strength, and together with other indigenous women faced with the same issues, take their position in the frontlines of advocacy, be leaders in their own territories and reclaim their rights.

Recommendations

1. When mapping socio-economic development, governments should consider the special needs and concerns of indigenous women. Strategies must be along gender perspectives and the rights of indigenous peoples. A national legislation that bears policies, programs and budgets must be geared towards the elimination of the multiple discrimination of indigenous women. There should be measures that will ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women in local, national and international governance.

2. To enhance indigenous women's participation in development processes, they should be provided with opportunities to strengthen their capabilities to gain control over valued resources that will help them to gain gender equality. Data disaggregation on key indicators on the wellbeing and development of indigenous women shall be conducted systematically and regularly, to take account of local and regional cultural/social/economic differences in regards to indigenous women's issues.

3. The vital role and contribution of indigenous women in natural resource management and protection of environment and bearers of traditional knowledge should be fully recognized, enhanced and promoted, including their ownership rights to lands and access to resources. Indigenous women's effective participation shall be mandatory in consultation and decision making processes in relation to the control and prevention of the destruction of natural resources. They should fully and effectively participate in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of environmental programs or projects.

4. State policies must be towards increased employment opportunities for indigenous women to improve their economic and social conditions, thereby empowering them. The professionalization of their traditional skills especially in arts and crafts can further expand their work opportunities. Also, increased access to resources including micro credit, new technologies, agricultural inputs and other outputs are also useful for self-employment. Capacity building can be strengthened by entrusting women's groups with the direct management of financial resources for development work. Facilitating women's access to credit through micro finance activities has been successful in generating additional income. With better incomes, indigenous families will be freed from debt bondage and other forms of exploitation and the nutritional status of the family members will be improved.

5. Indigenous women should have access to improved education systems and skills training. The right to education, including bilingual and mother tongue education, shall be fully respected so that indigenous women have better access to appropriate formal and non-formal education. Governments shall increase funds allocated for education to sustain equitable education programs particularly for indigenous women and girls. Launching literacy programs targeted exclusively at indigenous women and girls as well as the raising of family awareness of the benefit of education in terms of social and economic status shall be pursued. Likewise, special educational needs of indigenous women should be culturally-appropriate. Improved educational status of indigenous women will expand their employment opportunities and also empower them in the political processes.

6. Indigenous women should have access to health care services, health education and training through a rights-based system. The services should be culturally-acceptable and appropriate to be able to benefit indigenous women. Traditional healing practices should also be recognized and improved.

AIPP at a glance

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) is a regional organization founded in 1988 by indigenous peoples' movements as a platform for solidarity and cooperation. AIPP is actively promoting and defending indigenous peoples' rights and human rights; sustainable development and management of resources and environment protection. Through the years, AIPP has developed its expertise on grassroots capacity building, advocacy and networking from local to global levels and strengthening partnerships with indigenous organizations, support NGOs, UN agencies and other institutions. At present, AIPP has 47 members from 14 countries in Asia with 7 indigenous peoples' national alliances/networks and 35 local and sub-national organizations including 16 are ethnic-based organizations, five (5) indigenous women and four (4) are indigenous youth organizations.

Through our Indigenous Women (IW) programme, AIPP aims to empower indigenous women through networking, education and capacity building activities with the overall goal for indigenous women to assert, promote and protect their rights as women and as indigenous peoples.

Our Vision

Indigenous peoples in Asia are living with dignity and fully exercising their rights, distinct cultures and identity, and enhancing their sustainable management systems on lands, territories and resources for their own future and development in an environment of peace, justice and equality.

Our Mission

AIPP strengthen the solidarity, cooperation and capacities of indigenous peoples in Asia to promote and protect their rights, cultures and identities, and their sustainable resource management system for their development and self-determination.

Our Programmes

Our main areas of work among the different programmes are information dissemination, awareness raising, capacity building, advocacy and networking from local to global. Our programmes are:

- Human Rights Campaign and Policy Advocacy
- Regional Capacity Building
- Environment
- Indigenous Women
- Communication and Development
- Organizational Strengthening

AIPP is accredited as an NGO in special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and as observer organization with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). AIPP is a member of the International Land Coalition (ILC).