



Volume

2

UNHEARD AND UNSEEN

Indigenous Women's
Path to Empowerment
and Sustainable Development

CAMBODIA, INDONESIA, PHILIPPINES,
THAILAND AND VIETNAM

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to Empowerment
and Sustainable Development**

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THAILAND AND VIETNAM**

Volume 2

**UNHEARD AND UNSEEN: Indigenous Women's Path
to Empowerment and Sustainable Development—
Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam
(Volume 2)**

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Foreword



This book is a significant contribution to operationalizing the global commitment to Agenda 2030 *not to leave anyone behind* and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) due for review on its 25th year of implementation. Twenty-five years earlier, indigenous women acknowledged BPfA's critical areas of concern but posited that it failed to acknowledge the neo-colonial structures perpetrating the discrimination and violence experienced by indigenous women and their communities. The Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women (BDIW) called for the recognition and respect of indigenous peoples' rights and a stop to human rights violations and violence against indigenous women. It also demanded for equality in political participation while calling for support to enhance their capacities and access to resources.

In 2000, 191 states agreed to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women through the millennium development goals (MDGs). The MDGs is a milestone in recognizing the indigenous peoples' close relationship to their lands, territories and resources and their significance in environmental protection and management. Indigenous women's invisibility in the MDGs, however, proves that their calls in Beijing were not heeded.

Twelve years after Beijing, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted. While it is a landmark in the history of indigenous peoples, there is still a wide gap in its full and effective realization on the ground. In Asia today, this is complicated by the intersectionality of diverse factors which include histories of colonization, conflicts, social and cultural diversity, fundamentalism and militarism.

The Sustainable Development Goals/Agenda 2030 followed the MDGs in 2015. From Agenda 21 of UNCED aimed at reducing poverty, advancing social equity and environmental protection to the current SDGs, indigenous peoples have consistently argued that development should be founded on the respect and protection of individual and collective rights including to culture. Substantive respect, recognition, and protection of the rights of indigenous women as indigenous peoples and as women is a continuing call. Despite indigenous women's contributions to development and progress made in the policy realm, indigenous women generally remain unseen and unheard. If development is to be responsive and inclusive, the significant roles and contributions of indigenous women in sustaining life, people, the planet, peace, and development need to be acknowledged and accounted for, and their rights protected.

The five-country studies presented in this second of a 2-volume series are part of the efforts of the Asian Indigenous Women's Network to raise the visibility and voices of indigenous women. The studies take different themes and approaches reflecting the diverse priorities, experiences, situations and capacities of indigenous women's organizations who have been engaged in the process. While the studies may be limited in scope and do not necessarily reflect the totality of the situations of indigenous women, these show how intersecting issues shape their lived realities, how they themselves are responding, and the challenges they face. These offer insights on how to approach substantive inclusion and empowerment of indigenous women.

We are grateful to the members of the Asian Indigenous Women's Network and Tebtebba partners who have taken up the challenge of documentation to collaborate in this endeavor. Special thanks to the women, men, and their families/communities whose experiences are included in this volume. We owe it to our children and the future generation...

Eleanor P. Dictaan-Bang-oa
On behalf of the Secretariat
Asian Indigenous Women's Network

Indigenous Women Lead

The narrative on indigenous women as leaders and main actors in development is little heard. It may be that being women and indigenous, the glass ceiling for them may be that much higher and harder to break. But the stories that emerge reveal that in various communities they are hurdling barriers in arenas beyond their traditional domestic domain. Although still marginalized and burdened by multiple work, they are proving that they can actively engage in their community's economic and political development rather than remain passive receivers of programs and policy. These case studies from five Southeast Asian countries give a glimpse of what indigenous women can achieve when their potential and possibilities are unlocked. When armed with knowledge of their rights and their capabilities are enhanced, they can mobilize and lead in fostering the common good.

These cases highlight indigenous women's leadership, initiatives, and roles in sustainable development, management, and protection of community lands and forests, promotion of cultural identity, and local governance in Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, and Vietnam. They illuminate the particular issues that indigenous women face in their communities and how they are responding to them as indigenous women and as indigenous peoples. They also shine a light on distinct women and their singular feats in defending their land, propagating their culture, and advancing their fellow women's welfare, and in the process, their community.

Wide Ranging Issues

The indigenous women featured in these case studies share the common women's condition of multiple burden, marginalization, and gender inequality that subordinates their position to men in most spheres of life, making them barely visible or heard in the public life. But beyond this shared lot, they also confront other issues peculiar to their own communities and societies. These are diverse and wide ranging, from food insecurity (Philippines), land encroachment by big companies (Cambodia), absence of forest use rights (Vietnam), agrarian conflict and labor rights violations (Indonesia) to statelessness and low participation in governance (Thailand). Most of these are problems that stem from the various roles and livelihoods that they engage in to secure family and community welfare. Apart from their traditional responsibilities of household care and management, they are farmers, farm laborers, plantation workers, of nontimber forest product gatherers. Pursued to augment family income, these livelihoods are also fraught with potential abuse or denial of rights that further puts them at a political and economic disadvantage.

Although the issues indigenous women confront may differ, a common underlying factor is the matter of rights—the absence, lack, or denial of rights—to land, forest, and other natural resources, to work and social protection, and even non-recognition as indigenous people. The traditional and supplemental livelihoods of indigenous women are largely bound up with the land and forest and the utilization of natural resources. But these have increasingly come under threat due to official policies and programs that deny or erode the right of indigenous peoples to their land.

In Cambodia, Kui and Tumpoun women and their communities in Ratanakiri and Stung Treng provinces suffer land grabs by foreign and local companies granted “economic land concessions” by the government to mine, log, or establish large-scale agricultural or commercial tree plantations. The program on “social land concessions” which hands over indigenous communities' lands to non-indigenous people without land similarly undermines their land rights. Such programs

have caused indigenous families to lose their land, affected their farm cultivation, and limited their access to forest resources. “When indigenous peoples lose their land, they do not only lose the territory where they live, but also the link with their ancestors, their traditional occupations, a part of their culture, the natural resources which provide a living for their family and all the community members.” Cambodia has passed new land laws that recognize collective land ownership of indigenous lands, but the long and complicated process and many requirements are stumbling blocks for an indigenous community to obtain one. Only 14 out of several hundreds of indigenous communities are reported to have acquired a collective title to their lands and only after several years from application.

In Vietnam, ethnic minority communities and women in North Central provinces such as Thanh Hoa province do not have legal access and use of the forests and forest resources they have long been relying on for living. Government forest policies place forests, which are usually near or surround their villages, under the control and management of commune authorities. These have made it illegal for ethnic minority people to undertake their traditional livelihood of gathering nontimber forest products and other resources of the forest. Other livelihood options are no less restrictive. While they also farm, available cultivable land is limited, just barely adequate for household production and consumption and is increasingly becoming degraded from chemical overuse and water lack attributable to forest decline.

In Thailand where about half a million people, mostly indigenous peoples and migrants, are reportedly still without citizenship, a significant number of indigenous women face statelessness. This means they do not have any rights to land, livelihood, and work, use and management of natural resources, and other rights and benefits that citizens are entitled to. It further denotes exclusion especially from basic social services such as health care, education, livelihood assistance, community services, and services for children, elderly and disabled. Stateless, they remain outside of the protection of the law and are often deemed along with migrants lawless

elements. Thailand as it is does not recognize the notion of indigenous peoples, only acknowledge the nine indigenous groups in the North as ethnic groups or hilltribes people.

The application process for citizenship, already long and difficult, is further complicated by various amendments to Thailand's Nationality Act. A lack of facility in the Thai language needed to follow through the complex process further stymies indigenous peoples especially in isolated areas. Citizenship can be transformative as mere possession of a national identification card can already ease mobility and access to basic services. To a young Karen woman, an ID card virtually opened up a new life. "Upon receipt of the ID card, I felt that I got my human dignity back. I can travel everywhere, I can access education loan, I can access bank services. All the limitations of my life have been removed. I got a new life. I have the right to vote for the first time in my life."

Indigenous women in Thailand are also limited by their gender in their own communities, even matrilineal ones, which traditionally give higher value and respect to men. Consigned to domestic care, they have little opportunity to participate in local governance and to take on leadership roles in the community and larger society dominated by men. This is compounded by prevailing community attitudes that consider women as incapable of leading.

Dayak women in Sisang and Iban Sebaruk communities on the Indonesia-Malaysia border endure unfair labor practices. Many are casual laborers at palm oil plantation companies on lands they and their families once owned. Indonesia's past administrations aggressively pushed the exploitation of West Kalimantan's vast natural resources including on indigenous lands. The Dayak women were mainly farmers and rubber tappers who became plantation workers after companies took over their lands in negotiations that involved only the men of the community and resulted in plantation jobs in exchange for their lands. As casual plantation laborers, the women are deprived of basic workers' rights. They are paid wages lower than those of women in general and less than set regional minimums. Unlike regular fulltime workers, their casual work status puts them beyond the coverage of standard

worker protection such as health and social security benefits and maternity and paid sick leaves. Yet they carry out heavy work that exposes them to high health risks. They clear land, sow and plant palm oil seeds, and what they consider the most difficult and hazardous task, spray chemical pesticides and fertilizers on foot in assigned areas as wide as a hectare for a set number of hours. Suffocation, headaches, and body pains are not uncommon ailments among them.

Dayak women further confront gender inequality in their own communities that undermine their access to economic development. They are scarcely visible in village decision making including those on development programs, as the man represents the family being deemed family head by state regulations and community beliefs. While women can receive and manage a share of their family land, the same social norms place its control with the man in the family, in the case of married women, with their husbands. Their capabilities are further belittled when a central government fund specifically intended for women empowerment can be reallocated, as “the village government sees the indigenous women as incapable of accessing the fund.”

Indigenous women in the Philippines, as the family’s main food producers and providers, grapple with food lack and insecurity. Their communities, which depend on the land and its resources for food production, are some of the most marginalized in the country. The landless tenant farmers and farm laborers among them are especially at risk of experiencing food insufficiency. The women perform a major role in food production from planting, harvesting, and marketing crops, raising livestock, gathering fuel and water to preparing and processing food as well as managing and budgeting the household income for food and other expenses.

Being mainly responsible for ensuring food on the table, they have to cope with farm-related difficulties including rising threats from climate change impacts. The shift to cash crops has indebted indigenous families who have increasingly become dependent on costly farm chemicals such crops require. Inadequate irrigation systems have idled farms, caused pest attacks and yielded poor harvests. Lack of access to clean

and safe water has also meant more time, effort, and expenses that women have to expend to meet the family's water needs. They are further constrained by their lack of marketing skills and the remoteness of their village to sell their produce and other products outside their villages.

Food insecurity in many communities is due to low income, lack of farm inputs, calamities and erratic climate conditions. When the family income is not enough, some women like the Dumagat in the Philippines take on farm or non-farm labor to meet their daily needs. During lean times, the women usually fall back on borrowing in kind or cash from relatives, neighbors, or the village store. Some communities have experienced food shortages and scarcity during natural disasters, typhoons, prolonged droughts, or monsoon rains that destroy their farmlands and natural resources. A Lambangian community in southern Philippines went through a drought for nine months that severely damaged their crops resulting in food shortages. A Mandaya community had to abandon their farms when these were devastated by a typhoon to search for other means of income, leaving these idle for a long period of time.

Even as indigenous women in Southeast Asia live and work at a disadvantage, prevailing social norms, community attitudes and cultural practices further denigrate the value of their work, disparage their capabilities and degrade their worth as persons. More pernicious is their effect on the women themselves who accept these notions unquestioningly as the way things should be. The lingering impact is low self esteem and confidence, passivity, submissiveness, and subordination to men and authority.

Among indigenous communities in Thailand, for instance, it is a long held belief and custom that only men can be leaders. The women have to prove themselves long and hard, over and over, before they can be given a crack at the male-controlled leadership. In the words of a Hmong woman leader,

“To be accepted and appointed as village leader, we women need to work really hard and to really prove to the men that we are qualified and good enough to be a leader. Fifteen years ago, I failed in my first attempt to be elected as village chief just because I was a woman. After that I worked hard, I tried to help the community with all the knowledge and experience I have...Because of my work for the community, in July 2019 the village chief appointed me as his assistant responsible for the security and welfare of the people in my village. This is a step I have made for Hmong women and I am proud that at last Hmong men in my community have accepted me, a woman as their assistant.”

And even in matrilineal communities like the Karen, the few who succeed in emerging victors in their electoral bids remain inferior in men’s eyes. A Karen woman leader elected as a member of the Subdistrict Administration Organization member and as village chief remarked,

“I am still seen as just a woman and a servant in the eyes of the elected male chiefs. We are still asked to prepare them coffee and snack during our annual monthly meeting...I encourage the elected women to resist and not do service work, but they said it is okay, making coffee is the work of women.”

Further, indigenous women do crucial work but whether paid on plantations or farms or done in their own homes, it is deemed of less economic value than men’s by both the community and larger society. The contribution of their labor to the general economic welfare is regarded as minor or insignificant compared to the men’s. Although they hold jobs as plantation workers, the Dayak women for instance are considered secondary breadwinners to the men in the family. In the Philippines, men are favored over women for certain work especially farm labor. The case study cites a Dumagat woman who almost lost the chance to earn some cash to add to the household income because the landowner preferred a man to cut the grass on his land.

Certain traditional and cultural practices such as those relating to marriage also tend to reinforce women's subservience to husbands. Among the Teduray in Maguindanao, Philippines the bride price entitles a man "to do whatever he wants to his wife because he paid for her, even economic and physical abuse." Bride price in an Ata-Manobo community in Davao del Norte, Philippines practically denies a woman the right to make decisions in the family and similarly opens her to ill treatment. "The practice of *duwad* in which the groom's family gives a gift to the newlywed couple is misinterpreted as payment by the groom or his family for the bride. That is why a woman cannot make decisions and is treated as a slave by her husband and in-laws." It is the man too who takes the decisions involving their land and resources.

Response: Building Knowledge and Capacities

A common response to address these diverse issues is the enabling of indigenous women with knowledge, technical skills and women's formations/organizations. When their understanding and proficiencies are raised, women can change mindsets and behaviors and take collective action towards their own and their community's development. Pivotal is the knowledge of rights. Awareness and comprehension of one's rights is essential to be able to exercise them, assert them when denied, and defend them when violated. Equally crucial is building capacity including in technical skills and technologies that improve livelihoods and foster sustainable development. Further vital is organizing and establishing groups that lead to concerted action and continuing growth, both for the person and the organization. These are the foundation and key elements that cumulatively empower indigenous women to find and raise their voice, to move and act. These are the strategies employed by indigenous women's and peoples' organizations and programs featured in these case studies to help indigenous women tackle the issues they confront in their everyday lives and communities.

For some indigenous women, knowledge of their rights is almost nil. In the project "Empowering ethnic minority women for REDD+, climate change and sustainable devel-

opment in Vietnam,” all the ethnic women participants had barely any notion of the basic human rights that all individuals are entitled to and of the laws and policies that directly bear on their lives and livelihoods. “Through the project, the target ethnic minority women, for the first time, learned and came to know about human rights, citizen’s rights, women’s rights, forest rights, some forest laws and policies.” The newfound knowledge gives confidence and becomes a motivation to act. “When I understood the rights, I became very confident; later if someone does not allow me to express my point, I will say—that is my right,” a woman participant remarked of the training they received.

The project, which supported ethnic communities’ forest use rights and participation in forest management, was a holistic capacity building program implemented by the Center for Research and Development in Upland Areas. Its training covered a wide range of learning areas from rights, laws and policies, development of community institution to participatory governance, financial management and management knowledge. It also equipped participants with technical skills in forest management, protection of forest and farm ecosystems, organic agriculture, and setting up and managing a cooperative, the legally recognized organizational form in the community. The women and other participants were further trained to engage the REDD+ program as forest area owners/managers, and therefore as independent stakeholders, which entailed such learning as GPS use to measure forest land and timber volume and result-based payment.

By project’s end, the participants had become collective owners and managers of forest areas and legal users of forest resources under two cooperatives that they themselves set up. Target ethnic women, who hardly participated in village meetings and community work before, held half of the six leadership positions in each cooperative, which contracted longterm forest leaseholds with the government to manage forest areas. The women headed the cooperative’s forest management team and several of the self-governing groups that made up the cooperative. They too led the cooperatives’ economic enterprise, dried bamboo shoot production, and its marketing as a local brand in outside markets including the Hanoi national market.

The project concludes that building rights awareness and capacities of indigenous women in order that they are able to exercise their rights through their established organization is the shortest and an effective path to realize women's empowerment. Among its recommendations is "considering integrated and gender-balanced capacity building as a right for women, ethnic minorities and most vulnerable people."

A similar strategy of wholistic capacity building was employed by Institut Dayakologi and Yayasan Karya Sosial Pancur Kasih in their women empowerment program for Dayak women on the Indonesia-Malaysia border. Their program which started in 2015 shows that empowering women is a long, slow process of building their awareness and capacities to be more self-reliant and to participate actively in the community's public life. The strategy, focused on formation of women's groups that covered some 250 women in several villages, demonstrates the significance of organizing. The formations became a nucleus through which the women collectively searched for common solutions to their shared problems in the community and for learning and training. The approach is also anchored on education including on the rights as glimpsed from the training. They undergo in human rights/women's rights, gender awareness, problems facing women at the border, work patterns of women farmers and palm oil plantation workers, and women's roles in custom and culture, natural resource management, and climate change.

The program has engendered transformational changes among Dayak women and their communities. From women who were previously submissive and toiled all day without any opportunity and time for their own self development, they have become self-confident and have begun to engage in public activities. They are able to better manage their families' economy, participate in organizations, and take on more roles in managing their natural resources and protecting their ancestral land. "From being previously marginalized, indigenous women are becoming the main actors of community development alongside other actors in the community." The program's impacts are felt in the wider community. It has raised awareness on women that has led to structural changes in the customary institution of the Iban Sebaruk Customary

Administration. The board in the customary institution in each village is now mandated to have at least one indigenous woman as a member.

In Thailand, a novel capacity building program of the Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand is to prepare key indigenous women leaders to engage in politics and to run for local government positions. This is in response to the problem of women's low political participation and recognition of the importance of having indigenous women in local administration, which decides on a community's developmental directions. Rights education is again a basic program component, including in basic human rights laws such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and civil and political rights. Participants are also immersed in political education on the significance of women's participation in local governance, how indigenous women can participate in subdistrict governance, structure of the subdistrict administration office, and public speaking. In one such project, IWNT trained 10 indigenous women leaders from three provinces in northern Thailand who expressed interest in participating in their local elections and provided campaign support to seven who ultimately decided to run. Two of the seven won their electoral bids at the subdistrict level: one as chief executive and the other as representative of the community at the Subdistrict Administration Office. This is a feat in indigenous communities that deem women as without any capacity to lead.

In other indigenous communities, there are women who have become respected leaders and are held up as role models because of their work and achievements that contribute significantly to the community welfare. These are women who participate vigorously in the public life, helping to shape the development of their community. They lead or play a major role in protecting the communal land and forest from economic interests that would destroy or endanger their natural resources and environment. They hold traditional knowledge and skills which they generously share with members of their community and other communities, especially the women, helping to uplift them socially and economically. They celebrate their people's culture through their continuing work

in traditional arts and crafts and engender an appreciation of these especially among the women and youth. Two remarkable examples come from the Kui and Tumpoun communities in Cambodia's indigenous region. Both mentor, assist, and organize women and youth, including teaching them about their rights and uplifting their social and economic condition.

Por Mach mediates domestic violence and takes active part in collective actions on forest and communal land protection and against land grabs in her Tumpoun village. She works closely with the women in her community, training them in indigenous women's rights, community work, and weaving. Weaving is of great value to the Tumpoun, a cultural identity marker since their traditional knowledge and beliefs are depicted in weaving designs and styles. It has doubly assumed importance for women, as weaving has become a way to improve their family livelihood, support their children's education, reduce domestic violence, and generate jobs in the community. "All the knowledge she has shared has inspired women in the community to defend themselves from domestic violence." Ms. Mach has extended her work to help other women in other provinces with the support of nongovernment organizations.

To further share her weaving expertise and to ensure its transmission to the younger generation, Ms. Mach leads the Weaving Group comprised of women and men who produce various woven products using traditional designs and innovations and provide training to other members of the community. She has brought public attention to Tumpoun weaving and the group's products by promoting them in cultural events and festivals outside their village. The Weaving Group has gained recognition from the Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture, Non-Timber Forest Products, Highlander Association, and Indigenous Community Support Organization.

Kha Sros is similarly a defender of her Kui community's land and forest, culture and traditional knowledge. Her work has involved forest land monitoring and resolving land disputes in the community, and in various capacities she has served in the village gender committee, land dispute committee, and forestry committee. Her participation as an elected commu-

nity representative in the nationally recognized Indigenous Rights Active Members further afforded her valuable skills in rights advocacy and knowledge of the legal process, which have served her well in her forest and land protection work. Over the past decade, she was among the community leaders who successfully blocked a Chinese company's mine exploration around their village that covered a reserved forest sheltering their spirit and burial forests and natural resources. In addition, she mobilized the community to pass a resolution against illegal logging that resulted in a national company's withdrawal to set up a large scale tree plantation that would have destroyed old tree growth in the village. An art teacher, Ms. Sros has also set up the Kui Indigenous People Group, which serves as a center to train the youth in their traditional dances that present the Kui way of living. It has also become a gathering place for the people to watch dance performances and other cultural activities of the community.

As the stories of Por Mach and Kha Sros reveal, indigenous women actively engage in the economic and political life of their community, advancing its development in these vital areas. Further, they play key roles in ensuring the transmission of their cultural heritage and knowledge to the younger generation.

These responses draw attention to the vital work and advocacy that indigenous women's and peoples' organizations are carrying out to capacitate the women of indigenous communities. The Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand work among Karen, Lisu, H'mong, Lahu, Akha, Dara'ang, Taiyai or Shan, Lua, Kachin, and Mien communities to help the women realize their rights as women and indigenous peoples and to enhance their participation in local governance and natural resource management. They also assist members of these communities to go through the government processes to acquire national IDs and citizenship. This includes documentation work to determine their citizenship status and production of materials based on this work to educate and aid other communities.

The Institut Dayakologi and Yayasan Karya Sosial Pancur Kasih have long worked with Dayak communities in Indonesia.

They have been collaborating since 2011 with the Regional Government of Sanggau District in implementing a holistic empowerment program for indigenous communities on the Indonesia-Malaysia border. Part of this is the women empowerment program which is set to establish an indigenous school for women in the near future with a curriculum drawn from indigenous knowledge and the experiences of indigenous women. The Center of Research and Development in Upland Areas works with ethnic minority communities in Vietnam. It has been conducting various programs and projects in the last five years to support their forest use rights and to build their capacity to participate as stakeholders in the UN program REDD+ on reducing carbon emissions from deforestation.

Recommendations

Indigenous women perform essential work that builds and transforms communities especially in protecting lands, forests and natural resources and in propagating cultures and traditional knowledge. It is thus recommended to:

1. Expand holistic capacity building among indigenous women to include rights education, training including in leadership, governance, technical and technological skills, and setting up women's formations/organizations
2. Further capacitate indigenous women leaders and provide support for their projects/programs and endeavors for women and youth in their communities
3. Document and disseminate stories of indigenous women and their achievements in the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres
4. Strengthen indigenous women's and peoples' organizations in capacity and funding to replicate and widen their programs/projects to reach more indigenous women and communities
5. Enhance networking and platforms for exchange of knowledge, lessons learned and good practices in program strategies and implementation for women empowerment among indigenous women, leaders and assisting indigenous women's/peoples organizations

Ensuring Food Security

By
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Photo credits:
SILDAP

PHILIPPINES



Introduction

Achieving food security is a key priority concern identified at the inception meeting of the 4th Conference of the Asian Indigenous Women's Network in 2017. As the Rome Declaration of the 1996 World Food Summit stated, "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."¹ Food security, by definition, is realized with the dimensions of availability, accessibility, stability and utilization of food present all together.²

Over time, food security has become an essential objective of development frameworks. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 by world leaders has as Goal 2 a stand-alone goal on ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.³ Goal 2 is relevant to indigenous peoples because many of them are food producers employing sustainable agricultural practices. And they can contribute to achieving this goal through recognition of their rights to land, territories, and resources and support of their traditional occupations and sustainable livelihoods.⁴

Food security among indigenous peoples is closely linked to their traditional food and livelihood systems entwined with their ancestral land, territories, and resources. Their communities are typically located in the forests, mountains, coastal, and rural areas. They engage in varied or a combination of

livelihood activities such as farming, hunting and gathering, fishing, handicraft making, and livestock raising among others. Their food systems include production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food.⁵

Within their food system, indigenous women play an important role from production to consumption. They contribute essentially in planting crops, tending animals, collecting fuel and water, processing and preparing food for their families. Hence, indigenous women are important food producers and providers in their communities. These roles have afforded them to be custodians of traditional knowledge in agriculture and food systems.

In the Philippines, indigenous peoples who mainly depend on their ancestral lands and natural resources for food and income are among the poorest and marginalized sectors, often experiencing food shortage. Displacement, loss of ancestral lands, and environmental degradation are the root causes of poverty and food insecurity in their communities.⁶ Coping with food insecurity at the household level is typically the responsibility of indigenous women, being the expected household managers. During periods of food shortage, they assume their role of ensuring the presence of food on their family table.⁷ However, despite their wealth of knowledge, they are vulnerable and marginalized due to illiteracy, lack of access to basic social services, discrimination, and violation of rights. Thus, it is significant to document the challenges that indigenous women and their communities face in ensuring food for their families and the general welfare.

This undertaking strived to increase recognition of indigenous women's contribution in achieving zero hunger by examining food security within the broader contexts of indigenous women's discrimination and marginalization, displacement, poverty, and violations of collective and individual rights. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Describe the indigenous women's perspective on food security.
2. Assess the context of food security in their indigenous communities in terms of food availability, accessibility, stability, and utilization.

3. Identify and examine the enabling and constraining factors that enhance and limit the roles of indigenous women as food producers and providers.
4. Document how indigenous women and their communities are coping with issues of food insecurity.

The study used focus group discussion (FGD), key informant interview, and specific questions on food security from the Indigenous Navigator Long Community Questionnaire. Eight indigenous peoples' communities located in five ethnographic areas in the Philippines were covered:

Ethnographic Area	Site	Indigenous Peoples
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	Fidelisan, Sagada, Mountain Province	Pidlisan
	Sitio Banilag, Poblacion, Paracelis, Mountain Province	Balangao
Island Groups	Sitio Bait, Panaytayan, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro	Hanunuo-Mangyan
Rest of Luzon	General Nakar, Quezon	Dumagat
Southern and Eastern Mindanao	Luyong, Binondo, Baganga, Davao Oriental	Mandaya
	Mangkay, Gupitan, Kapalong, Davao del Norte	Ata-Manobo
Central Mindanao	Sitio Upper Fantil, Bayabas, Upi, Maguindanao	Teduray
	Sitio Benuan, Kuya, South Upi, Maguindanao	Lambangian



Food Security and Indigenous Communities

Teduray of Barangay Bayabas, Upi, Maguindanao

Bayabas is one of the barangays⁸ in the municipality of Upi in Maguindanao province inhabited by the Teduray. A province under the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in the southern Philippines, Maguindanao is one of the country's poorest provinces with 57.2 percent poverty incidence affirmed by the 2015 Full Year Poverty Statistics.⁹

Barangay Bayabas has a population of 1,202.¹⁰ It can be reached by foot or a 1-hour motorcycle ride from the national highway on a road that turns very dusty during the dry season and muddy in the wet season. The barangay has access to electricity and mobile phone service but with erratic signal.

The Teduray describe food security as being able to eat three times a day, taking food from *sulagad* and being able to work, and they believe this is guaranteed them if they complement hard work with prayers. *Sulagad* is their sustainable farming practice that entails planting minor, major, and permanent crops. Minor crops include vegetables planted in their backyards such as eggplant, legumes, *pechay* (a kind of cabbage) and squash. Major crops are corn, peanuts, and rice, and permanent crops include coconut, fruit trees, bananas, while coffee. This practice serves as their system of food production and is also their concept of food security.

Teduray families work together to ensure that they are able to eat three times a day. Children help in fetching water for food preparation and cooking. Women mostly grind corn and cook food in the household because men are occupied with farming activities in their farm. Their primary source of livelihood is a combination of cash crop, mainly corn, and swidden farming where aside from corn they plant root crops, bananas, coffee, and vegetables.

A water system installed by ASSISI Foundation in January 2018 gave the women a stable and convenient source of water for cooking and other household chores. Time allotted for fetching water is shorter as faucets are accessible to houses.

In terms of food consumption, Teduray households consume a variety of food. Their source of carbohydrates include rice, *bigas mais* (rice with corn grit), cassava, taro, and *ube* (type of yam). Their protein source comes from chicken, fish, pork, and legumes but meat and fish consumption is not often as these are not affordable and easily accessible. They also consume vegetables such as beans, bitter gourd, *camote* (sweet potato) tops, eggplant, beans such as *mongo* and *patani*, squash, and *ubod* (heart of palm), among others. Banana, guava, marang, and mango are some of the fruits they eat, which they buy mostly from the town center because of limited fruit trees in their community. Some food items they do not produce but considered essential and part of their present diet are bread, candies, salt, sardines, sugar and vetsin (popular term for monosodium glutamate).¹¹

Their food consumption however has been changing. According to Teduray women, nowadays they are hooked on buying food from *sari-sari* (variety) stores, such as instant noodles and canned goods, being cheaper and easier to prepare for meals. They purchase ground coffee even though they have coffee trees because coffee production becomes tedious for them. Children also prefer to eat junk food than *balinghoy* (cassava). “*Hindi na marunong ang mga kabataan namin sa mga pagkaing gubat* (Our children are no longer aware of the food from the forest),” said a participant in a focus group discussion. This can be rooted in the declining transfer of knowledge on traditional food to the young generation.

The Teduray women also noted that some families had malnourished and underweight children, which they attributed to these families having too many children to feed and mothers lacking knowledge in nutritious food. These children receive “nutri butter” sachets, ready-to-use food products distributed by the Barangay Health Center.

They experience food shortage when their rice harvest is not enough to last until the next planting season. Lean months

are observed from January to July based on the seasonal food security calendar (as of March 2018, see Table 1). If harvest and income are not enough to make ends meet, food from the sulagad helps them get through their day-to-day living. They depend on it for their supply of root crops and fruits. They recalled experiencing prolonged food shortage in the past. In 2016, swarms of rats overran their corn farms that lasted for seven months, resulting in serious crop losses. A 9-month drought earlier in 2014 also caused severe food shortage.

To cope with food lack, they depend on wild foods like *kayus*, a wild root crop that grows abundantly during the drought season. They have certain techniques in cooking *kayus*, as it has toxic content that can lead to food poisoning if not prepared carefully. In addition, during lean months, Teduray men and women go out of the community to look for menial jobs to earn cash for food and other needs. Women are paid P200 (US\$4) per day for laundry jobs and P100 (\$2) for weeding.

Table 1. Seasonal Food Security Calendar, Teduray (March 2018)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall pattern				Peak of rainy season is from June to July								
Planting				Corn 1st cropping				Corn 2nd cropping				
				Rice, peanuts, mungo		Coffee, coconut						
Harvesting	Corn							Corn, rice				Corn
Supply of food												
Expenses			School expenses, farm input					Farm input				
Income												
Sickness				Flu, diarrhea, cholera					Flu, diarrhea, cholera			

To Teduray women, being hardworking is the key to ensuring food on their tables. Each family in the community has their own land to farm. Women undertake farming activities such as planting, harvesting, and weeding. They also fetch water, gather wood for fuel, and forage for food. They look for ways to ensure food supply in their homes, which is the women's major concern. Those who are members of microfinance institutions acquire cash loans, a portion of which goes to food expenses. However, some decline to join any microfinance group or get loans because they do not want to fall into debt. "*Mahirap sa amin yung hulugan. Baka maabutan ng hulugan at walang maiabot na pera* (Repaying loans in installment is difficult for us because we might not make payments on time)," expressed a Teduray woman.

Also posing a difficulty in food production is the heavy dependence of their corn farms, their main source of income, on chemical inputs like fertilizer. They find it hard to maintain these without a financier, which confines them to debts they are not capable to pay. Lack of water during prolonged drought also affects their agricultural production, reducing their capability to ensure a steady source of income and food.

The Teduray, however, have cultural practices that are discriminatory to women and could constrain their roles as food producers and providers. First, the *tamok* obliges a groom-to-be to give bride-price, in the form of cash and farm animals, to the bride's parents who sometimes demand a lavish bride-price. With the bride-price, a man is entitled to do whatever he wants to his wife because he paid for her, even economic and physical abuse. Second, in the practice of *malunsod*, a man who wishes to marry a woman delivers a carabao to her house as his gesture of a wedding proposal. If the woman rejects the proposal, she is penalized by matching twice what was given to her. Women are fined when they turn down forced marriage proposals, making life more difficult for them. Last, *duwoy* is the practice of being married to more than one wife at the same time. Before marrying another woman, a man has to ask the permission of his first wife. However, there have been cases where such permission was not obtained.

Lambangian of Sitio Benuan, Kuya, South Upi, Maguindanao

Benuan, a sitio¹² in Barangay Kuya, South Upi, Maguindanao, is dominantly occupied by the Lambangian. Sitio Benuan with 136 households¹³ has no electricity and limited mobile phone signal.

The Lambangian are related to the Teduray, thus they are sometimes referred to as one indigenous group, the Teduray-Lambangian. For the Lambangian, food security is equivalent to clean and safe food and having something to eat the next day. The parents have the responsibility to feed their family. They believe that men should be the breadwinner of the family, while the women, since they are often at home, are responsible for preparing and cooking meals.

Their main sources of food are the *kaingin* (swidden farm), backyard garden, fish pond, and river. They plant peanut, upland rice, and corn in their *kaingin*. Their main livelihood is the cultivation of corn, which they plant thrice a year (Table 2), and copra production from their coconut plantation. From their harvest of peanut, corn and rice, they select good seeds and store them for the next planting season. Such practice is called *balik-balik*. They raise chickens, goats, and pigs. Like the Teduray, they have the *sulagad* which provides year-round food such as banana, camote, cassava, taro, ube, and ubod. Also Like the Teduray, they consume rice with corn grit, which they call *dineba* in their language. They use the income from their corn and copra production to buy their rice supply since their grain harvest is insufficient for the whole year. Some portion of their income also goes to farm inputs needed for the next planting season.

Aside from what they produce, they purchase food from outside that are not available in the community, like round scad, sugar, salt, and cooking oil, among others. Their current food intake also includes instant noodles and canned goods such as corned beef and meat loaf, which they buy from *sari-sari* stores in the community.

Table 2. Seasonal Food Security Calendar, Lambangian (March 2018)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall pattern												
Dry season												
Planting			Rice (1st Cropping)					Rice (2nd Cropping)				
	Corn (1st Cropping)					Corn (2nd Cropping)				Corn (3rd Cropping)		
	Mongo				Coconut, coffee, peanuts					Mongo, string beans, banana		
Harvesting												
Supply of food												
Expenses	Due to planting					School expenses	Due to planting					
Income												
Sickness							Measles, Fever, Cough, Cholera (common among children)					

Among the Lambangian, it is the women who look for ways to make sure their family has food to eat. During market day, they sell their vegetables and root crops to have cash for food. They also borrow food items from the sari-sari store when they run out of food.

They have experienced food insecurity in the past. In 2016 a drought persisted for nine months, which resulted in massive crop damage leaving them short of food. Most of the households at that time relied on the wild root crop, kayus, which because of its toxic content led to the death of some community members.

Lambangian women receive support services provided by the government. They are beneficiaries of the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer Program for Indigenous Peoples in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (MCCT IPs-GIDA),¹⁴ which gives them rice subsidy on top of cash grants. The program requires beneficiaries to have a backyard garden, which they consider helpful in meeting their food needs. However, they complained about delayed payout of cash grants and issues with the MCCT IPs-GIDA service providers, which they have been afraid to report because of fear of being dropped from the program.

A constraining factor in their role as food providers is the lack of knowledge in managing pests and limited marketing skills worsened by their geographical isolation. “*Lalo na kapag tag-ulan, mataas ang tubig sa ilog kaya hindi kami makalabas para magbenta ng mais at makabili ng pagkain* (During rainy days in particular, the river swells and we cannot go out to sell our corn and buy food),” one woman shared. In addition, the community has no safe water source. They have to spend time and energy in fetching water from the nearest spring and river.

To cope with food insecurity, the Lambangian depend on the sulagad for their supply of banana, cassava, coconut, sweet potato, taro, and yam, among others. Their backyard and communal gardens enable them to have vegetables to eat. During lean months, the women resort to borrowing food items from the sari-sari store. “*Walang mangyayari kung aasa lang sa asawa namin* (We will go hungry if we just depend on our husbands),” remarked a woman.

Some also shared that they are ridiculed because of their food. “*Tinutuya kami dahil bigas-mais ang baon namin* (We are mocked because we eat rice with corn grit),” expressed a youth. As rice consumption has become a symbol of being well off, eating substitutes like camote, bigas-mais, and cassava has been associated with being poor.

Balangao of Sitio Banilag, Poblacion, Paracelis, Mountain Province

Banilag is a sitio of Barangay Poblacion in Paracelis, Mountain Province in the Cordillera Administrative Region in northern Philippines. Paracelis, with a population of 28,121,¹⁵ is inhabited by different indigenous peoples, among them, the Balangao.

Balangao women in Sitio Banilag take vigorous roles as food producers and providers. They prepare and cook food for their families, a chore the men assume only occasionally as they are mostly out working. The Balangaos plant upland rice once a year, which the women help in planting; they also maintain the rice farm. They plant squash, eggplant, string beans, patani, and pechay in their backyard and *uma* (swidden farm). However, their rice harvest does not last until the next planting season, so they take on farm and non-farm labor to earn money to buy commercial rice.

They recognize that their food intake has changed, as they use vetsin or MSG in enhancing their viands. Even changes in their farming techniques like the use of herbicides have impacted the quality of their food. They believe that these cause dreaded diseases like lung and breast cancer.

Lean months in the community are observed during rainy months from June to August (Table 3). They cannot leave the village to look for work during heavy rains, so they do not have enough money to meet their food needs. In times of food shortfalls, they scrounge for money or borrow rice from relatives and other food items from sari-sari stores. They also depend on available food in their backyards or *uma* like banana, papaya and cassava.

The Balangao believe that if women are in good health and have finished schooling, they will be better in their role in ensuring food for their family. Also seen as helpful are capability building activities where they can learn new livelihood skills.

Based on their present experience, restricting factors in meeting daily food needs are lack of safe water at home,

Table 3. Seasonal Food Security Calendar, Balangao (April 2018)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall Pattern												
Planting					Upland rice and vegetables							
					Corn 1st crop					Corn 2nd crop		
										Vegetables (eggplant, legumes, squash, pechay)		
Harvesting		Corn 2nd crop							Corn 1st crop			
Supply of food						Less supply of food						
Expenses					High expenses because of farm inputs and schooling of children							
Income		High income							High income			
Sickness										Colds, cough, flu, dengue, fever		

limited farm and non-farm job opportunities, lack of access to microfinance institutions, and non-ownership of the land they farm. “*Makibangbangkag kami ta awan ti daga mi. Awan tawid mi nga daga ditoy ta nagapu kami Natonin* (We rent land because we do not have our own land. We do not have inherited land because we came from Natonin [another town]),” said one participant during the FGD. The farm rent depends on its size and agreement between lessor and tenant. The need for clean and safe water, which they pay to be delivered at P50 (\$1) per drum, has also reduced their budget for food.

It is difficult for them to have regular jobs, since they do not have college degrees. As a result, they seek farm labor or

odd jobs to earn a living and secure food for their family. They commonly work as farm laborers for well-off landowners in yellow corn production. Work in a corn farm is sufficient only during planting and harvest period; women are paid P200 per day for farm and non-farm labor. They are not members of any microfinance groups, and not all of them are beneficiaries of the government's conditional cash transfer program.

Pidlisan, Sagada, Mountain Province

Pidlisan is located in the northern zone of Sagada, Mountain Province and consists of the four barangays of Aguid, Pide, Fidelisan and Bangaan (and Guesang, a sitio of Madongo). Its land area of 3,902.48 is divided into various land uses, namely, watershed, pine forest, timberland, rice field, unirrigated farm, grassland, orchard, residential area, and cemetery. Pidlisan has a population of 3,943 with a total of 574 households and 616 families.¹⁶

To the people of Pidlisan, there is food security if they eat three times or more in a day, have work and plant food crops. Farming is their main livelihood, with every household having a small piece of land to farm. They plant rice, coffee, vegetables such as squash, legumes, pechay and root crops such as cassava, sweet potato, and taro, among others. Legumes are stored and can be sold during market day. They also grow sugarcane and produce their own table sugar in their communal sugarcane mill.

Rice is grown in rice paddies, but what they produce is no longer the traditional variety but the "bi-it" variety introduced from the lowlands. They observe synchronized planting of rice to avoid pest attacks. Men handle the tilling while women sow the seedbeds. Women select the grains and thresh them using their feet before sowing them in the seedbeds. Men and women transplant the seedlings, which usually starts from January to March. The harvest from the rice paddies is inadequate to supply their rice needs for a year because of bad harvests, occasional pest and bird attacks, and crop damage caused by strong typhoons.

The people put emphasis on hard work as a key to food security. “*Nu haan kami agtrabaho, awan ti rumwar nga kanen* (If we do not work, we do not have food to eat),” one participant shared in the FGD. The women are primarily in charge of preparing food for their family. Their food consumption has changed. They recalled that their main source of food was their home gardens but now some choose to buy food rather than to plant and produce it. Likewise, children prefer to buy junk food for a snack in school instead of bringing banana or corn from home.

The tourism industry in the province has, to a certain extent, impacted food production. The participants observed that the young people prefer tour guiding to farming, which they see as adversely affecting their food production. Even women elders work as tour guides, preferring such work to farm labor, and this has sometimes led to farm labor shortage. “*Awan pay unay maayaban nga kadwa nga agdalos idia y talon ta pati babbaket ket ag-tour guide da metten. Mas prefer da ag-tour guide ti three hours kaysa diay whole day nga farm labor* (Nobody is available to do clearing of weeds in the rice field; even women elders serve as tour guides. They prefer to work as tour guide for three hours than to do farm labor the whole day),” remarked a FGD participant. However, they asserted that tour guiding as a source of income is inadequate to secure food for their families. They still need to work and plant crops since not everyone is doing tour guiding for livelihood; it mainly serves as an additional income source for some community members.

Enabling factors that enhance their role in food production and ensure food security is their ownership of small pieces of lands. Since they have their own land where they plant rice, vegetables, root crops, and fruits, they never experienced food insecurity. They are members of farmer’s groups like the Pide Aguid Fidelisan Primary Multi-Purpose Cooperative, which focuses on coffee production. Lending institutions are also present in their communities.

What constrains their capability to produce food is the lack of irrigation for rice fields. This limits their capacity to plant and produce more rice, which leaves parcels of

lands idle. They believe that once their irrigation system is improved they would be more eager to cultivate their lands for rice production. Apart from irrigation lack, *saktuto* (worm pest) is another problem they encounter in their rice fields. “*Diay danum agtalinaed ti tallo nga aldaw. Ngem nu adu ti saktuto, han nga agtalinaed nga mabayag ti danum idia y talon* (Before, irrigation water stayed for up to three days. But water does not last long if there are many saktuto).” They have reported the problem to the concerned government agency but it was not resolved. They claimed that changes in their rice farming techniques made their fields favorable to pest attacks. Farmers today just burn old stalks and weeds from surrounding areas of the field that in the past were thoroughly kneaded by foot into the soil.

To avoid food shortages, they pointed out the importance of maintaining home gardens and rice fields because these are their main sources of food. They noted that every household should continue to plant crops such as banana and coffee. Food security will never be a problem if they stay hardworking.

Hanunuo-Mangyan of Sitio Bait, Panaytayan, Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro

Bait is a sitio in Barangay Panaytayan occupied by Hanunuo-Mangyans. The sitio is only a small portion of the Hanunuo-Mangyan ancestral domain which can be reached by a 1-hour ride by *habal-habal*.¹⁷ The sitio has electricity but mobile phone signal is limited to a few locations.

The Hanunuo-Mangyan is one of the indigenous groups in the island of Mindoro. Food security for them means having to work and to be hardworking to make sure they eat three meals a day. Parents and children usually help each other to ensure that the family is able to eat. The mother and eldest child prepare and cook food for the family. Every family has a *kaingin*, which is cultivated by the household head, mostly the father. The Hanunuo-Mangyan produce avocado, banana, corn, coconut, balinghoy or cassava, taro, *bondo* (another

variety of taro), vegetables, and rice. Most of the food they consume are from their kaingin. Women help in preparing the kaingin, making it ready for planting and maintaining it to ensure robust growth of crops. Aside from farming, women make handicrafts, beads, broomsticks, and weave bags.

They practice organic farming, thus their food is clean and free of chemicals. They emphasize the importance of cassava in their daily diet. “*Malinis at walang kemikal ang mga pagkaing kinakain namin. Mahalaga ang balinghoy sa amin. Halos ito ang kinakain sa araw-araw* (Our food is clean and free of chemicals. Cassava is important to us, we eat it almost everyday),” one participant shared in the discussion. They plant rice once a year, with the planting season synchronized with the onset of the rainy season.

The foods they commonly consume are rice, root crops, banana, corn, cassava, sweet potato, eel, and small shrimps. A fish dish typically accompanies rice in their daily meals. They occasionally eat chicken, beef, and pork. There is not much difference in the food intake among women, men, and children. However, adults normally eat twice a day because they only consume coffee for breakfast. They raise livestock such as goat, pig, and cow for profit that they allot for children’s expenses like school fees.

Farming, copra and broomstick production are the main livelihood sources of the Hanunuo-Mangyan in Sitio Bait. Rice harvest from the kaingin is insufficient till the next planting season, so their recourse is to buy commercial rice. They prefer to buy expensive commercial rice than the more affordable rice distributed by the government’s National Food Authority due to what they claim as its nasty odor.

There are periods of food insecurity in the community particularly during rainy season starting from August. Throughout the wet season, the raised water level in the river makes it more difficult for community members to go outside of the sitio or to their kaingin. They also experience food shortage during this period, because it is not yet harvest time for any of their crops, particularly that of cassava. When food

supply is short, they have to forage for wild foods like kayus in a hand-to-mouth situation. Aside from wild foods, they borrow food items from the sari-sari store and do non-farm labor outside the community.

They have observed changes in the food consumption of their children who choose bread or camote fritter over rice and viand and are reluctant to bring cassava for school snack. In addition, consumption of instant foods like instant noodles and coffee is becoming frequent in their households. With these changes, they notice increased occurrences of urinary tract infection and abdominal pain.

A favorable factor that supports the women's role as food producers and providers is their determination to pursue socio-economic activities such as bead making. However, they lack regular buyers for bead products and financial resources for production. They have been able to access a fund of P20,000 from the municipal local government for bead making but the venture was short-lived; they repaid the borrowed amount and divided the profit among themselves.

Among the limiting factors, on the other hand, are lack of safe water in their homes, illness of mother or children, husband's bad habits like smoking and drinking, successive pregnancy, no regular income, and low valuation of farm produce. The lack of safe water had already resulted in the death of a child who succumbed to diarrhea.

The women considered the cultural practice of *agduwa* or having more than one wife at the same time as discriminatory to women. Participants during the FGD were against this practice, as it becomes more burdensome if husbands took an additional wife, and though part of their culture, it aggravates their meager situation.

Cited as needs to support the women in Sitio Bait are funding for their micro socioeconomic activities like bag, bead, and handicraft making; capability building to improve their skills in cooking and financial management; and assistance in transporting and marketing farm produce.

Dumagat of General Nakar, Quezon

General Nakar in the northernmost municipality of Quezon Province is inhabited by the Dumagat. The Dumagat in General Nakar, with a population of 29,705 (2015 Census), are both farmers and fisherfolk. Their sources of food are their farms—kaingin and backyard gardens—where they grow banana, cassava, coconut, rice and vegetables such as eggplant, okra, string beans, squash, *upo* (gourd), among others. “*Yung taniman namin ay parang refrigerator na kung saan doon nakalagay ang suplay namin ng pagkain lalo ang gulay* (Our farm is like a refrigerator where our food supply is stored, particularly our stock of vegetables).” In addition to the farms, they also get food such as fish and shrimps from the sea and the river in their ancestral domain.

They cultivate rice only once a year, planting around May to June and harvesting by October. Their staple food is rice paired with fish and vegetable dish; meat is rarely consumed. Their traditional foods like banana, cassava, and those gathered from the forests are still important for them, being food substitutes in times of short rice supply.

The Dumagat are uncertain of their food security because of unstable sources of income. While they have farms, they have to wait for months before they can harvest. During harvest season, traders buy their produce at very low prices that give them a small profit or no return of investment at all, making them vulnerable to hunger. “*Kung makabenta man ay umaabot lamang ng P500 (\$10) na hindi sapat para sa gastos dahil may mga estudyante kami at pagkain na tutustusan. Kaya sa kasiguruhan hindi masasabing siguradong may kakainin sa araw-araw* (If we are able to sell our farm produce, we only earn P500, which is not enough for our expenses for food and children’s school needs. As to assurance, we are not sure we will have something to eat everyday),” said a participant in the FGD.

The sea, which provides an alternative livelihood, is not always a reliable source of income because of declining fish catch and strong typhoons. During inclement weather, they have nothing to sell in the market and thus no food for the

family. "*Pag kulo ng dagat, kulo din ang tiyan* (Once the sea gets stormy, the stomach goes empty)," shared another participant.

Food shortage is not something they have gotten accustomed to. "*Kung anumang nariyan na makakain, kulang man, ay siyang pagkakasyahin* (Whatever is there to eat, even if not enough, will suffice)," one participant said. This confirms the research finding that indigenous households have "erratic food consumption pattern" as they are consuming less quantity of food and getting low nutritional value.¹⁸

Women have a major role in the livelihood of the family. This entails clearing of farm, land preparation, planting, harvesting, and marketing of crops and fish catch. Inside their homes, they are responsible in managing their income and budgeting for food and other expenses. When their income is not enough and they barely make ends meet, the women help out by taking on farm or non-farm labor. But in the hiring of farm labor, men are preferred to women. One FGD participant shared being nearly rejected for a job to cut tall grass because the landowner thought the men were better at that kind of work.

On food consumption, they noted that children are fond of eating bread rather than cassava or sweet potato. They noted that high prices of basic commodities, such as rice, is making it more difficult for them to meet their daily food needs.

In 2004, the community experienced a severe disaster brought on by Typhoon Winnie that resulted in many casualties and missing persons. There was no available food or water throughout the first week after the storm. Relief goods, cooking pots, galvanized iron sheets for roofing, and other support from various organizations came only the following week.

Some of them have accessed microfinance services and some are also beneficiaries of the government's conditional cash transfer program.

They noted that having a steady source of income enhances the role of women as food producers and providers. Particularly needed is livelihood assistance especially in coconut processing and basket weaving, improving vegetable production and marketing. The women also considered im-

portant a centralized trading station for their farm produce or a cooperative where they can market their products, training such as on coconut processing, and funding for livelihood projects.

Mandaya of Luyong, Binondo, Baganga, Davao Oriental

Luyong is a sitio of Barangay Binondo in Baganga, Davao Oriental. It covers a land area of approximately 1,000 hectares, of which 600 hectares are forest areas; around 320 hectares, farming lands (tilled and unattended), and the rest, residential areas, water bodies, and a cemetery. The Mandaya are the indigenous people inhabiting Luyong. The 76 households or more than 300 people in Luyong are engaged in farming; labor for farm activities, logging, abaca stripping, or driving; and other seasonal work inside and outside the community.

The majority of the families earn from P2,000 (\$41) at a minimum to P10,000 (\$206) per month from different sources like sale of farm products, small businesses, and seasonal work. Some of their off-farm activities have left farms unattended. They also raise farm animals like cows, pigs, chickens, and goats for the market and for consumption. Access to the government's Modified Conditional Cash Transfer is also a source of immediate cash assistance every two months for some households to address family basic needs.

Luyong is part of the ancestral land of the Mandaya, which is in process for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. It was subdivided among the clans who distribute their share to descendants, both men and women. A daughter or son can own land through inheritance. Parents distribute their land properties to their children for them to have land to cultivate and support their families. Mandaya men and women can decide on how they use the resources, particularly land. Women participate in the decision-making process from household to community level. They have full control over the resources within their farm and territories.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ting-ani/ Harvest												
Mais (corn)	✓									✓	✓	✓
Humay (rice)			✓	✓	✓							
Kamote (sweet potato)						✓	✓	✓				
Sibuyas (onion leaves)					✓			✓			✓	
Abaka											✓	
Saging (banana)												
Monggos (mongo)							✓					
Pechay					✓							
Talong (eggplant)									✓			
Batong (string beans)							✓					
Sili (hot pepper)										✓		
Problima sa mga Pananom (Plant Pests and Diseases)												
<i>Sakit sa tanom</i>												
Tig ulod sa gulay (Vegetable worms/ maggots)							✓					
Upos-upos sa abaca (wilt)												
Ulod sa humay (rice stem borer)				✓					✓			
Kasagarang Sakit sa Tawo (Common Diseases in the Community)												
<i>Ubo (cough)</i>	✓	✓										
Sipon (cold)	✓	✓										
Hilanat (fever)								✓	✓			



Apusaw leaves and sweet potato

The Mandaya source the majority of their food from their farms, with the men, women, and children involved in food production. The abundant environment within their respective ancestral lands also provides them with natural and traditional food sources, which they consume or sell such as wild animals, abaca, and other non-timber products.

The Mandaya have traditional foods that they still plant such as *dawa* (foxtail millet) and those commonly found in their environment like *ubod* (young shoot of rattan and wild palm), *apusaw* (wild taro leaves), and *inampoy* (wild leafy vegetable). Mandaya women, who are primarily responsible in planning the food to prepare for the family, rely on what is available.

The Mandaya try to ensure that food is available whole year round by employing different farming technologies such as diversifying crops planted in the farm, relay and rotational cropping, along with traditional farm practices.

Most of their corn and rice harvest cannot last until the next cropping season, as they plant only once a year except for root crops that grow all year round. When the harvest is

insufficient, their alternative source of food and income is the forest. They get forest products for food and cash by hunting wild animals and selling non-timber products such as rattan, wild abaca, and others. Other sources of income such as driving, carpentry, farm labor, and planting short term crops for cash income also help address family needs.

Some food items are bought from the market (Table 6) and some are solicited or borrowed from neighbors who have extra food sources. Community members also usually help in harvesting one another's crops for which they receive a share of the harvested produce. This has changed over the years as family heads have gone into other livelihoods like driving, farm labor, and seasonal work. But as families rely on immediate cash income, their farms are left unattended, and as a consequence, they have no source to go back to for their direct food.

The Mandaya's most important traditional food items, such as rice, corn, sweet potato, taro, and vegetables, are usually prepared and shared by the whole family for every meal. They recognize the importance of these traditional foods in their past and present food consumption, since these are significant for their survival, rituals, and other community activities. Food items that the community people do not produce, harvest, catch, gather, or hunt but highly important in their present lives are salt, sugar, dried, and salted or processed fish and meat. An estimated five percent of the children in the community under five years of age suffered from stunting.



Foxtail millet

Table 5. Variety of Food Crops Planted, Mandaya (June 2018)

Crops Planted	Purpose of Planting		Responsible Person to ensure this Food	
	Market	Consumption	Women	Men
Humay (rice)		✓	✓	✓
Mais (corn)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wakag (gabi or taro)		✓	✓	
Sibuyas (onion Leaves)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Karlang (taro)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pechay	✓	✓	✓	
Kamatis (tomato)	✓	✓	✓	
Talong (eggplant)	✓	✓	✓	
Atsal (bell pepper)	✓	✓	✓	
Margoso (bitter gourd)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Timon (cucumber)	✓	✓	✓	
Kalabasa (squash)	✓	✓	✓	
Sayote (chayote)	✓	✓	✓	
Falcata	✓			✓
Durian	✓	✓		✓
Pinya (pineapple)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tubo (sugarcane)		✓	✓	✓
Monggos (mongo)	✓	✓	✓	
Batong (string beans)	✓	✓	✓	
Kal'lubang (winged bean)	✓	✓	✓	
Sebu/ Balanghoy (cassava)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kamote (sweet potato)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lubi (coconut)	✓	✓		✓
Cacao	✓	✓		✓
Rubber	✓			✓
Sili (Hot pepper)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Abaka	✓		✓	✓

Table 6. Common Food Items Consumed by the Mandaya (June 2018)

Common Food Items	Accessibility Method			Availability	
	Planted/ Cultured	Purchased	Hunted in the Forest	Seasonal	Always
Bugas (Mais/Humay) rice	✓	✓		✓	
Kamote (sweet potato)	✓	✓			✓
Wakag (taro)	✓	✓		✓	
Sibu (cassava)	✓			✓	
Saging (banana)	✓				✓
Karlang (taro)	✓				✓
Ubod (shoots or buds)			✓		✓
Baboy ihalas (wild pig)		✓	✓		✓
Baboy - Karne (meat)		✓		✓	✓
Manok - Bisaya (native chicken)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Manok ihalas (wild chicken)			✓	✓	
Pechay	✓				✓
Kalabasa (squash)	✓				✓
Sili (hot pepper)	✓				✓
Batong (string beans)	✓				✓
Margoso (bitter gourd)	✓				✓
Kamatis (tomato)	✓				✓
Sibuyas (onion leaves)	✓				✓
Alugbati	✓				✓
Talong (eggplant)	✓				✓
Okra (lady finger)	✓				✓
Luy-a (ginger)	✓				✓
Atsal (bell pepper)	✓				✓
Kadiya	✓				✓
Tanglad (lemon grass)	✓				✓
Dulaw (yellow ginger)	✓				✓

Isda (fish)		✓		✓	
Noodles		✓		✓	
Tinapa (sardines)		✓		✓	
Asin (salt)		✓			✓
Daing (dried fish)		✓		✓	
Mantika (cooking oil)		✓		✓	
Suka (vinegar)		✓		✓	
Betsin (seasoning)		✓		✓	
Tuyo (sauce)		✓		✓	
Kal (chicken culled)		✓		✓	
Baka (beef)		✓		✓	
Milo (squirrel)		✓	✓	✓	
Ambak (wild frog)			✓	✓	
Usa (deer)			✓	✓	
Langgam (birds)			✓	✓	
Kape (coffee)		✓			✓
Asukal (sugar)		✓			✓
Biskwit (biscuits)		✓		✓	
Gatas (milk)		✓			✓
Milo (choco drink)		✓		✓	
Pako (edible ferns)			✓		✓
Upo (gourd)	✓	✓		✓	
Dabong (young shoots)		✓	✓		✓

The Mandaya in Luyong experience food insecurity only occasionally, because they generally have the means to ensure that they can eat three or more times a day. With their farm as their main source of food and other resources like the forest, they can ensure food and good health for their families. The Mandaya usually prepare for lean months from January to March. To cope with food shortage, they reduce expenses while looking for other sources of income to address immediate family needs. The main reasons for food insecurity in their community include low income, calamity and erratic climate condition, lack of seeds and farm inputs, reliance on

government subsidy like cash conditional transfer, and unattended farms after these were devastated by Typhoon Pablo in December 2012.

The community recalled that from 2008 to 2012 they did not have any food shortage because of abundant harvests of corn, abaca, vegetables, and root crops for food and income. However, the devastation caused by Typhoon Pablo to their farms, resources and houses resulted in food shortage and lack of income in 2013. To date, people in Luyong are still recovering from the typhoon's effects; only a few have planted permanent crops while others have left their farms idle for years to look for immediate income.

As a traditional practice, the women take care of the children, and the men work and earn money to support their families. Typically, women spend little time in farming activities because they are tied to household chores and childcare. The far location of farms also prevents them from doing farm work regularly.

During lean months, the men look for other sources of direct income such as abaca stripping, driving, carpentry, and other seasonal work. Women support their husbands by doing farm maintenance like weeding. The threats to their food security are continuous labor migration of community members resulting in idle and unproductive farms, armed conflict causing displacements, unfavorable climate condition, logging activities of some community leaders and family heads, selling of ancestral lands to non-indigenous settlers, and entry of investors for mining exploration within their territories.

Ata-Manobo of Mangkay, Davao del Norte

Mangkay is a sitio of Barangay Gupitan in Kapalong, Davao del Norte. It is covered by the Ata-Manobo Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title that has a land area of approximately 6,000 hectares, half of which is forest land with stands of trees, rattan, traditional herbs, and abaca plantations. The forest with its rich flora and fauna serves as the community's source of forest and non-timber products. About 2,000 hectares are utilized by the community for food production, although

some are unproductive farm areas. Roughly 30 hectares are designated as sacred sites, called *bato*, with rock formations. Residential areas comprise 12 hectares, while the remaining 10 hectares make up the Magimon River that passes through Mangkay. Two families own the majority of the land in the ancestral domain, dominating the Mangkay community.

Relatively remote, Mangkay is accessible from the town center only after a more than two-hour motorcycle ride and two-hour walk through rugged mountain terrain and a river. As a gateway to other provinces and due to its terrain, Mangkay is exposed to armed conflict. Transient displacement of indigenous communities recurs every time the military conducts an anti-insurgency operation.

More than 110 Ata-Manobo families of about 600 individuals live in Mangkay, of whom 167 are school-age children. A community elementary school implementing the Indigenous Peoples' Education Framework and managed by SILDAP²⁰ offers awareness raising activities on indigenous peoples, children's and women's rights. It also provides livelihood assistance and capacity building in farm technologies and strengthening the indigenous governance system to ensure that community members can assert their rights for the protection and sustainability of their ancestral domain. The school has also been receiving support from the local government unit (LGU), which provides food packs and planting paraphernalia especially during disasters.

All the Ata-Manobo families in Mangkay have land to cultivate for food and cash production. Families from other villages displaced due to armed conflict were also allowed by the community leaders to till and develop parcels of land for food production. There are titled lands in Mangkay placed under the name of the men. The men decide the utilization of resources in the village, such as a donated piece of land for the construction of a school.

The main source of livelihood and income of the Ata-Manobo is farming of native corn, upland rice, bananas and fruits. They can plant corn twice a year and upland rice once a year, while root crops, banana, and other traditional foods are available all year round. The women, men, and youth are involved in farming, from land preparation to harvest activities.

They also earn a living from Falcata tree production, which takes from 6-10 years and requires minimal maintenance. Seasonal farm wage labor is another alternative source of income of the men and women especially during lean months. They also earn from collecting bamboo, rattan, and wild abaca fiber in the forest.

They obtain their food from their farm harvests and sell the surplus in the market, using the money earned to purchase other food and family needs. Aside from harvests, they rely on their natural resources (Table 7). They catch freshwater fish from the river and hunt wild animals such as pigs and birds in the forest. A few families raise farm animals such as chickens and pigs for their own food consumption and as a source of extra income.

Table 7. Common Food Items Consumed by the Ata-Manobo (June 2018)

Common Food Items	Accessibility Method			Availability	
	Planted/ Cultured	Purchased	Hunted in the Forest	Seasonal	Always
Bugas (Mais/ Humay) rice	✓	✓		✓	
Kamote (sweet potato)	✓	✓			✓
Wakag (taro)	✓	✓		✓	
Sibu (cassava)	✓			✓	
Saging (banana)	✓				✓
Karlang (taro)	✓				✓
Ubod (shoots or buds)			✓		✓
Baboy ihalas (wild pig)		✓	✓		✓
Baboy - Karne (meat)		✓		✓	✓
Manok - Bisaya (native chicken)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Manok ihalas (wild chicken)			✓	✓	
Pechay	✓				✓
Kalabasa (squash)	✓				✓
Sili (hot pepper)	✓				✓
Batong (string beans)	✓				✓

Margoso (bitter gourd)	✓				✓
Kamatis (tomato)	✓				✓
Sibuyas (onion leaves)	✓				✓
Alugbati	✓				✓
Talong (eggplant)	✓				✓
Okra (lady finger)	✓				✓
Luy-a (ginger)	✓				✓
Atsal (bell pepper)	✓				✓
Kadiya	✓				✓
Tanglad (lemon grass)	✓				✓
Dulaw (yellow ginger)	✓				✓
Isda (fish)		✓		✓	
Noodles		✓		✓	
Tinapa (sardines)		✓		✓	
Asin (salt)		✓			✓
Daing (dried fish)		✓		✓	
Mantika (cooking oil)		✓		✓	
Suka (vinegar)		✓		✓	
Betsin (seasoning)		✓		✓	
Tuyo (sauce)		✓		✓	
Kal (chicken culled)		✓		✓	
Baka (beef)		✓		✓	
Milo (squirrel)		✓	✓	✓	
Ambak (wild frog)			✓	✓	
Usa (deer)			✓	✓	
Langgam (birds)			✓	✓	
Kape (coffee)		✓			✓
Asukal (sugar)		✓			✓
Biskwit (biscuits)		✓		✓	
Gatas (milk)		✓			✓
Milo (choco drink)		✓		✓	
Pako (edible ferns)			✓		✓
Upo (gourd)	✓	✓		✓	
Dabong (young shoots)		✓	✓		✓

Their most important traditional food items are rice, corn, vegetables, root crops, fruits, fish, and wild animals. Rice, corn, and vegetables are highly valued because these constitute a large chunk of their total food consumption.

Food availability in Mangkay varies over the year depending on the farm products. From July to October, food supply is abundant, being the harvest season for corn, upland rice, and other traditional crops. From March to June and November, food supply is just enough for the family, since this is the time for land preparation and planting. The Ata-Manobo continue to observe cultural practices in the opening of land for farming activities. During land preparation, they observe dream interpretations from the elders, listening to birds' songs, fruiting of old trees, interpretations of positions of the stars and moon in the sky. They perform rituals to ask for a productive planting season for the whole community. They have separate rituals for land preparation and actual planting performed by the *balyan* or traditional faith healer who can communicate to the spirits in their environment.

The Ata-Manobo apply relay cropping in farming, planting different crops as main year-round sources of food (Table 9). They also practice seed banking for the next planting season and reserve some extra corn and rice harvest for the lean months. They maintain traditional practices such as *lusongay*, a self-help mechanism in which a group of 7-12 farmers, depending on the geographical location of the farms, and agree to help one another (both men and women) do the farm work as a community activity.

It is mostly the men who have high access and capability to the resources they need to meet food security requirements, as most of the land is given to sons except if the family has no male offspring, in which case the women can inherit the family land. With regards to credit access, it is the women who negotiate borrowing for food. In the sale and purchase of farm products and food needs from the market, both men and women decide, but it is the latter who mostly determines food preparation. A few women have operated small businesses within the village, in addition to their regular livelihoods.



The women have made some social progress as a result of regular attendance of capacity building activities by SILDAP and other stakeholders. They have become active in community activities and decision making in community and school development. A women's organization also established a lending community enterprise in which equity or share comes from their conditional cash transfer subsidy.

In spite of these developments, however, the Ata-Manobo have cultural practices that limit the women's role in the community as food producers and providers. The practice of *duwad* in which the groom's family gives a gift to the newlywed couple is misinterpreted as payment by the groom or his family for the bride. That is why a woman cannot make decisions and is treated as a slave by her husband and in-laws. "*Ang babaye nga binayran sa pag minyo dili kayo maka desisyon kay nabayran naman* (A wife who was given a bride price cannot make decisions because she was paid for)," remarked a woman. In addition, it is the men who make decisions concerning their land and resources. Political leadership in the community is also controlled by a prominent family, making it difficult for some women to assert their rights.



In terms of food security, each family ordinarily is able to eat three times a day, either steamed rice, corn, or root crops with vegetables, fish, and other foods except during food crisis. Whenever food is scarce, parents will skip their meals, giving priority to their children. The mothers and the girls are responsible in food preparation like cooking rice, corn, and root crops and dishes such as mixed vegetable soup and other simple dishes. Children less than two years have light meals like rice porridge, powdered milk, and mother's milk.

The Ata-Manobo in Mangkay have experienced food scarcity because of armed conflict and calamities such as drought, long wet season, flooding, and pest attacks. Other reasons are health and financial problems. In the previous 12 months, some community members worried about not having enough food to eat and ate less than they thought they should because of lack of money and other resources. Nevertheless, they were thankful that their household rarely ran out of food and never left the house without eating for a whole day. Lean months are observed from December to April due to the long wet season from November to February (Table 8) that causes flooding in farms and crop damage; during this time most families depend on root crops and other traditional food from the forest.

Table 8. Seasonal Calendar on Food Security and other Relevant Community Situations, Atamanobo (June 2018)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dagan sa Panahon (Weather Condition)												
<i>Ting-ulan (Rainy)</i>	✓	✓									✓	✓
Tag-init (Sunny)			✓	✓			✓	✓				
Bagyo (Typhoon)	✓	✓									✓	✓
Baha (Flooding)	✓	✓									✓	✓
Food Security Situations												
Daghang Pagkaon (Abundant food)							✓	✓	✓	✓		
Igo lang ang pagkaon (Enough food)			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
Kulang sa Pagkaon (Scarcity of food)	✓	✓										
Walay pagkaon (No food)	✓	✓										
Income Situations												
<i>Daghan ang kita (High income)</i>							✓	✓		✓	✓	
Tamama lang ang kita (Enough income)			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
Gamay ang kita (Limited income)	✓	✓	✓									
Walay kita (No income)												
Agricultural Practices												
Pag andam sa Luna/uma (Land Preparation)			✓	✓	✓							
Ting-tanom (Planting)					✓	✓	✓					

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ting-ani (Harvest)						✓			✓	✓	✓	
Mais (corn)						✓	✓				✓	
Saging (banana)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Problema sa mga pananom (Common Agricultural Problems)												
Sakit sa tanom												
Ulod (worms)						✓						
Iлага (rodents)								✓	✓	✓		
Hangin nga kusog (windy)	✓											✓
Kasagarang Sakit (Common Diseases and Illnesses)												
Ubo (cough)	✓	✓							✓			✓
Sipon (colds)	✓	✓							✓			✓
Hubak (asthma)	✓	✓							✓			✓
Hilangat (fever)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To cope with food insecurity, community leaders ask for assistance from the local government, other government agencies and stakeholders, depending on the situation. They also plant root crops, banana, and other traditional crops, which can benefit not only the family who planted them but other community members as well. The abundant traditional forest food sources such as *baay* (wild taro) and *pangi* (fruit trees) and other wild plants provide alternative sources of food. Hunting of wild animals in the forest, usually done by the men and boys, is a common survival mechanism. The women, men, and youth also gather rattan, bamboo poles, and firewood to sell in the lower villages and engage in paid farm labor.

To further cope with food shortages, the Ata-Manobo practice a traditional barter system and sometimes borrow rice or corn from a neighbor. Another way of coping is getting loans from local stores using their government cash subsidy as collateral, and this is usually negotiated by the women.

Table 9. Variety of Food Crops Planted in Mangkay

Crops Planted	Purpose of Planting		Responsible Person to ensure this Food	
	Market	Consumption	Women	Men
Humay (upland rice)		✓	✓	✓
Wakag		✓	✓	
Gabi		✓	✓	
Karlang (taro)		✓	✓	
Tubo (sugarcane)		✓	✓	
Mongo	✓	✓	✓	
Batong (string beans)		✓	✓	
Balaghoy (cassava)		✓	✓	
Kamote (sweet potato)		✓	✓	
Ulibon		✓	✓	
Dawa		✓	✓	
Cacao	✓		✓	✓
Sili (hot pepper)	✓	✓	✓	
Inampoy		✓	✓	
Apusaw		✓	✓	
Ubod sa kalapi ubp pa		✓		✓
Lubi (coconut)	✓		✓	✓

There are cases of malnutrition in Mangkay. Approximately five percent of the children under five years of age suffered from stunting in 2016 based on the official records of the Barangay Health Worker in Gupitan. The causes were inadequate food and nutrient supply at the child's early stage of growth and sanitation issues such as absence of toilets. The people also linked malnutrition incidence to consumption of unhealthy corn grits from the hybrid corn they planted in their farms, provided by the Department of Social Work and Development and primarily grown for animal feeds. Safe water source is another health concern. While they have a potable water project for drinking and domestic use, it is prone to contamination during rainy season and is thus unsafe to

drink. The water from Magimon River is not safe, as human waste and other garbage are thrown into it.

The devastation brought by Typhoon Pablo in 2012 has resulted in abrupt changes in the availability, accessibility, and stability of food among the Ata-Manobo. The typhoon damaged about 70%-95% of farms and forests. They relied on assistance from the government and other organizations for their food, receiving food packs of rice, canned goods, noodles, and other processed foods for around six months after the typhoon. The majority of them eventually became beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfer program. During payout under the program, beneficiaries go to the town center to claim their cash grants, then buy some food items like noodles, canned goods, and other processed foods. This routine has altered their food consumption pattern.

“Adunay kabag-ohan sa unang panahon, kaniadto humay, mais, kamote, gulayon, pagkaun gikan sa lasang ang gina kaun sa mga tao. Apan karon nausab na kay adunay nay pagkaun nga naay kemikals ug naa nay mga pagkaun nga gikan sa lungsod sama sa balihya sa tindahan (Before, all their food were natural from their own farm and the forest within their territories, but now they can have instant and processed foods which are accessible and available in the local stores),” shared a participant in the FGD.

The Ata-Manobo's ways to ensure food security in their community are community unity, lobby with concerned agencies for livelihood support and basic social services such as health, awareness on appropriate and effective traditional knowledge especially on farming, and farmers' timely monitoring of proper use and application of assistance such as planting materials.



Conclusion

Food security in the indigenous communities of Ata-Manobo, Balangao, Dumagat, Hanunuo-Mangyan, Lambangian, Mandaya, Pidlisan and Teduray mainly depend on their utilization of their lands, territories, and natural resources for food production and income generation. In the matter of food availability, they produce their supply of rice, root crops, and vegetables in their rice fields and swidden farms. They raise chickens, cows, goats, and pigs and forage for food found in their natural resources like the forest, river, and sea.

Food accessibility hinges on the access of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories, and resources. With access to and control over these resources, they are able to maintain their traditional food systems, which enables them to produce and provide their food needs for their families. Ownership of land can certainly guarantee food security for indigenous peoples who engage in small-scale farming aimed at achieving food self-sufficiency. The traditional practice of mutual assistance, in which members of an indigenous community help each other during planting season, is also beneficial in ensuring food production for each family.

However, shifting to cash crops to generate income poses serious threat to this security. In the case of the Balangao, Lambangian, and Teduray, the shift from traditional food production for household consumption to market-oriented cash crops has resulted in increased dependency on farm inputs like chemical pesticides, fertilizers, and seeds. To endure the cost of farm inputs, they resorted to financiers to provide farm inputs for their corn production. In sitio Benuan, some Lambangian have given up their lands to repay their debts. Indigenous peoples who do not have land to farm are more vulnerable to food insecurity. For example, the Balangao in sitio Banilag who became tenant farmers and farm laborers barely earn enough money for their food supply.

Indigenous peoples are confronted with farm-related difficulties. The rice production of Pidlisan in Sagada is

constrained by the lack of irrigation systems, which has left farmlands idle, and pest attacks that damage rice crops, causing inadequate harvest.

In terms of food utilization, the indigenous peoples consume foods that are taken from their farms and natural resources, even eating the same food every day and without regard for the nutritional value of the food. Stunting and underweight children were noted in the communities. These children receive rations of ready-to-eat-food from local health centers. Aggravating undernutrition is the lack of clean water sources, leading indigenous communities to rely on unimproved and unsafe water sources.

The Balangao in sitio Banilag, Hanunuo-Mangyan in sitio Bait, and Lambangian in sitio Benuan often suffer from the lack of access to clean water sources. In Bait and Benuan, indigenous women and their children spend much time and effort in fetching water from outlying rivers, springs, and other sources of water, while Balangao women have to shell out money for costly water delivery, reducing their budget for food and making it more difficult to meet their basic food needs. With the lack of safe water, the people's health is at great risk. Unfortunately, some have succumbed to poisoning and gastrointestinal diseases brought about by unsafe water in the communities of the Lambangian and Hanunuo-Mangyan.

Availability, accessibility, and utilization of food as determinants of food security are not assured in indigenous communities because of incidents of food insecurity during extreme weather events such as prolonged drought, inclement monsoon rain, and strong typhoon that cause destructive and extended impacts on agriculture. As experienced by the Ata-Manobo and Mandaya in the 2012 wrath of Typhoon Pablo, they had no food to eat because their farms and natural resources were severely damaged. Consequently, they became dependent on food rations and some had to leave the village to look for jobs, leaving their farms idle and unproductive.

Indigenous women in the eight communities are taking vital roles as food producers and providers. They undertake farming activities such as sowing, planting, weeding, and

harvesting. They also fetch water, gather wood for fuel, prepare and cook food for their families. These responsibilities manifest indigenous women's essential role and concern in guaranteeing food for their families. However, they have to stand up to many challenges in performing these roles. One is the cited lack of safe and clean water source. Indigenous women and their children have to fetch water from sources far from their homes. Preparation and cooking of food becomes more difficult without clean water in the home.

Another challenge is their limited skills in marketing and processing farm produce, which constrain their ability to generate additional income. For instance, the Dumagat women lack knowledge and technology in processing coconut into value-added products with higher market price.

Low educational attainment among indigenous women is also a factor that hinders their economic roles in earning income for their families. Those employed are in low income jobs. With higher education, they would have more chances of getting regular jobs and thus be more capable of providing food needs. This would also increase their knowledge on good nutrition for the family. Poor health status can undermine their capacity to produce and provide food for their families. Healthier indigenous women are better household managers that can nurture their families reliably. Thus, higher educational attainment and better health status are crucial factors that can boost indigenous women's roles as food producers and providers.

Membership by indigenous women in cooperative and microfinance institutions is helpful as it increases livelihood opportunities so long as the financial resources are managed properly. Likewise, membership in indigenous women's organizations is instrumental in their empowerment.

Traditional cultural practices in certain indigenous communities have impacts on indigenous women to the present. The tamok or bride-price, malunsod (penalizing a woman who rejects a wedding proposal), and duwoy (polygyny) are cultural practices among the Teduray that make women vulnerable to mistreatment. Similarly, the practice of sukat (bride-price)

of the Mandaya and duwad (bride-price) of the Ata-Manobo has suppressed women in taking decisions at home except on those involving food preparation. The Hanunuo-Mangyan women expressed their strong resistance to their practice of agduwa (polygyny), as it increases the economic burden on their families due to adverse effects of inadequate income.



Recommendations

In order to attain food security, the indigenous women recommended the following:

- Establish appropriate, operational, and sustainable income generating projects.
- Access to appropriate and sustainable income generating projects is essential for indigenous women not only to increase their opportunities to generate income but also to empower them in leading vibrant economic activities. Examples of income generating activities that can improve women's livelihood are coconut processing (Dumagat) and livestock raising (Teduray).
- Conduct capacity building for skills development of indigenous women.
- Capability building activities that will enable them to gain and develop skills in cooking, marketing, pest and financial management are among the identified needs of Lambangian, Hanunuo-Mangyan, and Dumagat women.
- Strengthen indigenous women's organizations in the communities to empower them in advancing their advocacy and development work.
- Establish a trading center or producer cooperative where indigenous women can cooperatively market and sell their agricultural products such as fruits and vegetables and handicrafts such as baskets, bags, and beads.
- Provide financial assistance for income generating projects.

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- Access to financial resources is crucial for the success of livelihood projects implemented by indigenous women.
 - Provide continuing education on the importance of women's role in ensuring food security.
 - This will enable women to exercise their rights and to organize for active participation in decision making not only in the family but also in the development of the community.
 - Local Government Units should support indigenous women initiatives particularly on economic empowerment to enable them to participate fully in uplifting their living conditions.

Endnotes

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- ⁸ Barangay, a Filipino term for a village, is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines.
- ⁹ Philippine Statistics Authority. *2015 Full Year Poverty Statistics*, Table 2.
- ¹⁰ Philippine Statistics Authority. 2015 Census of Population.
- ¹¹ Culled from the results of data gathering of Indigenous Navigator Team in Barangay Bayabas, Upi.
- ¹² Sitio is a sub-village that forms part of a barangay.
- ¹³ Culled from the community validation of Indigenous Navigator Team in Sitio Benuan, Kuya.
- ¹⁴ MCCT IPs-GIDA is a modification of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) that targeted more vulnerable and disadvantaged families.
- ¹⁵ Philippine Statistics Authority. Various Census Reports.
- ¹⁶ Culled from the Pidlisian-Community Based Management Information System, Tebtebba.
- ¹⁷ Habal-habal is an innovation of the motorcycle commonly used as public transportation in rural areas in the Philippines.
- ¹⁸ Rovillos, R. et al. *The State of Food Insecurity of Indigenous Peoples, An Integrative Report on Indigenous Peoples' Communities across the*

Philippines (EED-TFIP, Quezon City: 2004), p. 36.

¹⁹ Falcata is a fast-growing tree species favored by wood manufacturers because of its pulp texture.

²⁰ SILDAP (Silingang Dapit sa Sidlakang Mindanao) Southeastern Mindanao, Inc. is a non-government organization working with indigenous peoples (lumads) of Southern Philippines.

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Protecting Land, Promoting Culture

By
Loek Sreyneang
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Cambodia Indigenous Women Working Group (CIWWG)

CAMBODIA



Introduction

Cambodia has a population of around 16.3 million. The Khmer make up approximately 90 percent of the total population, Vietnamese five percent, and the rest are comprised by Chinese, Cham, and indigenous ethnic groups called “Khmer Loeu.” The indigenous peoples are estimated to number 200,000, representing 1.2 percent of the population. They are composed of 24 indigenous groups with at least 19 indigenous languages, but the number may be higher as some do not want to identify themselves as indigenous because of possible discrimination. These groups are spread over 15 provinces, with the largest number concentrated in Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, and Kratie.

While there is no official definition of “indigenous peoples” in Cambodia, the various legal and political terms used—“indigenous communities,” “indigenous ethnic minorities” and “highland peoples”—can describe these peoples: the Broa, Chhong, Jarai, Kachak, Kavet, Kel, Koang, Kouy, Kreung, Krol, Bunong, La'Eun, Lun, Mil, Por, Radei, Sam Rei, Souy, Spong, Stieng, Thmoun, Saauch, and Tumpoun. This designation is evidenced, among others, by their distinct cultural identity, language, and blood relations to members of these communities.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia 1993 guarantees that all citizens have the same rights “regardless of race, color, sex, language, and religious belief.” Cambodia voted in favor of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights

of Indigenous Peoples in the UN General Assembly in 2007, although it has yet to ratify ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. The 1993 Constitution also recognizes equal rights in political participation; economic, social, cultural spheres and family life and prohibits gender discrimination. Article 35 states that “Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to participate actively in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the nation.” Furthermore, the Constitution provides that “The Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognize and respect the human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women’s and children’s rights.”

The Cambodian government has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Since its ratification of CEDAW in 1992, the Royal Government has to submit a periodic report, under article 18 of the Convention, on the progress and situation of women’s rights in Cambodia. In 2018, the government notably developed the first National Gender Policy that provides a longer term policy framework on gender equality. For indigenous women, a policy that particularly applies to them is the national policy on the development of indigenous peoples, which seeks to ensure equal right to participation and access to development initiatives at every level.

Indigenous Lands and Resources

Cambodia’s indigenous communities have traditionally managed nearly four million hectares of remote evergreen and dry deciduous forests. They practice rotational cultivation, animal husbandry and harvest forest resources such as rattan, vine, resin, cardamom, and honey. These indigenous livelihoods and the long-term well-being of indigenous cultures are inherently tied to their systems of land use and access to forest resources, but these systems are coming under threat.

Indeed, the economic land concession (ELC)¹ is a recurring problem for indigenous communities. The NGO Forum

on Cambodia has reported that economic land concessions, mining concessions, hydropower dams, land grabbing, deforestation, and illegal logging continue to impact severely the livelihoods of indigenous groups. In one instance, 17 indigenous communities complained that a Vietnamese-based rubber company had grabbed their lands through economic land concessions. With the assistance of NGOs and indigenous peoples' organizations, these communities filed a complaint with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group which subsequently launched an investigation. In 2015, the Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman, a recourse mechanism for projects supported by the IFC,² facilitated negotiations between the parties, which resulted in the rubber company agreeing to aid 11 of the communities in the country's communal land titling process.

Communal land titles provide legal recognition of the collective ownership of land, and article 28 of the Land Law 2001 states "no authority outside the community may acquire any rights to immovable properties belonging to an indigenous community." In 2015 this principle was successfully used by a Bunong community in Mondulkiri to defend its land in court.

The reality however is that the process to obtain collective ownership of land by indigenous communities is long and complicated. Apart from the Land Law 2001, the government has issued a national policy on indigenous people for development, a national policy on collective land registration in 2009, and a sub-decree on indigenous collective land registration. Articles 23-28 of Chapter 3 of the Land Law focus on indigenous collective land ownership rights and recognize the traditional practice of shifting cultivation and the decision of the traditional authority over collective land.

Although these legal protections appear relatively comprehensive, the process of receiving a communal land title is complex. The Ministry of Rural Development must first recognize the identification of an indigenous peoples, the Ministry of Interior must then register the community as a legal entity, and finally the Ministry of Land Management,

Urban Planning and Construction carries out a collective land titling procedure. The process also requires surveying of the property and opening the proposal to public comment.

By the start of 2017, only 14 indigenous communities had received communal land titles under Land Law 2001 (Profiles: Indigenous Communities), leaving approximately 500 communities without legal recognition of rights to their land. Without technical and financial support from development partners and NGOs, it was impossible to register these 14 collective land titles because of many challenges and complicated requirements, including documents for self-identification/community by law development/internal rule and preliminary mapping; all these need expertise to prepare.

The 2002 Forest Law also provides a legal basis for rural communities, including indigenous communities, to use and manage forests through community forestry. The 2003 Sub-decree on Community Forest Management further lays out rules for the establishment, management, and use of these forests. The Open Development Cambodia (ODC) dataset for community forests lists 337 different forests. However, although indigenous peoples' connection with their land has strong protection on paper, many observers such as independent analyst Dr. Kem Ley, NGOs working with indigenous peoples, and some development partners have stated that a lack of implementation and enforcement of laws and policies has left indigenous peoples vulnerable to commercial and state interests, which are increasingly attracted to exploiting the economic potential of the forests and upland areas traditionally used and managed by indigenous communities.

And when indigenous peoples lose their land, they do not only lose the territory where they live, but also the link with their ancestors, their traditional occupations, a part of their culture, and the natural resources which provide a living for their family and all the community members. All these facts make the land issue one of the most vital for indigenous peoples in Cambodia.

Indigenous Women's Situation

As with indigenous women across the Mekong region, those in Cambodia play an important role in their communities in protecting and preserving traditional knowledge from one generation to the next. They serve key roles in the family and assume much of the responsibilities for safeguarding the indigenous land, culture, and natural resources. However, as the protection of indigenous land and natural resources is often in conflict with state or company interests, dozens of indigenous women have been accused of being “opposition” members. Indigenous women have been harassed by provincial courts as well as by military and government officials.

This is in addition to the discrimination they face within their communities and in society in general. Indigenous girls are often the first to abandon school at an early age and have lower literacy rates than their male counterparts. Some 10.6 percent of indigenous girls marry before the age of 15 compared to 1.5 percent of the Cambodian population. They have inadequate awareness of and access to independent family planning measures or reproductive health. Tragically, a large number of rape cases have occurred in the northeastern provinces, and the victims are yet to receive justice. The cases are not investigated and have not been brought to courts, largely due to the far distance indigenous women have to travel to do so as well as illiteracy, lack of knowledge regarding laws and finance, and police corruption in the communities. Further, tradition has enforced the idea that parents ought not to complain or report such matters, one of the traditions that may be viewed as not appropriate for indigenous women in the 21st century.

Indigenous women are also unlikely to enjoy their political rights. Only a few indigenous women are in positions in the commune council and thus, the limited promotion or knowledge of the specific issues indigenous women face. They consequently suffer from their lack of decision making power in the community, aside from deprivations in education, reproductive rights, and healthcare.

More importantly, however, were land grabs, economic land concessions and social land concessions³ that handed

over indigenous lands to non-indigenous Cham people. One instance is the case of the Bunong indigenous community in Busra District, Mondulkiri province where such concessions caused the people to lose their land, limited their access to non-timber products, affected farm cultivation and women's health, contributing to the overall loss of traditional practices, cultural rights, and livelihoods.

There is, however, much hope for indigenous communities and the indigenous women are taking the lead in protecting their lands and preserving their heritage.

Indigenous Women Assert Land and Cultural Rights

This study⁴ looks at how the women of two indigenous communities are responding to particular issues they face and how they are asserting their communities' rights to land, forest, and cultural identity, advancing in the process the social and economic development of their communities. These are the Tumpoun women of the Loeun Kren community in Ratanakiri province and the women of Kui community in Stung Treng province.⁵



Study areas

Tumpoun Women: Preserving Cultural Heritage

The Loeun Krean community, located approximately nine kilometers from Banlung City in Ratanakiri province, is comprised of 136 families, with 164 indigenous women. Under community chief Muk Thien, the community received a community land title for 900 hectares located in Loeun Krean village, O Chum Commune in O Chum district. The Loeun Krean community has five different types of land use—burial land, spiritual land, farm land, reserved land, and residential land—all of which are recognized under a 2002 interim land policy that aimed to promote more equitable land distribution. The community manage their land collectively, following the customs of the indigenous Tumpoun.

Prior to receiving their community land title, the Loeun Krean community in 2004 fell victim to a land grab by the private company Sovann Reaksey and the powerful governor of Ratanakiri province. The community chief and village members decided to file a complaint with the local authority and with the commune chief. It took a full year of struggle before the community got their land back and more urging by the people to find a new agreement that would ultimately stop the predators who took their land. Finally, in 2008, the Loeun Krean community received a community land title from the Ministry of Land, Urban Planning and Construction, safeguarding them from further encroachments.

The Tumpoun women perform significant roles in the community. The women elders lead in conflict resolution, helping to mediate and conciliate cases including those of women facing problems or violence. They convene the conflict parties and if the parties cannot reach conciliation, they let each side decide by themselves what future steps to take.

Traditional barriers impacting women are slowly altering. In the past, daughters were strictly prohibited from traveling far from home. Sons were allowed to go to school while daughters had to stay home to help the family with chores such as cooking, raising animals, fetching water, caring for parents, and other family tasks.

Traditionally, Tumpoun daughters also had to pay gratitude to their parents, which was not expected of sons. This could take the form of caring for elderly parents or washing clothes for them. Even when women marry, they are required to live with their parents for up to one year before they move out to their new house. In addition, parents previously assumed that whether their daughters received education or not, they still had to help with farming. This has gradually changed, however, as there is limited land for farming and women's ability to earn income from their handicrafts means enough money to send daughters as



well as sons to school. Daughters today also have more freedom in choosing their partners for marriage. As a Tumpoun woman said, “Girls are now aware of their rights and have more capacity.”

“Women have the right to defend themselves, and as a head of family they do the same as men in the protection of the communal land. Traditionally, the woman is a head of family. For instance, when a daughter grows up, she will likely succeed much more than a son in managing their land and other properties. Furthermore, a daughter plays more roles than a son does as she takes care of a mother and elders when they get sick. She is also the one who keeps rice seeds for the following years.”

- Mrs. Por Mach

Promoting identity through weaving

The women in the community like those in neighboring villages make their living mainly from farming and forest management as well as from traditional handicrafts. They are very adept at weaving scarfs, sampots (a women's fabric) and blankets with beautiful indigenous designs. Weaving is very important to the Tumpoun people, as it promotes their traditions and beliefs. The remarkable designs, which draw from their forest, life cycle, and imagination, depict their beliefs and reflect their identity. Among their different styles and designs are the cucumber seed, spider net, bird nest, jet plane, women, and the Taneam, the most important style used in Kapha housing. As weaving requires a lot of time, a woman can finish only 10 scarfs and three sampots in a month.

The women have formed a weavers group of 14 members including five men, which is chaired by Mrs. Por Mach. The group produces sampots, scarves, purses, and blankets as well as other handicraft products such as kapha (backpack), crossbow, smok (rice bowl), rolout (rice steaming pot), and rice separator. To help support them in their daily livelihoods, the women also sustain a savings group, established in 2006, which earns from their other initiatives, including small scale traditional businesses such as rice wine production.

Since the Sangkum Reas Niyum government (People's Socialist Community by Prince Norodom Sihanouk), Tumpoun women had been planting cotton to produce fine thread for weaving. By tradition, it was necessary for women to learn to weave, otherwise they could not get married. In 1985, however, the Loenun Krean community stopped planting cotton trees because there was no more land to cultivate. Some of the Khmer sold threads, which were not as good as indigenous cotton thread and led to its price decline. Nevertheless, the Tumpoun women continued weaving, depicting their beautiful traditions in their designs.

Recognized by the Ratanakiri provincial department of the Commerce and Artisans Association of Cambodia, the Weaving Group hopes to strengthen the community by expanding their membership. They want to equip their chil-

dren and new generation with weaving and designing skills through training, sharing, and transferring their knowledge of different designs. They also want to modernize and make more creative products.

Mrs. Khoeung Choul, a midwife and skilled designer, says that to promote the indigenous women's handicraft is to promote the traditional knowledge and identity of their Tumpoun ancestors. She adds that their weaving helps improve the family livelihood, reduce domestic violence, support their children's education, and create jobs in the community.

The following expresses the sentiments of the Loeun Krean women on their weaving tradition:

*Improving our skills never stops
Less trained, less knowledge
All our knowledge passed on to all our generations
I feel hurt, if I cannot pursue my ancestral knowledge
My ancestral knowledge would be lost, if I leave them behind.*



Grandma Khoeung Choul, Tumpoun woman elder

POR MACH: ROLE MODEL

Por Mach, chair of the Weaving Group, is a role model in the community. She raised her six children after her husband died of an illness 18 years ago. She is active in the community, working at forest and communal land protection and in collective actions against land grabs in their village. She helps mediate domestic violence in the community and mentors and teaches women how to weave. She has provided training to women on community work and indigenous women's rights and facilitated meetings of the local women's network and of other groups. All the knowledge she has shared has inspired women in the community to defend themselves from domestic violence. Her work has expanded to women in other provinces with the support of NGOs such as Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO).

In addition, Mrs Mach has been promoting and making the products of the indigenous women of Loeun Kreaan popular among the Khmer and other indigenous peoples. She attends exhibits and other events, such as the Angkor Sankranta Exhibition in Siem Reap province, to showcase their handicrafts and networks with CIPO for marketing support and promotion. Her efforts are paying off. The Weaving Group's products have been recognized by the Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture, Non-Timber Forest Products, Highlander Association, and Indigenous Community Support Organization.



Ms. Por Mach during the Mekong Regional Meeting

Kui Women: Fighting for Lands, Transmitting Culture

Like the Tumpoun, the Kui, another indigenous group who live in Cambodia's northern areas, face threats to their land and livelihoods. The Kui, who can be found in Preah Vihear, Stung Treng, Kampong Thom, and other Cambodia provinces and in Thailand's Surin province, practice the traditional culture of farming and collection of resin and wild fruits. Their livelihoods and environment, however, are being affected by mining and agricultural concessions. Several economic land concessions have been granted to Chinese companies for the cultivation of rubber, acacia, and sugar cane.

The Kui women are important actors in defending their community's lands and culture from the encroachment and cultural destruction caused by these concessions. This is aptly illustrated by the story of Mrs. Kha Sros, a defender of the Kui's land and forest and protector of their culture and traditional knowledge.

Kha Sros

Kha Sros is a 68-year-old Kui woman who lives in Tonsoung Village in Siem Bok commune in Stung Treng province. She is a farmer, has a small home-based business, and collects resin from the forest. However, not all these activities are her principal ones. Indeed, over time, she acquired an important role in the community.

It started in 2000 when she was elected to the village gender committee by members of the commune. In 2002, she became chairperson of the Land Dispute Committee (state administrative) and a member of the Forestry Committee, having been very active in patrolling the community's forest land and in solving land disputes in the community. She was also elected as the community representative to the Indigenous Rights Active Members (IRAM), a network organized by the National Indigenous People's Forum and recognized nationally and internationally. Through her participation in IRAM, Mrs Sros developed many skills and learning, including the legal

process and rights advocacy. In 2010, she blocked the mine exploration of a Chinese company around Tonsoung village. In spite of the government's attempt to encourage and negotiate with community representatives, especially Mrs. Sros, to accept the mining concession, the community representatives refused to have the project in their village.

Although the local authorities did not provide the Kui community with information on the mining company and the project's purpose, the Kui and other neighboring indigenous communities clearly understood the impact of the mining concession on their land and resources. The project would cover their reserved forest land including their spirit land, burial land, and other natural resources, which would be destroyed without compensation by the company. The communities thus stood together to fight against the mining project to protect and maintain their forest and natural resources, which for centuries have been their source of income, and to keep these intact for the next generation.

Mrs. Sros was a protector of the forest. Between 2013 and 2014, she was involved in monitoring patrols to prevent illegal tree cutting. The illegal loggers were a national company with foreign investors that had a state license for a large scale tree plantation covering old tree growth areas that would have to be cut to establish the plantation as well as illegal loggers from the Kui and other neighboring villages. She mobilized community representatives and local authorities to get the community people to support a resolution against illegal logging. In 2014, the company withdrew.

But Mrs. Sros is not only an activist and defender of the land and forest. She also protects Kui cultural and traditional knowledge and transmits it to the youth. Since 2009, she has been an art teacher, educating the youth in traditional dances especially performed during the celebration of International Day of Indigenous Peoples and village and government programs. The traditional dance of the Kui in Tonsoung presents the Kui way of living and unique way of connecting with the earth and forest.

In order to preserve and promote the Kui culture, she created the Kui Indigenous People Group in Tonsoung, which

serves as a center to train dance groups in the village. It has become not only an important place for members of the community to practice and perform the arts but also for the youth, men, women, and elders to gather every evening to watch the group's performance. Mrs. Sros provides materials and time to engage and support the members, enlightening them of the importance to maintain and perpetuate their traditional culture into the future, as their culture, language, art, dances, and traditional clothes are part of their indigenous identity. Her involvement, however, has also impacted her family, as she earns a very small income to support her family and has inadequate time to spend with them.

The local authorities are not too happy with her activities to protect the community's land and resources. But this strong and motivated woman has won the respect and trust of all the other members of the community. Her story inspires other indigenous women to believe in themselves, and shows how they can enhance their skills and become a community reference for knowledge and advocacy. It shows the women that they are equal, competent, and can make a difference if they so choose.

Emerging Indigenous Women Leadership

With the growing movement of indigenous peoples in Cambodia, women's leadership has emerged, and their significant roles in child rearing, education, and in managing and sustaining land, natural resources, and culture are being acknowledged. These came about amid discrimination that persisted despite laws, policies, and programs promoting gender equality and rights of indigenous peoples as well as conflicting laws on land and resource use that infringe on their primary roles in food production, culture identity, and care. Recognizing the need to strengthen women's voices within and outside the indigenous movement, the Cambodia Indigenous Women Working Group (CIWWG) was formed on September 2, 2018 in a gathering of 37 women representatives from different provinces in Siem Reap.

Officially established on February 25, 2019 in Phnom Penh, the CIWWG is founded on indigenous women's common issues, challenges, and proposed solutions. The challenges they face include rights to land, forest, and culture; impacts of climate change; threats to lives of human rights defenders; gender-based violence; crime; and access to health and education. These intersecting challenges limit indigenous women's access and participation in decision-making positions and also reflect the work that has to be done at all levels to realize indigenous women's rights.

The CIWWG was created as a platform to coordinate and facilitate solidarity through a collective workplan, capacity building, and empowerment for substantive participation in decision making. This collective effort hopes to enhance self confidence among women in their advocacy work and to mobilize indigenous women's leadership in sustaining indigenous identity, knowledge, and development in the context of communities' collective interests over their rights to land, forest, and culture identity.

To date the working group has 50 members from different ethnic groups, provinces, and work experiences. It draws its financial resources from an annual membership fee of US\$30, \$1 contribution to support allowances for members participating in workshops/meetings/trainings, voluntary contributions from members' own businesses, and the group's earnings from the services they provide. From February-November 2019, they had \$4046 to support their activities.

In the near future, the CIWWG hopes to continue with its institutional development work in the areas of strengthening internal management, organizational by-laws, policies, and strategic plan. It will also build its network and links with different donors, NGOs, networks, and government at all levels for technical and financial support to carry out its strategic plan. The CIWWG is an important step in the process for indigenous women groups in Cambodia to lead and to voice out their common issues, especially rape cases and threats to indigenous women defenders of human rights, land, and forest, towards the fulfilment of their rights and overall betterment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The stories of Por Mach and Kha Sros demonstrate that women, through their political and economic participation and endurance, play key roles in the community's development and in enhancing understanding of indigenous peoples. Further, they are vital actors in protecting land and resources and in ensuring transmission of cultural heritage and knowledge to the youth.

The following are actions recommended to the government to further provide protection to the lands and cultures of indigenous communities in Cambodia:

- The Ministry of Land should increase the budget for the provision of technical support to remaining indigenous communities to obtain their collective land title in order to secure their land/forest, traditional occupations, and cultures.
- The national government should allocate a budget to support the collective land title registration process; this should not be the responsibility of the community and NGOs or development partner. It should undertake government mapping of all the indigenous communities in the country and register them at one time, and the process should be done with the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of these communities.
- The Ministry of Land should strengthen the process of solving the land issues in indigenous communities affected by economic and social land concessions; otherwise, they will lose their lands, and their livelihoods and welfare will be affected including security of women's occupations and the outcomes of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

To address the issues that Tumpuon and Kui women are facing, the following are recommended to the government and women's and indigenous peoples' organizations:

To the Government:

- The local government should allocate a budget for indigenous women's programs in targeting indigenous communities in regions/provinces.

- The local government should implement gender equality and make it a reality by giving indigenous women the space to decide and resolve gender issues by themselves.
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs should work closely with the Department of Women's Affairs to resolve indigenous women's issues and reduce gender inequality.

To the Indigenous Women, their Organizations and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations:

- Indigenous women should influence and raise awareness of indigenous women/elders in the communities on gender equality and encourage girls to pursue higher education.
- Indigenous women should make development plans and activities towards reducing gender inequality in their communities.

Endnotes

¹ An economic land concession (ELC) is a long-term lease that allows a concessionaire to clear land in order to develop industrial-scale agriculture, and can be granted for various activities including large-scale plantations, raising animals and building factories to process agricultural products. A land concession is a grant of rights over an area of land for a specific purpose, land concessions can be granted for various functions, including agribusiness and redistribution of land to the landless and land-poor (Open Development Cambodia).

² <https://opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net/tag/compliance-advisor-ombudsman/>.

³ Social land concessions, established under the 2001 Land Law, provide land to the landless or with little land to establish residences and/or to generate income through agriculture.

⁴ The study used individual interviews and secondary data analysis to generate and analyze the information collected. The interviews and stories of the women were done and narrated in the original indigenous and Khmer languages and translated to English.

Gender Injustice on Indonesia-Malaysia Border

INDONESIA

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Introduction

It has been more than 72 years since the Republic of Indonesia proclaimed its independence. This is almost three quarters of a century but it turns out it is not long enough for the people of Indonesia to be fully independent from the shackles of colonialism. Following independence and a change of regimes from President Soekarno to the New Order under General Soeharto, Indonesia became a fascist country, with colonialism transformed into a new era of colonialism (neo-colonialism) disguised as economic development.

When Soekarno was ousted and Soeharto took power, Indonesia was entering the New Order regime. The new administration's first program, which aimed more at improving people's welfare, was economic development through an open economy in the hope it would yield good results that would spark Western countries' confidence in Indonesia's economic prospects. This economic development program, which effectively started on April 1, 1969, was known as REPELITA I.¹ Prior to its commencement, economic, social, and political stability had been restored and the domestic economy, rehabilitated. The restoration of economic stability was prioritized through government management of the country's forest natural resources particularly in natural resource-rich areas to amass as much assets as possible for the country. Extending this program, Soeharto through his ministers issued laws and policies that paved the way for his administration to carry out exploitation of natural resources (forests, lands and water) on a massive scale.

REPELITA's impacts on the Indonesian economy that were deemed quite remarkable especially at macro level (national and international) turned out to be disproportionate to the condition of the people in areas considered Indonesia's sources of economic income such as Sulawesi, Maluku, Papua, and Kalimantan. The last, particularly West Kalimantan Province—known for its forest and mining potential, has become one of the areas undergoing tremendous resource exploitation. The Indonesian and Malaysian border located in Sekayam Sub-District in Sanggau District of West Kalimantan Province is rich in forest resources. It is also the origin site of the indigenous peoples of Iban Sebaruk and Sisang Customary Administrations/Ketemengungan.

The resource exploitation carried out by the State, through investors, has caused injustice and social inequality to the indigenous peoples living in this border area. It has resulted in agrarian conflicts, as it is carried out within the lands these indigenous peoples have managed and inhabited for generations. When the State enters ancestral lands, bringing along private investors, taking over their ownership, and employing diverse strategies, the indigenous peoples become helpless and desperate in overcoming the massive exploitation disguised as economic development to equalize welfare at the border area. In truth, this has further caused economic and social gaps, as the unexpected, ongoing exploitation does not lead to the welfare of the indigenous peoples but has worsened their plight instead. Their lands are replaced with large-scale oil palm plantations, with members of their communities employed as casual laborers doing the hard work for meagre wages on their very own lands.

When such economic and social conditions result in poverty across the border area, those most affected are the indigenous women. They are part of the indigenous communities, suffering from this unjust act of the State. At the same time they experience gender injustice in their own communities, and, thus, suffer from double injustice. Further, as owners of the ancestral land with all its resources, indigenous women have to deal with a more severe plight. They lead a life close to nature (forest) in performance of their gender-related role

that has been practiced for all this time in their communities. Changes in land ownership from indigenous peoples to large-scale oil palm plantation companies have resulted in fresh problems for them as they are highly dependent on the forest. Long deemed by the State as second class citizens in their communities, they undergo multiple kinds of injustice known as gender injustice. These are marginalization, subordination, discrimination, double burden/multiple responsibilities, and violence against women, all because of their gender.

In addition to land ownership changes, the impacts of climate change or destruction² that have also been impacting the border area have worsened the economic condition of indigenous women. Climate destruction has resulted in unpredictable harvest and fruit seasons, making it difficult for indigenous peoples who farm and manage nature to determine the right planting time. With the farming pattern and plant disease cycle highly reliant on fruit and farming seasons, they are confronted with unfamiliar diseases as a result of such erratic seasons.

In order to address these problems, Yayasan Karya Sosial Pancur Kasih (YKSPK) and Institut Dayakologi (ID), as facilitating institutions, collaborated in carrying out advocacy on the rights of indigenous women of Ketemenggungan/ Customary Administrations of Iban Sebaruk and Sisang at the border area. The advocacy calls for gender equality and justice for indigenous women of both communities, based on the national laws, policies and regulations related to indigenous women and women empowerment.

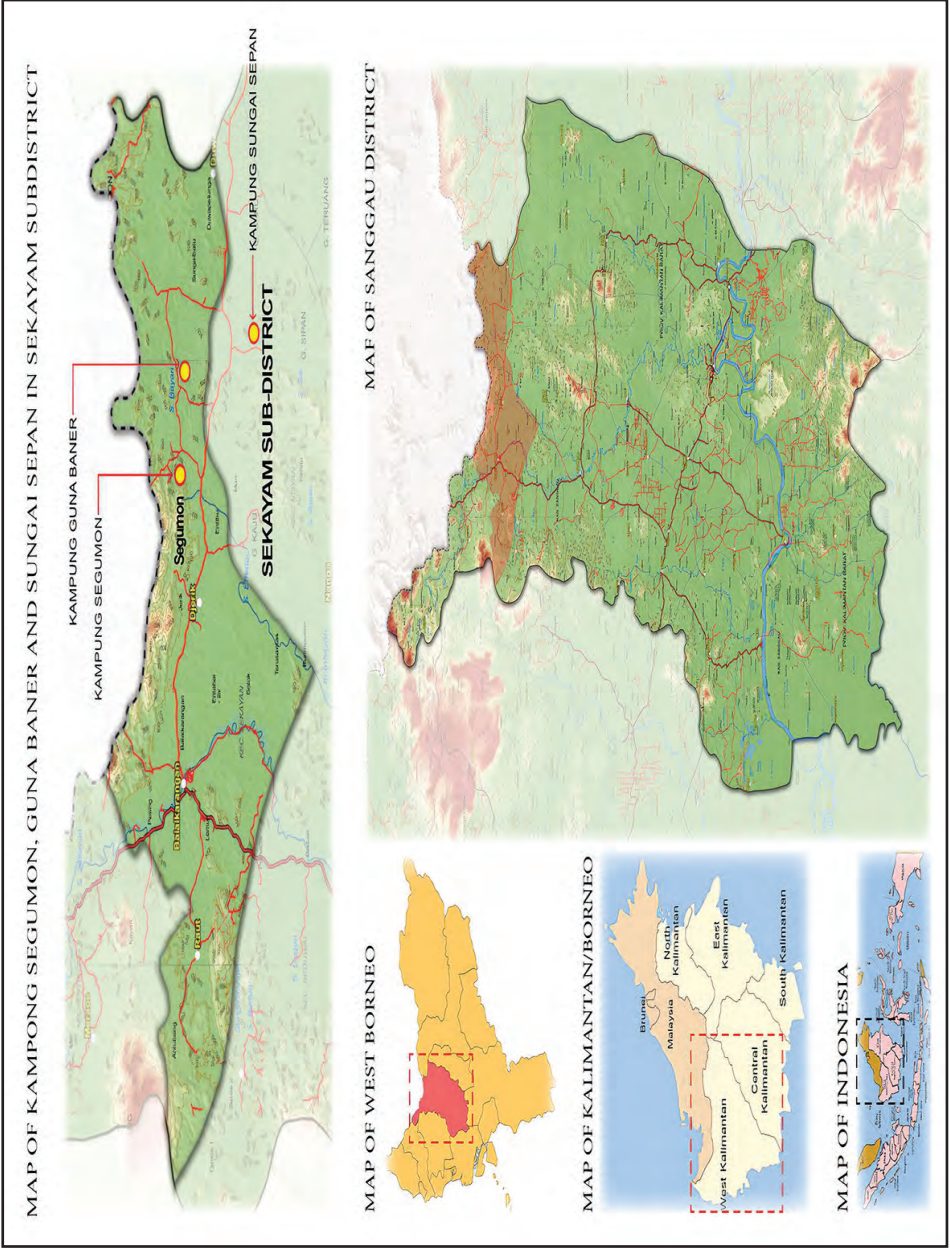
Indonesia ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984. Since the issuance of Presidential Instruction Number 9 of Year 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development, the Ministry of Forestry and Environment has taken a lot of efforts to push for the realization of gender equality and justice. These include dissemination of gender mainstreaming, advocacy for policy makers, developing institutions for gender mainstreaming, and technical education to integrate gender into the development process.

The understanding on gender mainstreaming becomes important in every sector of development, and the environmental and forestry sector is no exception. On December 21, 2016 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Acceleration of Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming, Women Empowerment and Children Protection in Environmental and Forestry aspect as well as in Climate Change Control was signed by multiple ministries including the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children Protection. The MoU is the extension of previous MoUs signed between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children Protection. Taking into account the importance of gender mainstreaming and to accelerate it in the field of environment and forestry, a Guideline to the Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in Environment and Forestry will be drafted.³

It was to determine how far such national policies have been implemented in the country and their impact on indigenous women in local communities that this study was carried out. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to: 1) collect data that describe the situation of indigenous women at national level; 2) identify cases of gender injustice facing indigenous women in the facilitated Iban Sebaruk community (Sungai Sepan and Guna Banir Kampongs) and Sisang community (Segumon Kampong); 3) identify means and strategies for indigenous women to address their situation through various platforms including involvement in national and local processes of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

I. Study Communities

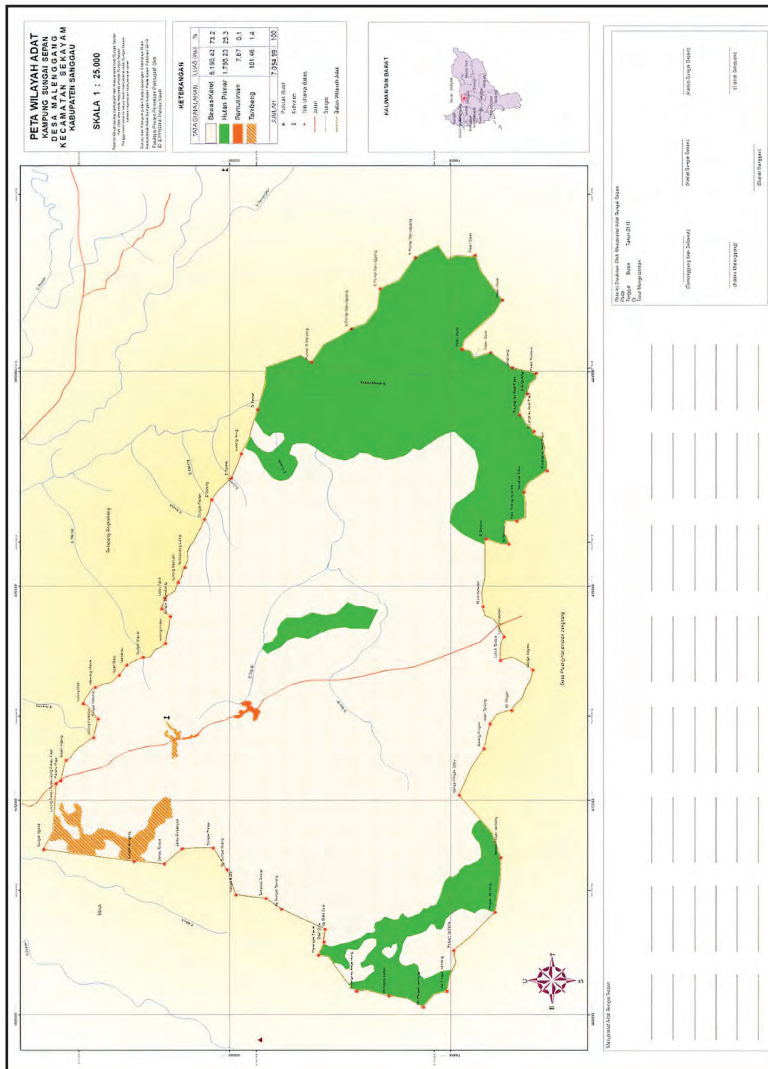
Figure 1. Map of Border Area



The study was conducted in three communities in the Sanggau District of Indonesian West Kalimantan Province. These are:

Kampung Sungai Sepan

Figure 2. Map of Kampung Sungai Sepan



Kampung Sungai Sepan is part of the Customary Administration/Ketemenggunaan of the Iban Sebaruk indigenous community. It is located in Malenggang Village, Sekayam Sub-District. This *kampung* is accessible by vehicle from Balai Karangan to Senaning - Sintang District, and unlike other kampongs along the main road, it is located around five kilometers from the main crossroad at Kampung Miruk.

Kampung Sungai Sepan has a population of 618, with men slightly more than the women.

Table 1. Population of Kampung Sungai Sepan, 2018

No.	Age Range	Women	Men	Total
1	0.1 – 5 years old	31	31	62
2	6 – 12 years old	52	46	98
3	13 – 20 years old	63	53	116
4	20 – 59 years old	142	170	312
5	60 years & older	10	13	23
6	Unknown	3	4	7
	Total	301	317	618

Kampung Guna Banir

Also part of the Customary Administration/Ketemenggunaan of Dayak Iban Sebaruk indigenous community is Kampung Guna Banir. This kampung is administratively situated in Sungai Tekam Village, Sekayam Sub-District and can be reached by vehicle from Balai Karangan in the direction of Senaning-Sintang District. It is approximately 10 kilometers from the crossroads of Kampung Kuya, Lubuk Sabuk Village and Kampung Segumon and Guna Banir.

Kampung Guna Banir has a population of 570, with an almost fair distribution between women and men. The 21-59 age bracket make up almost half of the population.

Figure 3. Map of Kampong Guna Banir

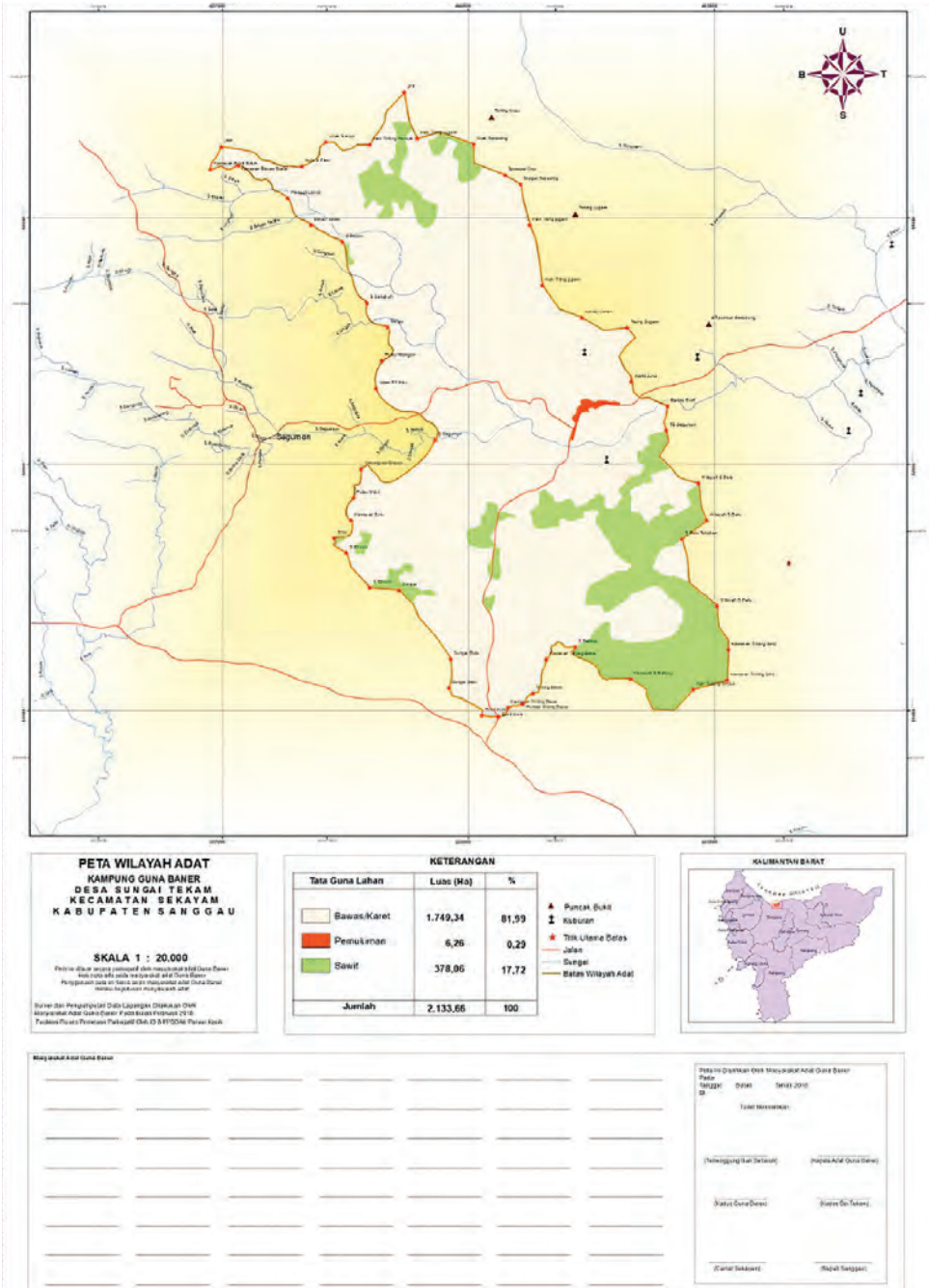


Table 2. Population of Kampong Guna Banir, 2018

No.	Age Range	Women	Men	Total
1	0.1 – 5 years old	34	36	70
2	6 – 12 years old	42	47	89
3	13 – 20 years old	34	47	81
4	21 – 59 years old	146	136	282
5	60 years & older	17	17	34
6	Unknown	9	5	14
	Total	282	288	570

Kampong Segumon

Kampong Segumon is part of the Indigenous Dayak Sisang Customary Administration; administratively, it is part of Lubuk Sabuk Village, Sekayam Sub-District. It is located in the inner area on the border shared by Indonesia and Malaysia. Accessible by vehicle, it is five kilometers from the Kampong Kuyak intersection in Lubuk Sabuk Village.

Kampong Segumon is populated by 553 people, with slightly more men than women.

Table 3. Population of Kampong Segumon, 2018

No.	Range of Ages	Women	Men	Total
1	0.1 – 5 years old	25	31	56
2	6 – 12 years old	35	38	73
3	13 – 20 years old	55	48	103
4	21 – 59 years old	138	152	290
5	60 years & older	6	11	17
6	Unknown	5	9	14
	Total	264	289	553

II. Status of Indigenous Women

Education

Education is everyone's right. It is a window that opens a person's mind to a wide range of knowledge that is expected to benefit himself/herself and others. Since 1950, during the era of Indonesia's first president Soekarno, the government has pioneered a Compulsory Education Program for all Indonesian children throughout the country. Its implementation was officially commenced by President Soeharto (Indonesia's second president) on the National Education Day on May 2, 1984. The program has undergone three stages of implementation:

- 6-year compulsory education for children 7-12 years old (1st-6th grade), which started in 1984;
- 9-year compulsory education for 7-12 years old (1st-6th grade), 12-15 years old (7th-9th grade), which started in 1994;
- 12-year compulsory education for 7-12 years old (1st-6th grade), 12-15 years old (7th-9th grade), 16-18 years old (10th-12th grade), which started in 2015.

With this government program the education of Indonesian children from 1984 to the 2000s could have been completed fully. However, they confront education issues especially those in indigenous communities, largely due to complex economic issues and widespread poverty that impacts all aspects of life including education.

Indonesia also faces many challenges and obstacles in terms of quality and access to education. Many Indonesian children are unable to go through compulsory basic education, and dropout cases are high. Based on 2010 data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, more than 1.8 million children in a year cannot continue their schooling. This is attributed to the fact that children are forced to work to augment the family income and underage marriage (Secretary of Directorate

Table 4. Mandatory Education Level (2018)

Age Range	Kampong	Elementary School		Elementary School Graduate ⁵		Junior High School		Junior High School Graduate ⁶		Senior High School		Senior High School Graduate ⁷	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
6-12 years old	Guna Banir	38	33	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Sungai Sepan	45	43	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Segumon	30	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13-16 years old	Guna Banir	6	9	0	2	10	9	4	3	4	3	0	0
	Sungai Sepan	13	8	0	0	16	19	0	0	4	0	0	0
	Segumon	7	5	3	2	15	8	1	0	1	0	0	0
17-20 years old	Guna Banir	0	0	2	8	1	1	0	0	0	0	6	3
	Sungai Sepan	0	0	5	2	2	3	3	3	10	5	4	4
	Segumon	0	0	5	8	0	1	3	2	9	12	1	1
21 above years old	Guna Banir	0	0	57	58	11	13	0	0	0	0	11	14
	Sungai Sepan	0	0	30	48	0	0	9	21	0	1	3	18
	Segumon	0	0	40	55	0	0	17	24	0	0	19	24

General of High Education Dr. Ir. Patdono Suwignjo). Other factors affecting quality and access to education are unequal distribution of the number and quality of teachers and the curriculum's focus on student skills for work in industries.

Limited access to education is experienced more by indigenous communities that are far from education centers such as the marginalized and border communities in Ketemenggungan Iban Sebaruk (Guna Banir and Sungai Sepan kampongs) and Ketemenggungan Sisang (Segumon Kampong). The average education of indigenous women in Guna Banir, Sungai Sepan, and Segumon Kampongs is elementary level (Table 4).

Unlike today when on average both girls and boys go to school, girls in previous generations were not privileged to complete their education. The majority dropped out from elementary school and once they left school, most got married at the ages of 13 to 18 years old. At the time of this study (2018), children 6 to 18 years old were in the range of the 12-year Compulsory Education Program that began in 2015. The government and each region, thus, made a bigger effort to push the program goals through various education funds particularly for public elementary schools in each village. This decreased the burden on parents and enabled each child, boy or girl, to attend school.

It was a different matter for indigenous communities, especially females 21 years or older and considered adults. In the three study kampongs, the majority of indigenous women in this age bracket are elementary school dropouts. As shown in Table 4, the number of elementary graduates among women is lower than that of men. The data similarly show smaller percentages of women continuing on to higher levels. Even though many indigenous women completed basic education, the majority did not move on to junior or senior high school due to financial reasons. In Sungai Sepan Kampong, for instance, of those who graduated senior high school, 18 were male and only three were female. A similar pattern obtained in Segumon Kampong (24 males, 19 females) and in Guna Banir Kampong (14 M, 11 F). This is so, as in the past boys were prioritized over girls to get higher education. Higher

education was not considered necessary for girls, since they would marry and only manage the house.

Also, limited and even no adequate infrastructure and teachers for high school in the kampong mean more expenses for parents as they have to send their children to schools outside the community. In more dire financial conditions, especially when rubber prices decline or living costs rise, many children stop schooling and return to their kampongs to help the family. When children drop out because parents are no longer able to provide for their school needs, priority goes to the boys to continue schooling, as they are considered the successor or head of the family.

Livelihood

Indigenous peoples in general and indigenous women today have more choices of work/jobs than they did in the past. The diversity of jobs and livelihoods of indigenous women in the study kampongs can be seen in the following table.

The main livelihood of the majority of indigenous women in Guna Banir, Sungai Sepan, and Segumon Kampongs is casual labor at oil palm plantation companies. On average, they work four days a week from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. An additional livelihood to meet the family's food needs is farm work. This work pattern has changed from previous ones. Prior to the presence of oil palm plantations in the kampongs, the women mainly engaged in farming and rubber tapping.

Some indigenous women work as laborers in medium-scale oil palm plantations owned by residents of neighboring kampongs. Such work demands even longer hours, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. Given the longer days of work, they only have Sundays left to work on their own farms.

Table 5. Main and Alternative Livelihoods of Indigenous Women, 2018

No	Type of Job	Kampong Guna Banir				Kampong Sungai Sepan				Kampong Segumon			
		Main		Alternative		Main		Alternative		Main		Alternative	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	Domestic/ housewives	54	0	0	0	37	0	2	0	41	0	0	0
2	Dry/Wet Field Farming	20	26	70	64	51	62	72	60	52	44	71	65
3	(Rubber, pepper crop) gardening	5	18	45	66	6	13	56	67	30	38	73	88
4	Casual Laborer (BHL) at PT. SISU/ Gudang Garam	55	53	0	2	47	37	0	0	46	32	0	0
5	Laborer (BHT) at PT. SISU/ GudangGaram	1	7	0	0	1	9	0	0	0	16	0	0
6	Casual Laborer (BHL) in other companies	4	11	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
7	Laborer (KHT) in other companies	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Laborer working in other palm oil plantation (small holder)	0	0	0	0	5	10	1	1	3	5	12	23
9	Gold miner	0	0	0	0	3	9	1	7	0	0	0	0
10	Elementary School Teacher /Honorarium Teacher	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	4	0	0
11	Running canteen	5	1	2	0	2	2	3	1	6	3	7	5
12	Working in Malaysia/ Indonesian Migrant Worker	0	11	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	0

13	Village Administrative Affairs Head	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	Village Head	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Hamlet Head	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0
16	Civil Servant Retiree	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
17	Kampong Healer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
18	Others (babysitter, construction worker, working in other people's farm, working in BalaiKarangan)	0	12	4	5	1	11	0	1	3	36	0	7

Poverty/Income

The findings also suggest that the indigenous women in the three kampongs do multiple work. In addition to their main and additional livelihoods as plantation laborers and farmers/gardeners, they have to do domestic work (cooking, washing, childcare, among others). Oil palm plantation work earns them around 2,000,000 Rupiah (IDR) (UMK [district minimum wage] Sanggau District in 2017 & 2018)⁸ without other benefits and subject to various deductions. The income they bring home is usually inadequate to meet their family daily needs, not to mention monthly expenses such as children's education. Thus, to be able to provide the family food requirements, women have to farm during the remaining time left after plantation work. Farm yields, however, are usually not optimal due to the said insufficient farming time and limited land to farm. The majority of families in the three kampongs have released their family lands for oil palm plantations. Thus, the average remaining land they own provides only their daily food needs.

Health

The average health of the indigenous women in Guna Banir, Sungai and, Segumon Kampongs is below average standards. These kampongs have not had sufficient health care facilities except for one integrated health care center recently built to assist mothers with toddlers. This center, however, opens only once a month when health care officers come down from the village (the center of a few kampongs) to conduct routine check-ups for mothers and children. When women and particularly children get sick, they undergo the community's traditional treatment or buy medicine sold in small shops inside the kampong.

Land and Heritage

The findings⁹ suggest that the indigenous women from Guna Baner, Sungai Sepan, and Segumon have rights over heritage lands of their families. Dayak custom is bilateral, which means women and men have equal rights in the distribution of inheritance. However, this only applies to indigenous women who were born and have their origin in the kampong. For instance, those who are in Kampong Sungai Sepan but do not originate from there do not have lands, as they have followed their spouses there. They usually have rights over land in their kampong of origin, but they lose access and control to parents and siblings who manage it when they outmigrate.

Access to Economic Resources

The ancestral territories of the Iban Sebaruk and Sisang have rich potential in economic resources that can bring prosperity to all their community members—men, women, children, older people, and other vulnerable members. The economic resources of Guna Baner, Sungai Sepan, and Segumon Kampongs consist of natural and human resources as well as assets.

Natural resources are all the resources that come from nature (forest, land, water, minerals, etc.) that can be utilized for agriculture, including environmentally sustainable gardens that could generate welfare for their communities. The indigenous women in the three kampongs, however, have limited access to the natural resources in their communities.

Human resources are all the activities of indigenous peoples, physical and spiritual, that are aimed at production work. These relate to their activities as agricultural farmers, oil palm plantation laborers, livestock farmers, rubber tappers, customary administrators, kampong and village administrative structures, and others. Indigenous women who work as farmers or casual laborers in company or smallholder oil palm plantations are usually regarded as secondary bread winners because of their roles as housewives. These roles that include domestic work are deemed unproductive and economically valueless according to prevailing social norms in the communities.

Asset resources are resources produced by people such as money or goods that can be used to contribute to production activities and processes. One is capital in the form of village funds budgeted specifically for community empowerment including women empowerment. However, indigenous women do not have access to and control over capital resources, as these are decided by village or kampong administrative structures during assembly meetings attended by men in the majority. Women may be present during those meetings but are not usually involved in the decision making.

This lack of access and control was exhibited when large-scale oil palm plantation companies first entered the areas of Iban Sebaruk and Sisang communities and took over indigenous peoples' lands including the women's on the pretext of developing the communities' economy. As part of the process to acquire the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the communities, the companies were obliged to provide and circulate information clearly to the indigenous peoples about the change of status of their lands. However, the land conversion took place without clear information dissemination to the communities, particularly to the indigenous women.

The study found that the women's participation in the three kampongs was neglected in the whole FPIC process. In comparison, men as the family heads had the opportunity to be involved in the initial information dissemination and subsequent negotiation with the companies. And in making the final decision and agreement where the companies offered plantation jobs to community members in exchange for their lands, again women who had ownership rights over their land did not take part but only gave approval to the decision.

"Those who were involved in meetings with companies were men only; no woman was present, let alone participated, in the decision making," said several men in focus group discussions. The men gave various reasons for the women's absence: the housewives deliberately did not want to participate because they were occupied with domestic work, others were present but only to listen from outside the meeting room.

Women who take the role of family head helplessly see themselves unrepresented due to the prevailing gender norms and are seldom given the chance to get involved in kampung assemblies like other indigenous women. Disregarding the family head position will lead to their losing their land. In general, this issue is encountered not only by the women but also by the whole community. Corporations take over ownership of ancestral lands by means of regulations (permits) supported by government officials and by coopting the kampung leadership and customary figures to sway the community to their side. Government officials and kampung leaders including customary figures are also dominantly men. Thus the

women are usually excluded from kampong assemblies, as they are unrepresented and not provided clear and transparent information by investors.

The impact of women's loss of land access and control is further felt when global climate destruction affects the agricultural cycle. Food production by families and women in particular through dry-field farming or vegetable and other food crop cultivation decreases; worse, harvests fail. Gender-based roles place women as fully responsible for providing food, and loss of land control and access further pushes them to seek alternative measures to obtain additional food for their families.

Human Resources

The indigenous women of Sisang and Iban Sebaruk communities work hard. The majority have to perform multiple work that includes palm oil plantation labor, dry-field farming, and domestic chores and household management. Unfortunately, not all the work the indigenous women do is deemed economically productive. Despite all their efforts or the resources geared to productive activities, these are considered incomparable to those of men. Their work is taken for granted and looked at as normally in line with their domestic role in their families. Such role has been internalized in the communities and is further reinforced by academic, religious, and even state institutions. This condition has led women to lose control of decision making within their families and communities.

Furthermore, even when women work as plantation laborers, they are still viewed as secondary breadwinners in the family as their economic activities are not seen to generate expected welfare. Nevertheless, they are extremely focused on economically productive work in addition to domestic work. This was confirmed by the study when the women were hesitant to attend several meetings due to their work both at

the plantations and their farms/paddy fields. They deemed such meetings economically unproductive and a waste of time that these had to be set several times in the evening. But these turned out to be less effective as the women could not stay too long due to fatigue following a hard and long day's work.

Gender gaps may remain wherever indigenous women work including in the public sector. This is attributed to the fact that the public domain sees the presence of gender-based work distribution like the private (domestic) domain, which puts men in the dominant (superior) position.

Capital/Asset Resource

Indigenous women are also neglected in terms of access and control over asset resources in their community. This is apparent in Sisang and Iban Sebaruk communities, as existing development programs at kampong level do not fully favor women's needs. This is due to the situation where those present during assemblies are men and, thus, the programs devised are more tailored to prioritize public development in general which sees men's dominant role.

Even the village fund disbursed by the central government for women empowerment programs is reallocated because the village government sees the indigenous women as incapable of accessing the fund. Women lose such opportunity because of a lack of participation and capacity. To access the funds, they must form a group and submit a proposal to the village government. It goes without saying that missing this opportunity is a big loss for indigenous women, as the fund could support their efforts to generate alternative incomes to address the impact of climate destruction on their ancestral lands. Women's groups could use such resources to purchase food crop seedlings as other food sources in their communities or for farm animal raising and share the proceeds among members.

Disregard for Women's Labor Rights

The study found that almost all of the indigenous women (99%) in the study areas were still day or casual laborers (BHL/Buruh Harian Lepas, now KHL/Karyawan Harian Lepas) despite most of them having worked at PT. SISU II since 2009 (PT. SISU II was taken over by PT. DSN of Gudang Garam in 2017). Because their status is casual employee (KHL), the company argues that it is not mandatory for them to provide work protection benefits such as social security (*BPJS Ketenagakerjaan/Social Security Organizing Committee on Employment Care*) and health protection (*BPJS Kesehatan/Social Security Organizing Committee on Health Care*). This work status is being used by the company as an excuse for not fulfilling workers' rights stipulated in the Law on Employment. Under this law, the company has violated the rights of women workers to decent wage and social, health, and other work benefits:

Right to Decent Wage

Considering their heavy workload, the indigenous women's daily pay/wage is indecent compared to the average monthly wage of women in general and to the Regional Minimum Wage (see Table 6). Most of them began working with the company since the start of oil palm crop planting in 2009. Below is a comparison of the wage received by indigenous women laborers and the minimum wage in Sanggau District.

The table indicates that the number of working days has gradually gone down from 2009 to 2018. And less working days means lesser pay or decreased income for the indigenous women laborers. In Kampong Segumon, this declined from five to three workdays a week largely due to the difficulty of the work and of meeting targets. In 2009, women laborers could work the entire five days because the work was less tougher than in succeeding years.

Table 6.¹² Wage of Women Laborers in Rupiah

Year	Range of Wage	Days of Work	Total	Minimum Wage of Sanggau District
2009	33,000	26	858,000	*
2010	37,000	26	962,000	*
2011	41,000	20	820,000	*
2012	45,000	20	900,000	945,000
2013	49,000	20	980,000	1,118,000
2014	53,000	20	1,060,000	1,449,000
2015	57,000	20	1,140,000	1,635,000
2016	61,000	20	1,220,000	1,823,025
2017	64,000	20	1,280,000	1,973,425
2018	89,000	20	1,780,000	2,145,310

*not identified

The women work an average 20 days when production period begins; this is the optimum number that they can put in each month due to the heavy workload. They must complete work targets set by the company; for instance, a number of kilograms of fertilizer to spray in a number of work hours. Meeting the targets is physically exhausting as the distance to be covered by foot is extensive. The majority of the women laborers are unable to meet the targets and their performance even slumps when the plant spraying period begins. The average number of work days women that can do this specific task is 12 days, as it is the most difficult work; most complain of getting sick after several days of spraying.

This situation of low pay due to reduced work days (HK) worsens when the laborer is sanctioned over mistakes that are often tolerable as these are not fully the worker's responsibility. If one's work is assessed by the supervisor to have failed to achieve the target, then her/his number of work days for the month is cut down. Not all the work that fails to meet targets is attributable to a laborer's mistakes, especially by women who usually toil more diligently and carefully. The cause is sometimes the company itself, such as when distribution of materials is delayed (Document on case, 2018).

A woman's experience attests to this. "In one day I manage to apply 500 kilograms of fertilizer by myself. The total area that has to be fertilized is one hectare consisting of 45 oil palm trees. Time, sometimes, is the constraint, as I have to wait for the fertilizer to be transported to the area and by the time it arrives, it is already 12 noon and our working time ends at 2 p.m. That means, in two hours' time, I have to apply 500 kilograms of fertilizer."

Social Security, Safety and Health Benefits

The right of Sisang and Iban Sebaruk indigenous women laborers to social security, work safety, and health protection (K3) is also violated. Women as day or casual laborers do not receive basic workers' rights, such as health and social security benefits, and others due women workers such as maternity leave.

Their work as oil palm plantation laborers under a severe and heavy workload system makes them highly vulnerable to various illnesses. They work eight intensive hours a day, use chemical farm inputs, and have to meet high daily targets, which all affects their physical health. Their work involves land clearing (*menebas area*), sowing, planting oil palm seeds, spraying, and fertilizing, among others. The majority of the women laborers interviewed admitted that they occasionally suffered headache, shoulder pain, and suffocation particularly when they sprayed chemical pesticide from a 16-liter spray tank that they carried on their shoulders as they trudged hilly paths. They also experienced waist and leg pains during land clearing.

When women laborers fall sick, they do not receive any benefits because of their casual worker status. Unlike full time workers, they are not entitled to a certain number of days of sick leave with pay. When they get ill, they cannot work and they do not get paid. This work status virtually entraps women laborers in an exploitative labor system extensively adopted in the oil palm plantation industry. This system is reinforced by the weak bargaining position of women as casual labors. As

back-up workers who are accepted informally by the foreman, and without any formal education and work skills, they do not have the option to choose where to work or to get a job with a lighter workload and adequate salary.

That plantations are located in isolated places further enables the company to apply such an exploitative system without being monitored. Social security on health and employment had not been provided to the laborers up to the time PT. SISU II was taken over by PT. DSN Gudang Garam at the end of 2017.

For the period 2017-2018 during PT. DSN Gudang Garam's management, workers' wages began to be deducted for a monthly health care fee (*BPJS Kesehatan*). None of some 300 women laborers interviewed, however, said they had been informed or received any clear information on such deductions and health care benefits. They further added that they knew their wages were deducted for the *BPJS*, but the amount was not consistent; sometimes, it was IDR100,000 per month and at other times, IDR40,000. The amount could differ for other women laborers, as well. When company representatives were asked about these wage deductions, they simply replied that was how the deductions worked.

Under PT. DSN Gudang Garam (2018), when women laborers fell ill, the company would exclude days of absence from the total number of working days, which is its basis for calculating wages. And if they were absent for more than a week, the company would fire them. Moreover, laborers doing spraying work no longer received milk and eggs unlike under the previous management.

Work Leaves

Iban Sebaruk and Sisang indigenous women laborers also do not get maternity and menstrual leaves. The company does not accommodate women's need for monthly menstrual leave. Thus, when they do not report to work due to sickness during this period, they would be considered absent. It does not also provide maternity leaves, which leads pregnant laborers to

quit their job when they are about to give birth. Once they quit, they would not be able to work again with the company. This is a dilemma for women laborers, often leaving them with no other choice but to submissively comply with company rules.



IV. Analysis of Gender Injustice Issues

Indonesia's border is a vast area rich in natural resources and extensive primary forests. The life and condition of the local indigenous peoples, however, do not parallel its natural wealth. The majority of Iban Sebaruk and Sisang communities are indigenous peoples who reside within and in the proximity of the forests. They have been living there for generations even before the independence of the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed on August 17, 1945.

The entry of investors and companies into the border area through economic development programs has resulted in agrarian conflict, particularly on the ancestral lands of these communities. Emerging and ongoing issues arising from such conflict as well as from climate change impacts on these lands are negligence of women's fundamental rights, economic resource rights, labor rights, and underage/child marriages. In addition, these are causing social injustice that severely affects women due to their gender, such as the following.

Marginalization

Marginalization is a form of impoverishment of the indigenous women of Sisang and Iban Sebaruk communities that happens at multiple levels, i.e., the family, community, and state. Marginalization is apparent in the women's lack of access and control over economic resources in their family and community. It limits their opportunity to manage such resources, resulting in their becoming reliant on spouses or others, thus making it more difficult for them to become self-reliant and prosperous.

Subordination

Subordination takes place due to systematic domination of men over women. This domination is of systemic nature as a result of the long history of the sociocultural system established in the communities and a gender-based ideology serves as its foundation.

The subordination that positions indigenous women inferior to men in the Iban Sebaruk and Sisang indigenous communities is also multilevel:

a. Family level

Subordination at the family level can be seen from their lack of access and control over family assets.

b. Community or kampong level

Indigenous women have limited opportunity to be involved and take on roles in the public domain. For instance, kampong administrators are all men, and at kampong meetings men comprise the majority; women are present but merely to prepare food for such activity.

c. Public level

Indigenous women are not given the opportunity to participate in village administration. Their absence in leadership roles and positions in the political domain is a result of a lack of capacity that has led to their not being taken into account at all.

Stereotyping

Women stereotyping is the labeling of particular features or characteristics of women because of their biological gender, which has a detrimental impact on them. Stigmatization of women by stereotyping is common in local indigenous communities.

The indigenous women of Sisang and Iban Sebaruk have to endure two kinds of stereotyping. The first is the men's

view that they lack capacity, such that they are given less roles and access to resources not only within their families but also at the kampong or village level. For instance, their capacity in accessing the village fund is assumed and perceived to be so low that the already budgeted fund for women capacity building program is returned to state coffers.

The second kind of stereotyping comes from women themselves—they consider themselves incapable and are, thus, better off relying on their spouses. Even women who have to assume the role of family head do not use the opportunity for more public community roles that this position opens to them. When an indigenous woman becomes the head of the family, all the family responsibilities become hers as the breadwinner and the major person charged with the care of all members of the family. As shared by a woman from Guna Baner Kampong who became a single parent and family head when her husband left, she had to raise two children without any financial help from him. She had to work hard every day as a laborer and also as a farmer and, thus, had no time to be involved in public roles in her community. Also, in community meetings where all heads of families are invited, with attendees usually being men, the opportunity to represent the family is given to the father or a brother.

Three special meetings conducted by this study that involved indigenous women and the administration of three villages (Malenggang village–Sungai Sepan kampong, Lubuk Sabuk village–Segumon kampong, and Sungai Tekam village–Guna Baner kampong) concluded that the role and access of women in kampong and village administration indeed remain low. This was attributed to a lack of opportunity for women to build their capacities in the effort to pursue self-reliance for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Multiple Responsibilities

Indigenous women shoulder multiple responsibilities. They play an influential role in sustaining their family and communities. They are the family food providers and are involved in production activities as well as domestic work. In addition, they support the family economy by working as casual laborers at oil palm plantations. Such heavy workload does not permit them time to socialize with peers and to actively get involved in meetings organized in their kampong.

Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women is one of the gender injustices facing indigenous women at the border. The violence, based on their gender, is not only physical but psychological. Indigenous women do not have equal access to particular basic things, their fundamental rights are ignored, and the most severe is their vulnerability to discrimination.

Men's Perspectives on Indigenous Women's Condition

This condition faced by women presents a burden not only to women. There exists a structural and systemic situation that has caused indigenous peoples including the women to always fall victim. One aspect is marginalization and neglect of women's rights by companies. According to some men who see and experience the situation first hand at the border, they are concerned yet are helpless, but they expect to be able to address the problem. The following are some of the men's perspectives and views on the condition of women at the border.

We are so deeply saddened by the plight suffered by all the indigenous peoples, particularly the women who work as laborers at palm oil plantations. Those women have to get up at four at dawn just to work full time for more than eight hours per day. They receive only IDR85,000 per day in wages but their number of working days is gradually deducted. Nevertheless, they do not have many choices as they had been promised by the company a job upon selling their lands to the company. And they would feel they would have lost everything if they did not work at the plantation, given the selling prices of rubber and pepper that are unbelievably so low they are unable to meet their needs. Thus, to remain working at the plantation is the women's choice.

In the future we need to detach the women at the border from their dependence on working at the plantation. What we can do, among others, is to establish local knowledge-based alternative income generating groups that will set a role model and at the same time provide them access to the market.

- Mr. Burhan, 53 years old, Head of Segumon Hamlet

We are deeply sad and concerned about the condition of women who work as laborers (at the plantations). They receive insignificant wages and have no assurance for their health safety, i.e., they work without protection. I think what should be done in the near future is that village government collaborate with Institut Dayakologi to seek justice for the women laborers that encompasses wage raise, health care as well as supplemental food/drink, such as milk. One effort we can take is to encourage establishment of women's organizations at customary administration level and to push for alternative income generating activities at each kampung. The present situation occurs partly because of the absence of other productive livelihood sources; meanwhile their main sources of income in rubber and pepper are declining with prices plummeting. We are going to address this problem together in the near future.

- Jhon Kenedi, 38 years old, Head of Sungai Tekam Village

Laws relating to Status of Indigenous Women

Such constraints, as the above findings show, indicate the current status of indigenous women in Indonesia. The majority of those at the border area still suffer from various forms of injustice and the study indicates that their position in all aspects of life remains way behind men's. The recognition of indigenous women in Indonesia, which remains far from ideal, is needed to change their lives and to enable them to become more self-reliant and prosperous. Several national policies that have direct impacts on their lives are:

Law No. 1 on Marriage of Year 1974

This law states that the head of a family is the man. Thus, ownership rights are usually handed over to men when women marry. The law, which has disregarded women's rights, has indirectly led women to further losing one of their assets: access and control over their lands.

Law No. 7 of Year 1984 on Ratification of CEDAW

Since Indonesia has ratified the UN Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, then all forms of discrimination based on gender must be eliminated. For instance, discriminatory treatment in women's pay, which is lower than that of men, must be eradicated. Further, politics does not belong only to men; women must also be given equal opportunity to participate in any political party and to serve in government. Men and women receive different appreciation not because of their gender but because of their achievement (ELSAM, 2014).

However, despite state ratification of CEDAW, the dissemination of Law No. 7 of Year 1984 that addresses rural women's rights is low and has not reached the grassroots level. The government seems to have done little to improve the situation or to conduct any particular intervention. In the rural sector, indigenous women's land ownership and access to the

economy, such as credit and cooperatives, remain at minimum level, which could further push women to poverty.

Article 6 of Law No. 13 of Year 2003 on Employment

Article 6 of Law No. 13 of Year 2003 on Employment reads “Every worker or laborer is entitled to equal treatment without discrimination from employer.” Based on this law, the Iban Sebaruk and Sisang indigenous women laborers should receive equal protection and assurance without any discrimination. On the contrary, the current implementation of the employment regulation further prolongs discriminatory practices against women.

Women laborers/workers’ rights are protected under CEDAW. The Convention promotes equality and equal treatment of women and men at the work place, particularly on the right to work, which is a human right, and the rights to equal work opportunity, to freely choose their profession and jobs, to position/promotion and work training, to receive equal pay and benefit, to social security, to health protection and work safety, and to equal work facilities. But as the findings show, many of the rights of women laborers in Iban Sebaruk and Sisang indigenous communities have been violated.

State Policies/Programs Addressing Women’s Issues

To address the issues on women’s rights, the Indonesian government has issued a number of regulations and programs on Gender Mainstreaming that include (YAPPIKA, 2009):

- a. Instruction of President of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development (2000)

This presidential decree aims at increasing the position, role, and quality of women in achieving gender equality in families, communities, and the nation. It instructs all governmental institutions to implement gender mainstreaming for planning, devising,

implementing, monitoring, and evaluating national development policies and programs in line with their capacities, functions, responsibilities, and authorities.

- b. Manual and Guidelines to the Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in National Development (2002)

This guideline was issued by the Ministry of the State for Women Empowerment to provide references to governmental offices in implementing the Instruction of President Number 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development.

- c. Women Empowerment National Development Plan (RIPNAS) 2000-2004

The RIPNAS's main objective is "to enhance women's life quality in every strategic sector; upscale dissemination on gender equality, eradicate all forms of violence against women, reinforce human rights of women and empower as well as improve women's institutional and organizational self-reliance."

- d. Indonesia is one of 189 countries that support the Millennium Development Goals.

Eight goals of the MDGs form a comprehensive framework that positions human rights, women's rights, and poverty issues in the main core of developmental policies. The third goal of the MDGs is associated with gender equality. The Indonesian government has committed to achieve the MDG target in 2015.

This set of regulations overall are supposed to be sufficiently strong to bring about change to the status of Indonesian women including indigenous women. However, what is happening is that all the regulations face constraints and daunting challenges when it comes to their implementation. Among the contributory factors is a lack of dissemination of these regulations from the highest to the lowest level of institutions. Various stakeholders' understanding about gender equality and gender mainstreaming remains low, which results in a difficulty in translating the gender equality regulations and strategies into all existing activity programs.

The gender mainstreaming programs are also far from the reach of indigenous women in the areas of the Iban Sebaruk and Sisang Customary Administrations. The indigenous women have no access and control at all over these programs devised by the central government.

Moreover, Indonesia is one of the countries that has been actively involved in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda since September 25, 2015 that includes 17 SDGs. The SDGs are based on the Millennium Development Goals and will guide the achievement of the global goal which is sustainable development until 2030 (UCLG-ASPAC).



V. Intervention Program: Women Empowerment

The Institut Dayakologi, in collaboration with the Regional Government of Sanggau District, started a holistic empowerment program at the border area in 2011, an integral part of which is women's holistic empowerment. The Institut Dayakologi together with Yayasan Karya Sosial Pancur Kasih has been implementing the women empowerment program since 2015 and it has improved women's self-reliance in managing their families' economy and active participation in organizations.

The YKSPK, through its Division for Women and Children Empowerment and in collaboration with ID, has conducted facilitation and assistance to the indigenous women of Sebaruk and Sisang communities, particularly in four kampongs. Ongoing since December 2015, the facilitation has covered approximately 250 women in these kampongs.

The strategy used in the facilitation process is the formation of women's local organizations. The indigenous women were encouraged through groups to unite and build solidarity among themselves to find solutions to their shared condition of marginalization, discrimination, and other constraints brought about by their gender. Some of the activities they

participated in that were conducted by YKSPK's Division for Women and Children Empowerment, show the range of topics they could learn from:¹³

- Focus group discussions on Problems facing the Women at the Border (Guna Banir kampong – Iban Sebaruk community);
- Training on Human Rights/Women's Rights and on Building Gender Awareness (Guna Banir kampong);
- Seminar on Women's Role in Custom and Culture (at Guna Banir kampong);
- Seminar on Women's Role in Natural Resource Management (Guna Banir kampong);
- Seminar on Women in Climate Change (Guna Banir kampong);
- Women's Role in Citizen Journalism (Guna Banir kampong and Segumon kampong-Sisang community);
- Focus group discussions on Work Patterns of Women Farmers and Women Palm Oil Plantation Laborers (Guna Banir kampong);
- Drafting a Book, *Potret Perempuan Perbatasan/The Portrait of Women at the Border*.

The program for empowering the indigenous women of Iban Sebaruk and Sisang Customary Administrations, which has run for more than 2 1/2 years, is still in the facilitation process. It involves multistakeholders and aims to reach more indigenous women in other kampongs that do not have the opportunity to develop themselves.

Among the goals in the near future is for existing women groups to form a School of Indigenous Women (*Sekolah Perempuan Adat/SPA*), which aims to help women obtain a holistic education to develop their full potential. The YKSPK has already developed a curriculum and a module adapted from the local knowledge and experiences of the indigenous women so that these are contextual and can be implemented by them. Moreover, the curriculum content seeks to address the issues faced by women, particularly indigenous women, as identified and listed in the target of achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Lessons Learned

Conducting women empowerment, particularly of indigenous women at the border area, has brought many lessons. Organizing indigenous women, who had never been involved in any such activity, is not an easy task. Facilitators have to be capable of building women's awareness to see the need to get involved and take on a public role in addition to the traditional role they have been playing in their families. Furthermore, it is not enough to provide understanding only to women, but also to their spouses and men in general for them to give women the space and opportunity to develop their potential.

Organizing women also requires perseverance as they barely have any time left because of their heavy workload and, thus, schedules (for gathering them) have to adjust to their situation and condition. When they eventually manage to be organized, they turn out to have considerable potential to develop. However, facilitators had to be extremely patient and ceaselessly motivated out of concern that once their motivation slackened, the organized indigenous women would be demoralized as they had to deal with the cultural norms in their communities.

Another important lesson learnt is that collective awareness at the community level is rising in terms of more attention paid to women's groups, particularly among the Iban Sebaruk. More spaces are open to women to serve as customary administrator.

Impacts of Women Empowerment Program

On communities

The women empowerment program implemented by YKSPK and ID impacts not only the indigenous women themselves but also their families and communities. The indigenous women were previously submissive and tended to succumb to their fate as women; they worked from morning till evening

every day, without any opportunity for self-development in the public space. But they have now gained more self-confidence, are more actively engaged in public activities, and have the opportunity to take part in capacity building activities carried out by the facilitating institutions.

Contribution to resolution of women issues and empowerment

The women holistic empowerment program is significantly contributing to the effort of achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals to pursue better life. It has localized and internalized the SDGs into multiple aspects and developmental dimensions at the indigenous community level.

The program also encourages increased participation and roles of women in natural resource management, ancestral land protection, and engagement in organizations. A significant outcome is the structural transformation of the customary institution of Iban Sebaruk Customary Administration. It is now compulsory for at least one indigenous woman to be a member of the board of the customary institution in each kampong. However, despite the fact that such consensus and customary institutional rule has been declared, its implementation has not yet commenced. The change of customary administrators generally takes place at the same time as that of formal leadership at village and hamlet levels, which is once in five years.

Through this program, ID and YKSPK have also facilitated the establishment of three learning groups or local women's groups in Segumon and Sungai Sepan. Overall, the women empowerment program has contributed to enhancing the status of indigenous women, since by having awareness, knowledge, insight, and skills they are able to stand up for themselves and be reliant in managing themselves, their families, and communities collectively in the endeavor to pursue welfare for all. From being previously marginalized, indigenous women are becoming the main actors of community development alongside other actors in the community.

VI. Recommendations

For gender justice to be realized, a range of relevant processes are required to eliminate the gaps separating women and men produced and reproduced within families, communities, the country, and the market. A measure that can be taken to pursue gender justice is to make it mandatory for key institutions (including state institutions) to be held responsible for addressing injustice and discrimination that have caused many women to live in poverty and suffer marginalization (Goetz 2007).

In the effort to achieve the SDG Agenda 2030 for the indigenous women at the Indonesian and Malaysian border, Yayasan Karya Sosial Pancur Kasih and Institut Dayakologi propose the following recommendations to help transform the status of indigenous women.

For Facilitating Institutions and Donors

- To carry out further strengthening and facilitation for current facilitated indigenous women by implementing the curriculum of *Sekolah Perempuan Adat* or School of Indigenous Women to create new groups of indigenous women leaders with feminist perspective and oriented to women's local knowledge.
- To conduct dissemination on gender justice and equality to indigenous women in other kampongs near the facilitated indigenous communities that have not yet had the opportunity to attend cadre education training.
- To lobby with donors to support the feminist education activity for indigenous women leaders to help realize the "No one is left behind" of SDG Agenda 2030.

For Local Government (Village) of Assisted Communities:

- To draft a program at village level with a budget allocation that responds more sensitively to gender issues by considering the situation and potential of indigenous women so they are not limited to casual labor at oil palm plantations. The program can develop local indigenous women's alternative income generating groups or community home industry products that are based on local food potential or knowledge.
- To encourage indigenous women's capacity building through trainings or workshops on improving livelihood as an effort to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

For Regional Government of Sanggau District

- To monitor and evaluate existing oil palm plantation companies in relation to their obligations to fulfill the rights and to provide health care and protection and work safety particularly to their women laborers.
- To impose strict sanction on oil palm plantation companies that fail to fulfill their obligations to workers.
- To conduct information dissemination—with Village Head and his/her administration's active involvement—on employment rights and labor unions to laborers of palm oil plantations.

For Provincial Government of West Kalimantan

- To encourage budget allocation that incorporates gender issues in its entire program.
- To conduct maximum dissemination to entire work units of Regional Departments to maximize the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly with regard to indigenous women empowerment.

For National Government

- To review policy on conversion of lands and forests to oil palm plantations and mining areas, which has been proven to be detrimental to local communities particularly to indigenous women.

Endnotes

¹ REPELITA I Policies: 1) Provide superior seedlings to farmers and conduct numerous experiments to find durable superior seedlings; 2) Improve infrastructure used by agricultural sector, such as roads, paddy field irrigation, and markets as the trading hub of agricultural produce; 3) Carry out transmigration in order for the lands in Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua to be able to be managed into economic valued lands.

² Climate destruction is another term of climate change that was introduced and made popular by Institut Dayakologi to further affirm that the ongoing climate change is not happening naturally or by its own due to natural factors, but rather because of the ways humans have been managing nature with investment (economic development) orientation disregarding local knowledge. Climate change is taking place because it is by design, scaled up through destructive exploitation of natural resources in a systemic way.

³ Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia Number P.31/Menlhk/Setjen/ Set.1/5/2017 on the Guideline to the Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in Environmental and Forestry Fields.

⁴ Documentation of Research, Documentation and Publication Team of Institut Dayakologi.

⁵ Graduate from Elementary School (SD) that is equivalent to Primary School (generally for children aged 6-12 years).

⁶ Graduate from Junior High School (SMP) that is equivalent to Secondary School (generally for children aged 13-15 years).

⁷ Graduate from Senior High School (SMA) that is equivalent to Higher Secondary School (generally for children aged 16-19 years).

⁸ UMK = District Minimum Pay/Wage – Sanggau in 2017 & 2018.

⁹ Based on interviews with approximately 300 women in the study kampongs.

¹⁰ Economic resources are all the resources possessed in the form of goods and services that fulfill human's need and those goods and services can originate from either natural resources or human resource that provide benefit and are manageable as basic assets for economic development.

¹¹ Law Number 1 of Year 1974 on Marriage. The rights and obligations of husband and wife are regulated in articles 30-34, as follows:

1. Husband and wife bear noble obligations as to establish a household that serves the basic foundation of the structure of society.
2. The rights and position of a wife is equal to those of a husband in a household and in social life within society.
3. Husband and wife are entitled to conduct legal acts.
4. Husband is the head of a family and wife is the housewife of a household.
5. Husband and wife must have a permanent residence mutually determined by the spouse.
6. Husband and wife are obliged to love, respect, be faithful and provide help physically and non-physically to each other.
7. Husband is obliged to provide protection to his wife and provide everything necessary for a family in line with his capability.
8. Wife is obliged to manage domestic affairs in the best manner as possible.
9. In the case when husband or wife neglects his/her respective obligations, he/she could file a lawsuit in a court.

¹² Column 5 of Table 6 shows the standard minimum wage in Sanggau District, while column 4 shows the highest average income of a woman working as a day laborer at a palm oil plantation operating in her indigenous community area. The amount depends not on the standard minimum wage that is regulated by the local government but on the number of days she works each month.

¹³ Other activities conducted by YKSPK and ID for indigenous women in border communities were: Training on Community Radio Komunitas, Human Rights & Gender (at Segumon kampung – Sisang community); Workshop on Women's Leadership & Forming Women's Group (Segumon kampung); Seminar on Human Rights and Women's Role in Community Empowerment (at Sungai Sepan kampung – Iban Sebaruk community and Lubuk Tengah kampung – Sisang community); Workshop on Forming Women's Group (at Sungai Sepan kampung); FGD on Women's Role in the Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change (at Segumon kampung – Sisang community and Sungai Sepan kampung – Iban Sebaruk community); Meeting between Indigenous Women of Segumon kampung (part of Lubuk Sabuk village) and Lubuk Sabuk Village Government; Meeting between

Indigenous Women of Sungai Sepan kampung (part of Malenggang village) and Malenggang Village Government; and this study's researchers.

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Hurdling Barriers: Citizenship and Political Participation in Thailand

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THAILAND



Introduction

Thailand is home to different indigenous groups; however the concept of indigenous peoples has no legal recognition in the country. The Thai government recognizes the nine indigenous groups in the north only as ethnic groups or hilltribe peoples. This leads to their non-recognition especially in terms of rights to land, natural resources use and management, and livelihood. Because of their status, they continue to experience marginalization and exclusion in the country. They are seen as forest destroyers and drug dealers.

The indigenous women in Thailand experience further limitations due to their gender. The vast majority are raised in traditional patterns of upbringing that differ greatly between men and women. Men in indigenous communities are generally accorded more respect and value than women even in matrilineal communities. Men are granted the leadership and representation roles and women are relegated to domestic care and nurture roles. In this setup, women are hampered from active participation in local governance. The girls are also less likely to access education, resulting in low facility for the Thai language, a basic and very important skill in navigating the complicated process of application for Thai citizenship.

To respond to the specific experiences and concerns of indigenous women, indigenous women established the Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand (IWNT) in 1996 under the Association of Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT), one of the first indigenous

peoples' organizations in the country. The IWNT became an independent national women's organization in 2011 focused on improving the lives of indigenous women in Thailand. It currently works with the Karen, Lisu, H'mong, Lahu, Akha, Dara'ang, Taiyai or Shan, Lua, Kachin, and Mien women to: advance indigenous women's rights as women and as indigenous peoples, promote national and international instruments for women's protection, and strengthen their participation in local government, natural resource management sector and other decision making bodies, and acknowledge and support indigenous women's traditional knowledge.

This case study culled from years of IWNT's work illuminates the difficult issues of statelessness and weak representation that indigenous women confront in Thailand. It also presents the personal stories of several women who surmounted the many hurdles to gain citizenship and its attendant rights and benefits and to boldly engage in local elections in their communities where men traditionally rule.



I. Citizenship: Implications on Indigenous Women and Youth

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) reiterates the right of indigenous peoples to nationality in Articles 6, 21, 24, and 33. Thailand, along with most members of the UN General Assembly, adopted the UNDRIP in 2007. But even in the previous decade, thousands of people including indigenous peoples remained stateless in Thailand. "As of 2016 there were 443,862 stateless people in Thailand who were born and lived in Thailand. Mostly they are from hilltribes or are the children of illegal migrants, most of them from Myanmar," a source NGO said. Of the estimated 1.2 million indigenous peoples in the country, over 100,000 are reportedly without citizenship to date. The existing policy on the process for citizenship has failed in many cases due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of both indigenous peoples and implementing authorities about the registration and verification systems.

Nationality Act of Thailand

Thailand's Nationality Act has been revised several times since 1913, creating a complicated layer of amendments, rules, and regulations.

- a. The first Thai Nationality Act of 1913 and most subsequent acts have included the principle of *jus soli* with various restrictions over the years. The Nationality Act of 1939 tightened the requirements stipulating that applicants for naturalization had to abandon their foreign names and take Thai names and to send their children to Thai schools. These rules were part of a broader trend of laws designed to promote the assimilation of the Thai Chinese community. From 1935 to 1958, a total of 4,652 Chinese were naturalized as Thai citizens.
- b. The 1952 Nationality Act rescinded the 1913 Act's provisions for *jus soli* in response to concerns over the integration of the children of Chinese immigrants.
- c. Unlimited *jus soli* was restored just four years later by the 1956 Nationality Act. This was also the year Thailand conducted its first national census which recorded Thai origin and nationality. Most hill tribes were not included in this census.
- d. In 1972, due to illegal immigration from Burma and concerns over communist insurgency in border areas, the Nationality Act was amended to require that both parents be legal residents of and domiciled in Thailand for at least five years in order for their child to be granted Thai citizenship at birth. It also revoked citizenship from many people who had it under the earlier act. This caused difficulties for members of hilltribes in border areas who were not registered in the 1956 census, since they had no way to prove that their parents were Thai as opposed to having entered the country as refugees.
- e. Under the 1992 Nationality Act, naturalization as Thai citizen requires five years of residence in Thailand,

proof of a certain minimum income, and renunciation of one's previous citizenship. The period of residence is reduced to three years for foreign women married to Thai men.

- f. Under Section 99 of the 2007 Constitution of Thailand, a naturalized citizen does not gain the right to vote until five years after naturalization and under Sections 101, 115, 174, and 205, naturalized citizens have no right at all to stand for election to the House of Representatives or the Senate or to be appointed as minister or justice of the Constitutional Court.
- g. Article 23 of the 2008 Nationality Act reversed the 1972 Act, restoring citizenship to those who had it before and allowing people born in Thailand before 1992 to apply for Thai citizenship anew. However, applicants have reported various difficulties in getting government officials to process their applications.

Following the act's passage, one of the first people to gain citizenship under Article 23 was Fongchan Suksaneh, a child of American missionaries to the Mlabri people who was born in Chiangmai Province.

Children, neither of whose parents are citizens and at least one of whom is an illegal alien, remain not entitled to *jus soli* citizenship. Furthermore, someone who has Thai citizenship by sole virtue of *jus soli* may still lose it under various conditions of the 2008 Act (such as living abroad). This, however, does not apply to people who have Thai citizenship by virtue of *jus sanguinis*. In 2013, the Ministry of Interior proposed new immigration regulations, based on Section 7 of the 2008 Nationality Act, to declare children who did not gain Thai citizenship at birth as illegal immigrants and have them deported.

These layers of policies can be very confusing and complicated if efficient systems and processes are not put in place. Since most indigenous peoples were excluded from the 1956 census, neither they nor their children are guaranteed citizenship under the Nationality Act. For indigenous peoples

in communities where patriarchy rules and those in remote areas who can barely speak or understand the Thai language, this is very limiting especially for women. Other challenges are the added burden of producing the following requirements to apply for citizenship: 1) house registration copy of the applicant and the parents; 2) copy of identity card of applicant and the parents; 3) biography registration document for people who carry the ID card which starts with number 6,7, or 0; 4) birth certificate or any relevant document to prove birth; 5) school certificate for a student; 6) 1x1 ID photo; and 7) other relevant document issued by government.

Aside from language, other bureaucratic hurdles make it difficult for indigenous peoples to access documentary requirements. The application process has also been long requiring extra financial resources for follow ups. For indigenous women, it becomes particularly difficult as they usually have a sense of insecurity when they have to travel outside their communities for this purpose.

Access to Citizenship

Indigenous peoples, especially those in remote upland and border areas, have generally been left out in the registration for national identity cards. Their citizenship issue started to be addressed in 1998 when a group of them demonstrated at Chiangmai City Hall. Then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra himself came to respond to the issue. A government order subsequently used the person status law to conduct a survey towards a new database. It also ordered the filtering of the citizenship issuances based on section 7b is only of the Nationality Act 1965, i.e.:

A person born within the Thai Kingdom of alien parents does not acquire Thai nationality if at the time of his birth, his lawful father or his father who did not marry his mother or his mother was:

- (1) *the person having been given leniency for temporary residence in Kingdom as a special case;*
- (2) *the person having been permitted to stay temporarily in the Kingdom;*
- (3) *the person having entered and resided in the Thai Kingdom without permission under the law on immigration.*

In case the Minister deems it appropriate, he may consider and give an order for each particular case or in general granting Thai nationality to any person under paragraph one, in conformity with the rules prescribed by the Cabinet.

The person who is born within the Thai Kingdom and has not acquired Thai nationality under paragraph one shall reside in the Thai Kingdom under conditions stipulated in the Ministerial Regulation, but principles of national security as well as human rights have to be considered concurrently. The person shall be deemed to have entered and resided in the Thai Kingdom without permission under the law on immigration unless the Ministerial Regulation is formulated.

Indigenous peoples took this window to register for citizenship. Thousands were reportedly able to register for citizenship and acquire national ID cards. For many of them, however, this was just the start of processing the required documentation. Civil society organizations following this work advocated for further leniency. As amended by 2008, the Nationality Act in Section 23 provided for:

Children born in Thailand in years 1985 to 1995, even if parents are migrants, are eligible to get Thai citizenship. The district chief has authority of approval in their respective area.

For the kids born after year 1995, only section 7bis is applied. The approving authority has currently been decentralized to the governor at the provincial level. Regulation #43 requires the house registration number of the Thai father or mother.

For children belonging to the nine officially recognized indigenous groups of Thailand but were missed out from the previous survey, their names can be added upon approval of the district chief.

Indigenous peoples outside of the nine recognized indigenous groups fall under section 17 of the same law. They can apply for permanent migrant status which makes them eligible to apply for Thai citizenship after five years.

Acquisition of a national identity card, however, does not guarantee the full rights of a citizen. Through time, the state has developed color-coded identification cards which implies one's citizenship status and corresponding rights and freedoms.

For those who got the status under section 17, they are eligible to apply for a passport which allows them to travel all over Thailand but are not allowed to buy any asset. In the past, they were not even allowed to purchase a motorbike.

Holding a pink card means one is allowed to travel only within the province where they reside. A request letter to the district office accompanied by a certified letter from the employer is required if one has to travel outside the province.

HOW A PIECE OF PAPER HAS GREAT BEARING ON ONE'S LIFE

I was in grade 7 when I went to the district office to ask about citizenship registration. To complete the registration requirements, my father and I walked 3 hours to get my birth certificate in another district. For this, we had to find a witness to my birth before the village headman certified the document at a fee of 200 baht. Luckily, the village officer was very accommodating; we were able to get the certificate by 4:00 p.m. and the fee waived. I was so happy I cried as we walked back home. After we gathered all documents, my father, younger siblings and I went to the District office to file our applications for citizenship. It took one week of going to and from our village to finish the application process.

Back in school, I was achieving but could not advance. I won a singing contest but I could not get to the next level; I won second prize in a marathon and again could not go forward to the next level because I did not have citizenship. My teacher told me they could not issue me a graduation certificate because of the same reason. This was so discouraging. But I held on to the belief that whether or not I got the citizenship card, at least I could read and write and could use my knowledge in the future.

It took us seven (7) years to finally acquire our national identification cards. We were the first family in the village to have them. The day I went for an ID card photo, I was so excited I could not sleep. Upon receipt of the ID card, I felt that I got my human dignity back. I can travel everywhere, I can access education loan, I can access bank services. All the limitations of my life have been removed. I got a new life. I have the right to vote for the first time in my life.

Katima Leeja
IWNT citizenship committee member

Impacts of Statelessness

Statelessness, despite the legal opportunities provided for by the Nationality Act, is still an issue confronting the indigenous peoples, especially the women and youth who lack access to appropriate information and enabling services on the matter. Among its direct and indirect impacts that aggravate one another are:

Invisibility and insecurity

Without citizenship, indigenous peoples do not exist in the eyes of the state nor do they merit its protection. At any time they can be charged as illegal migrants or criminals or driven away from their abodes and communities by the state. For indigenous women, statelessness adds to their invisibility and disempowerment.

Fundamental freedoms and access to resources

Their mobility is limited and dependent on the kind of ID one holds; permission from authorities has to be acquired to enable travel outside prescribed areas. They have to pay money to the village headman as well as to the local authority. It usually takes two days to process travel permission.

Further, indigenous children and youth without citizenship cannot access education and support from the government. Parents have to bear the costs from nursery to university level. While the Thai state has an educational loan program, only documented citizens can avail of it. With the cost of education and in the context of poverty and patriarchal culture in the general Thai society, boys are given the preference to study. For those able to study, admission to educational institutions is equally a challenge with the prioritization of citizens.

Discrimination and continuing impacts

Indigenous peoples have always been regarded as the “other,” given their difference in language, culture, and life-ways from mainstream Thai. They have been stigmatized as drug dealers, forest destroyers, and a hindrance to development. This has resulted in inferiority complex. For women, their gender adds another layer of discrimination. These may manifest in a lot of ways, i.e., depression, general lack of confidence, passivity, and fear of going out of their communities.

Some are able to get to the urban areas for work. Generally, however, they are in low-paying jobs and are at risk of exploitation. Young women are lured into sex work which pays better and does not require educational attainment. For those who are able to study, experiences of bullying are rampant. To avoid discrimination, some have opted to change their names to hide their indigenous identities, mastered the Thai language and refused to speak their indigenous language.

Continuing Responses

The continuous advocacy of civil society and indigenous peoples' organizations has opened up spaces and remedies for indigenous peoples to acquire national identity cards. This includes the National Human Rights Commission which decentralized its assisting work on this issue. Due to various factors though, a lot of indigenous children are still without citizenship to date. Recognizing the enabling significance of citizenship and national identity cards for empowering indigenous peoples in general and indigenous women and girls, in particular, IWNT continues to provide information and assistance to community members.

While documentation is a challenge, the IWNT has exerted efforts to do a survey in Chiang Dao and Vienghang districts in Chiangmai province and Pangmapha and Pai districts in Mae Hong Son province as a means to ascertain the citizenship status of indigenous peoples in these areas where they have been working. The survey showed only eight community members—six females and two males—from three districts waiting for approval of their applications. The IWNT is thus keen on producing knowledge materials from their experiences on their work on citizenship to extend information to other indigenous communities as well as their advocacy work. This documentation initiative has also provided a sense of pride among the IWNT committee members not only because they engaged in the process but also because of the results, which have given them a sense of accomplishment.

ASSISTING OTHERS ON CITIZENSHIP PATH

I used my experience to assist 20 from my village, 9 males and 11 females between ages 8-38 years old. These villagers were of various status in relation to eligibility, which needed from easy to complicated interventions. Those born in hospital with a birth certificate issued by the district is the easiest while those without birth certificates can be very difficult and costly depending on their circumstances.

There were orphans with no birth certificates. For them, we had to trace their personal history records to prove birth in Thailand in an identified specific district. It also necessitates a process of looking for their relatives from either of the parents' side and a DNA test. DNA testing is costly and takes around 3 months to get the results. For orphans under government custody, custodial officers can help facilitate their citizenship.

Some, without birth certificates, have conflicting parental data. This could be attributed to the language barrier, inefficiency/data lapses and/or the prevailing discriminatory attitude towards indigenous peoples in general. These cases require DNA testing and legal assessment to determine which section of the law can be used to apply for Thai citizenship.

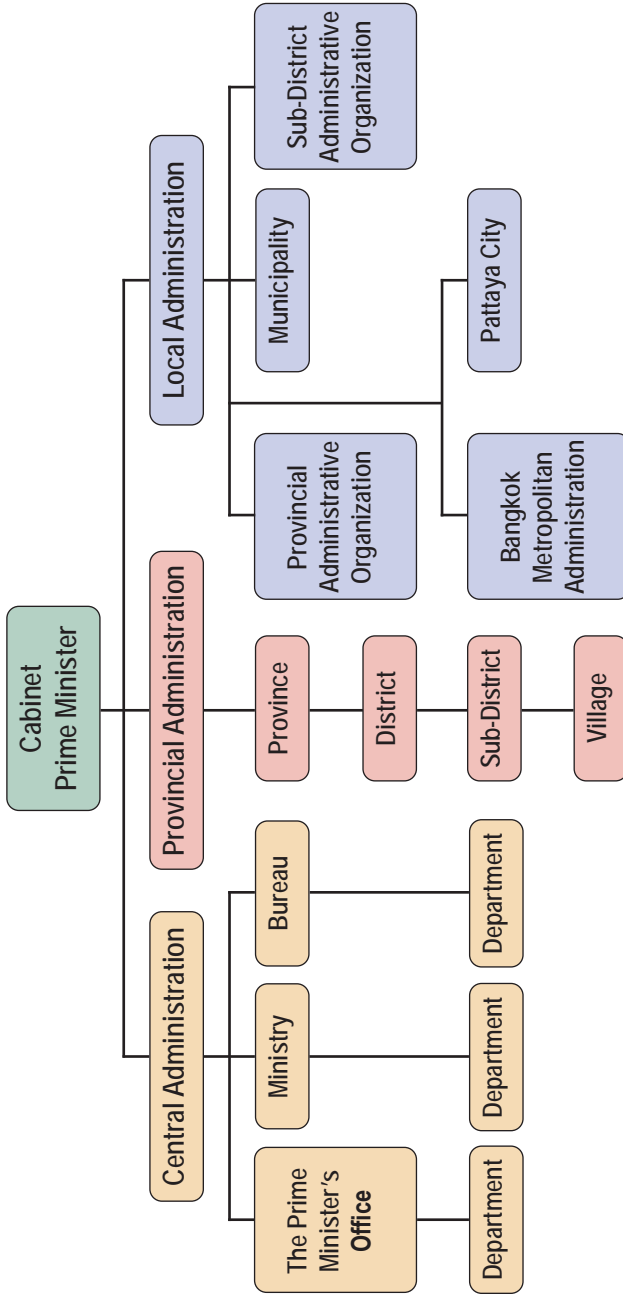
There were also children born in Thailand who were able to access institutionalized education, with some acquiring a college degree. For them, their education certificate sufficed to apply for citizenship. For those 18 years old and above, the process may take a longer period as they have to be officially cleared of any criminal offenses/acts.

The decentralization of the authority to receive citizenship applications and approve/issue national identity cards at the district and provincial levels made registration and follow up more accessible for indigenous peoples. Increasing access to primary education by children and youth has also contributed to Thai language literacy, enabling older applicants to do the follow ups themselves. It took us 6 years for all 20 applicants to get their national ID cards. Lately there were those who were able to get theirs within 3 years.

In summary, our work on citizenship is to help the youth and children have a better life. By unlocking a structural barrier that will restrict them throughout their lives, they will have a chance to develop their potentials and access basic government services especially education. Education can determine their way of living in the light of wisdom and grow up to realize their potential. They can serve in government based on their capacity. The marginalized people have knowledge, value, quality, are effective and can bring change in society for equality. Transferring the goodness to others can create an unending light of change everywhere. The light will continue to shine and light the others' way. I believe in the light of change that can lead to beautiful peace.

Katima Leeja
IWNT citizenship committee member

Thai Bureaucracy System



Source: Redrawn from https://www.mlit.go.jp/kokudokeikaku/international/spw/general/thailand/index_e.html.

Struggles and Attempts at Local Politics

As an indigenous women's organization in Thailand, IWNT has seen the importance of having indigenous women in local administration. As local officials, women can take part in decision making on development projects to be proposed for communities. The IWNT has, thus, provided in the past decade different kinds of trainings and capacity building for indigenous women leaders who have the capacity and interest in running for local government positions.

In 2010, IWNT, with financial support from Asia Foundation, implemented such a project to build the capacities of local indigenous women to engage in politics. Under this project, it provided various trainings and opportunities including Training of Trainers training for key indigenous women leaders to gain confidence and ability to make a training plan and train their own communities and groups. The capacity building covered: public speaking, basic human rights laws including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), civil and political rights and the importance of women's participation in local governance, structure of the subdistrict administration office, and how indigenous women can participate in subdistrict governance.

The IWNT also provided support for the women to run for local office. The project enabled IWNT to provide specific training to 10 indigenous women leaders in Chiangmai, Maehongson, and Chiang Rai provinces in preparation for their run for local politics and in their actual electoral campaigns in the villages. At the end of the project, seven of the 10 indigenous women decided to run for local elections in their community and of the seven, two won in their electoral bids: Mrs Noraeri Thungmueangthong and Ms Lakela Jathaw. Noraeri got elected as representative of her community to the Subdistrict Administration Office of Maewang district in Chiangmai while Lakela, with the help of her team, got elected as Chief Executive of the Subdistrict Administration Office.

Although the project was able to inspire and encourage indigenous women to take part in local politics, they face many challenges.

Social and Cultural Hurdles

The experience of Ms Nengnoi Saeseng, a 55-year-old Hmong woman leader, demonstrates the various hurdles that indigenous women have to overcome to win in an electoral contest. She was an active women's leader and social worker in her community and was chair of the Hmong women's network of Thailand and of the IWNT for 10 years when she ran for village chief. She lost the election, however. Hmong is a patrilineal society where men are considered as leaders and women as wives and helpers of men. Nengnoi said that she knew how the election result would turn out but she wanted to test if Hmong society had changed its views on women being community leaders. After she failed in her first attempt, many women tried to encourage her to run again. Nengnoi, however, did not do as they wished because she knew the Hmong people still have not changed their attitudes on women as leaders.

Mrs Taen Withayapa-ngam, a Lua indigenous women's leader who decided to run for local elections after attending the IWNT training, shared the same experience: she failed in her first attempt to be elected as village chief. Taen said she got five votes from 500 people who voted in the village. She believes her community has not opened the door for women to lead.

Another case is Mrs Peenee Moonkoon, a 60-year-old Karen women's leader of Ban Huay Hoi. Peenee similarly ran for the post of village chief. Even if she had been an active community leader and led the land movement in her village for many years, she got only 15 out of 200 votes. Peenee confirmed that even if women are active in community work and lead the fight for land rights in their village, the community people have no confidence all the same in women's leadership. The people still prefer a male over a female leader.

Mrs Nasae Yapa, a Lahu women's leader in Chiang Dao district who was also interested in participating in local elections, faced other limitations. She did not qualify to run as she did not have the educational degree required. She, thus, backed her husband instead to be chief of the subdistrict

administration office. By having her husband work at the subdistrict office, she believes she could have influence over his decisions.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MALE-DOMINATED SOCIETY

Even if the Karen is a matrilineal society, it is not easy for women to be accepted as leaders. Even though women work really hard, it is not enough for the community especially men to believe that we can be leaders. In my community, Ban Huay E-khang, there are more men than women, thus there is no chance for women to be elected as community leader.

It has been believed and practiced for centuries that only men can be leaders; it is not easy to change this belief and practice. In the Maewin subdistrict where I work, there are 60 elected village and subdistrict chiefs, and only 4 are women. As for me, it took me years to work and really prove to the community members that I am good enough to be their leader. I won in the latest election in December 2019 and became the village chief because of my past work. It was also because I had a good team who supported me and walked with me to every house in my village to meet and talk to the community members about electing me as their leader. Without the support of my team, I could not have done this alone.

Even today after I was elected as chief of my village, I am still seen as just a woman and a servant in the eyes of the elected male chiefs. We are still asked to prepare them coffee and snack during our annual monthly meeting. This is not good and I do not like it. I encourage the elected women to resist and not do service work, but they said it is okay, making coffee is the work of women.

Mrs Noraeri Thungmuangthong
Karen women's leader, IWNT vice chair, elected member of subdistrict
administration organization and village chief/headman

To be accepted and appointed as village leader, we women need to work really hard and to really prove to the men that we are qualified and good enough to be a leader. Fifteen years ago, I failed in my first attempt to be elected as village chief just because I was a woman. After that I worked hard, I tried to help the community with all the knowledge and experience I have. I received much recognition by the local government agencies as well as the people in my village. Many people encouraged me to run again for local office, but I do not dare to because I believe firmly that my Hmong community are still not open to women being leaders. Because of my work for the community, in July 2019 the village chief appointed me as his assistant responsible for the security and welfare of the people in my village. This is a step I have made for Hmong women and I am proud that at last Hmong men in my community have accepted me, a woman as their assistant.

Ms Nengnoi Saeseng
Hmong women's leader

Conclusion

IWNT's initiatives in 2010 have evidently helped open the eyes of many indigenous women leaders who, on realizing the importance of participating in politics and decision making, took a step forward to run for local office. Though some of them overcame the obstacles in their communities due to gender differences and got voted into local office, many more challenges remain to be surmounted. Indigenous women will need to work harder and better than their male counterparts in order to be recognized, accepted, and elected as local officers and leaders. As women, they work not only to increase their own capacities to meet qualifications of the position; they are also made to prove that they are not good only as daughters, wives, and mothers but also as leaders of their community.

With this multiple burden, it is not easy for indigenous women to think about, much less enter, the political arena.

But when women's voices are lacking and excluded from the decision making process, it is not possible for the country to move forward firmly. At the local community, indigenous women have to work persistently to prove to their families, friends and community that they are capable and able to lead. Family support and a strong and supportive team are essential if a woman wants to run for a local position. Also important are laws that support women in their attempts to participate in politics in order to increase their number and voices in the development of the country.



Recommendations

To help create an environment for increased empowerment and participation of indigenous women especially in the political arena, the following are therefore recommended:

The Thai government:

- Must increase political representation of women including indigenous women and allocate slots for them at all levels including in local administration. The Constitution must address these.
- Should allocate specific funds for capacity building of women to help prepare them to enter politics.
- Should include gender equality and importance of women's participation in politics in the school curriculum to educate citizens including the men. Even if women are not in politics, the realization by men of the value of women's voices and participation will help advance the country to a better level.

Nongovernmental organizations (both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples organizations):

- Should work more with women to build their capacity and awareness of the significance of taking part in the decision making process.
- Advocate for 50:50 representation to increase women's representation in politics.

Fostering Climate Change Resilience and Sustainable Development

VIETNAM

By
The Center of Research and Development in Upland Areas (CERDA)

Photo Credits:
CERDA



Introduction

Ethnic Thai, Tho, Muong, Nung and the majority ethnic Kinh¹ inhabit Thanh Lam and Cat Van communes in North Central Vietnam. Ethnic minorities, each with their own language and culture, comprise between 60 percent and 90 percent of the population of Cat Van and Thanh Lam communes, respectively, in Nhu Xuan district, Thanh Hoa province.

The people in these two communes have long depended on the natural forest, but for a long time they had no legal access and right to use it and its resources. They also engage in farming but land is limited, with agriculture characterized by single household-level production and consumption, low efficiency, overuse of chemicals, soil degradation, and lack of water due to forest decline. In the past, to earn a living, the young and middle-aged men and women tended to work away from home, leaving children in the care of parents. The women suffered gender inequality, severe lack of information, poor knowledge of rights and policies, no access to policy making, and were incapable of exercising and protecting their rights. They worked hard to earn an income but had weak participation in village and household decision making. In general, the local people especially the women were left behind.

Some projects² however had been implemented recently to help ethnic minority communities have better access and use of forests. Prior to this, the natural forest in Thanh Lam and Cat Van communes was managed by the Commune

People's Committee. The people did not have the right to use the forest products as they had not been legally granted forest use rights. The forest, thus, suffered from illegal harvesting to the point of near exhaustion. A protection forest was subsequently planned in the two communes covering over 1,800 hectares of natural forest.

Pilot Project

In 2016-2018, the Center of Research and Development in Upland Areas (CERDA) implemented a project in Thanh Lam and Cat Van communes to support forest use rights of the ethnic minority communities and to build their capacity to participate actively in the UN-REDD+³ program on reducing carbon emissions from deforestation. Part of the capacity building effort was the pilot project “Empowering ethnic minority women for REDD+, climate change and sustainable development in Vietnam.”⁴

The pilot project involved a series of community orientation, capacity building, and lobby and advocacy activities for and by indigenous women in Cat Van and Thanh Lam communes. It was a component of the bigger project, “Empowering indigenous women in Asia for REDD+, climate change and sustainable development: Strengthening indigenous women’s roles in community resilience and ensuring benefits therefrom,” funded by the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).

The pilot project aimed to strengthen capacities and explore strategies towards women-inclusive emission reduction programs at the country and local level for meaningful design, implementation, results, and benefits complementary to the rights and wellbeing of indigenous women and their communities as a whole. Specifically, it sought to enable indigenous women and leaders to participate and articulate their positions on land tenure, design, decision making, and benefit sharing regarding the emission reduction program and related initiatives affecting them. It was also geared to

strengthen knowledge and capacities on REDD+ and related matters, including rights and state forest/land policies and programs.

The project targeted 240 women and community leaders in seven villages namely Lang Xam, Lang Ken, Ngoc Thanh, Doan Trung, Van Tho, Van Trung, and Van Tien. These are the villages that surround the natural protected forest in Thanh Lam and those with plantation forests in Cat Van communes. By the end of the project, it had reached 418 women and government leaders from village to provincial level or 60 percent more than the targeted beneficiaries that included five key district and provincial officials.⁵

The project's main intervention was to build indigenous women's capacities to assert forest-use rights in support of livelihoods in relation to sustainable forest management and development through organized mobilization as cooperatives. It also involved holistic capacity building to ensure that community organizations have the capacities to ensure that the communities and women: 1) have access to policy as independent stakeholder; 2) implement low cost community forest management through landscape approach; 3) be ready to participate in REDD+ as stakeholder; 4) fulfill obligations of a forest owner; 5) execute the rights of forest owner to generate income from forest protection policy; 6) trade in forest products legally, promote non-chemical forest products to enhance their value, approach markets outside the locality; 7) promote organic-oriented agriculture to raise the value of agricultural products and to reduce use of chemicals in agriculture; and 8) protect soil and ecosystems.

With these interventions, the project has made remarkable achievements that the people and government recognize, prompting the latter to expand the project. The gains include positive changes in thinking, capacity, and linkage in target communities and women, and the way they use chemicals (herbicides, pesticides and chemical fertilizers) in agriculture. In particular, the quality of social participation of ethnic women has improved through cooperatives and collective action. This was the first time they exercised the right and had the legal mindset that enables them to make better contributions to society and the community.

This case study shares the pilot project's main results and accomplishments. It highlights in particular the women's gains in the following areas: communities' access to forest use rights; community institutional strengthening; capacity building to ensure collective rights/action and self-determination of communities with focus on women; managing the natural forest at low cost to prevent illegal logging and harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFP); improving field soil quality; promoting organic-oriented agriculture; market promotion beyond local market for local NTFP; promotion of traditional knowledge and customary governance for climate change resilience and sustainable livelihood; access to government forestry policies as independent and legal entity/forest owner and later to REDD+ for new income that can be derived from the forest.

Conducted in 2018, this case study was based on primary and secondary data collected through group discussion, informant interview, and validation workshop. The participants, mainly females (242 females), were members of community cooperatives established with the project's support.



Project Achievements

Access to natural forest use rights: The community—men and women—have the opportunity to access public resources.

The target communities, women and men, have access rights to long-term natural forest use and are equally entitled to participate in the decision making process.

In Cat Van commune, 633.6 hectares of natural protection forest that were temporarily managed by the Commune People's Committee have been officially reallocated to 10 communities in four villages with 236 households with 50 years of forest use rights. This includes the women who, with the

knowledge gained from the project, mobilized to apply for forest use rights. Reallocation of public forests to household and community organizations for the purpose of enhanced management is allowed under Circular No.38/2007/TT-BNN and Circular No.20/2016/TT-BNNPTNT issued on 27 June 2016. The forest allocation decision indicates the full names of both wife and husband. Being recognized as members of a community forest owner means a lot to women, especially single women household heads.

In Thanh Lam commune, around 1,200 hectares of natural forest are under the temporary management of the Commune People's Committee. As of the period of the project's implementation, beneficiaries were already determined to have access rights to land and forest use through household certificates covering 320 hectares of protected forest under the care of the provincial government. The District People's Committee agreed to allocate this area to eight communities with 241 households. The community forest owner here consists of between 15 and 30 households traditionally living adjacent to each other and are part of a village.⁶ These households were organized as Self-Governing Groups (SGG). A traditional self-governing group can be considered as a suitable base unit for the government to allocate forest use rights and can thereby form a legal entity of community forest owners. Members of SGGs are households, including women and men.

Among the 18 SGGs formed, three are headed by women. This is a small percentage but it can be considered a success in a context where women, being less likely to participate in social work at both village and commune levels, have weak voices and are less likely to be involved in family and community decision making.

The forest use right allocation to Self Governing Groups is the initiative of the project that was agreed to by the local authorities. It should be said that when the project piloted the model of low-cost forest allocation to the SGGs, the forest allocation to the village community was still not recognized in legal documents. Currently, the community forest owner is a traditional group of households (the sub-village) that is recognized in the Forest Law (effective January 1, 2019).

As a result, 18 SGGs with 477 households have been allocated 50-year forest use rights over an area of over 1,800 hectares of natural forest. The community forest use right allocation is an effective way to increase community solidarity and to reduce the land gap between households with more forest land and those without any in the community. With forest allocation to the community, in particular the households without workforce, single women, old men and women are entitled to use the forest together with the community. Moreover, the legal decision on allocation of forests includes the names of both husband and wife, ensuring that the woman has the right to use the forest.

The forest allocation cost accounts for about 40% of the norm (40% of regular government cost). This is because a number of local villagers are trained to undertake the costly heavy workload, such as measuring the forest area and counting timber volume in the forest.

With the self-governing group, the scale is smaller compared to the village, the traditional relationship is still practiced, the woman has confidence to express her opinions and views unlike the old situation where women were always quiet in village meetings. The self-governing group is thus an approach to restore the traditional relationship in community forest management and to promote gender equality.

Developing the legal organization of the community in the form of a cooperative—a type of rural enterprise

An important result of the project is that households and communities established legal organizations in the form of cooperatives (according to the Law on Cooperatives 2012). These were the first cooperatives to be set up in Cat Van and Thanh Lam communes.

The community forest management groups formed community cooperatives to achieve the objective of managing natural forests located far from residential areas effectively at low cost following state policies as well as implementing REDD+ initiatives, and trading in forest products and accessing markets as a legal entity,

The Cat Van Self Governing Groups—10 community forest owners with 236 household members—set up the Thanh Son Lam cooperative. In Thanh Lam with a 90 percent ethnic minority population, the eight SGGs/community forest owners with 241 households established the Thanh Trung cooperative. In the Thanh Trung cooperative, women comprise 60 percent of the cooperative's leaders and are members of the Board of Directors and Supervisory Board. This is truly a positive change; the women hold important positions in the legal organization of the community.



Conference that established the Thanh Trung Cooperative in Thanh Lam Commune, Nhu Xuan District, Thanh Hoa province, with the participation of officials from district and commune departments.

According to the cooperative's leaders, the establishment and capacity building to operate a legal entity is the shortest way for ethnic minorities in general and for women in particular to exercise their rights with an independent voice, to implement an independent decision making process and to be protected under a legal framework. The communities and women have advanced in law based governance through their legal entity, the cooperative.

With a legal entity, the community has a legal basis for availing of programs and policies as a stakeholder, including REDD+, to trade in agro-forestry products professionally, and to look for and select partners independently.

The involvement of a large number of women in the executive apparatus of the cooperative is indeed an effective way to move towards gender equality. The women are more confident when they know they have their own organization with a legal status. They actively offer initiatives to prevent deforestation, deal with forest law violations in a straightforward way, and exercise active control over their forest products. For example, the women proactively asked the cooperative to issue a regulation on bamboo harvesting: "Bamboo shoots should be only partially collected to allow growth and regeneration."

Holistic capacity building for community forest owners and their legal organizations towards self-reliance

Establishing a cooperative has been a challenge. Its operation and development are an even greater challenge for women and ethnic minority communities, as they face many constraints, such as limited access to information, limited self-determination, low knowledge of the law, passive position in policymaking, passive thinking due to longterm effects of top-down work implementation, and unsustainable agricultural production.

To achieve the goal of "self-reliance, to be capable of self-determination, resolution of problems, social integration and development" for communities and women, and specifically to generate income through legal forest product trading and

participation in REDD+ as a stakeholder, the community organizations need to be trained in a variety of areas through training methods appropriate to their level of education. Capacity building should also be integrated covering all areas, including legal, institutional development, organizational governance, and technical to ensure organizational sustainability.

Community forest owners and their cooperatives were trained in community institution development, rights, laws, participatory governance, financial management, techniques, management knowledge, and communication skills. In addition, they have been capacitated on REDD+ as independent stakeholders and through their initiative over their legal forest area, results-based payment, and social and environment safeguards, focusing on women's participation in all activities. The capacity building was designed to suit the capacity and culture of the community, particularly women, and ensure sustainability and self-determination.

Appropriate training methods to ensure the community organization is capable of self-enhancement

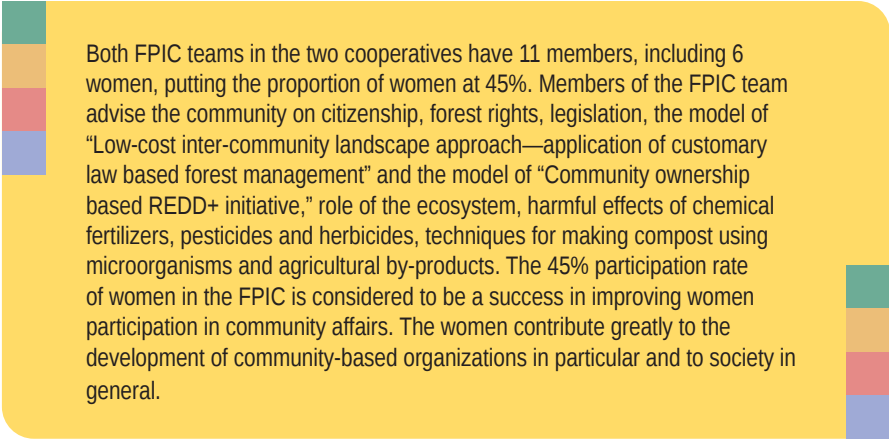
The training method of “expert farmers” and “farmer training farmers” was applied to enable community-based legal organizations to develop by creating a core group of leaders and coordinators who have the capacity to maintain and operate the organization.

Each cooperative has a core group of selected farmers on a voluntary basis. They were intensively trained on institutions, rights, laws, participatory governance, organizational management, network maintenance, financial management, communication skills, and counselling skills for villagers and cooperative members. They became the “farmer expert.” Each cooperative has a group of farmer experts and a community consultation group or FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) team. The FPIC team of Thanh Son Lam cooperative has five members, including one woman. The Thanh Hoa FPIC team has six members, four of them women.



Ms. Nga, member of Thanh Son Lam Cooperative's FPIC team, discusses "Results-based payment," a topic under "Community ownership of REDD+ through a legal entity" to members of Self-Governing Group.

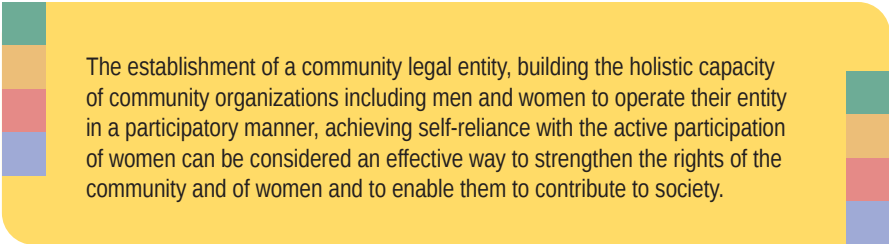
The women participating in communication sessions/training of Self Governing Groups was over 50 percent. This is quite high compared to village meetings organized by the commune government. The quality of the training was also better. The members of SGGs recognized the importance of the training content. The participants listened intently, questioned with little or no private talk. All women participants shared a similar sentiment: "All the topics are important, especially since this is our first time to hear about human rights, citizen's rights and forest ownership rights and REDD+." As Ms. Nguyen Thi Nga declared, "It is important that the women be trained about rights. When I understood the rights, I became very confident; later if someone does not allow me to express my point, I will say—that is my right."



Both FPIC teams in the two cooperatives have 11 members, including 6 women, putting the proportion of women at 45%. Members of the FPIC team advise the community on citizenship, forest rights, legislation, the model of “Low-cost inter-community landscape approach—application of customary law based forest management” and the model of “Community ownership based REDD+ initiative,” role of the ecosystem, harmful effects of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, techniques for making compost using microorganisms and agricultural by-products. The 45% participation rate of women in the FPIC is considered to be a success in improving women participation in community affairs. The women contribute greatly to the development of community-based organizations in particular and to society in general.

After being trained, the cooperative established the internal institutions to ensure the full participation of members of the cooperative, self-reliance, self-determination, self-responsibility, openness, and to be able to access the policies and participation in REDD+ as a legal stakeholder.

The cooperative was also taught to write a project proposal, which helps its leaders to work on policies and programs, including REDD+.



The establishment of a community legal entity, building the holistic capacity of community organizations including men and women to operate their entity in a participatory manner, achieving self-reliance with the active participation of women can be considered an effective way to strengthen the rights of the community and of women and to enable them to contribute to society.

Low-cost community forest management, prevention of illegal logging and illegal NTFP collection, contributing to climate change mitigation, ecosystem restoration, long-term income generation by and for ethnic minorities, forest dependent communities and women

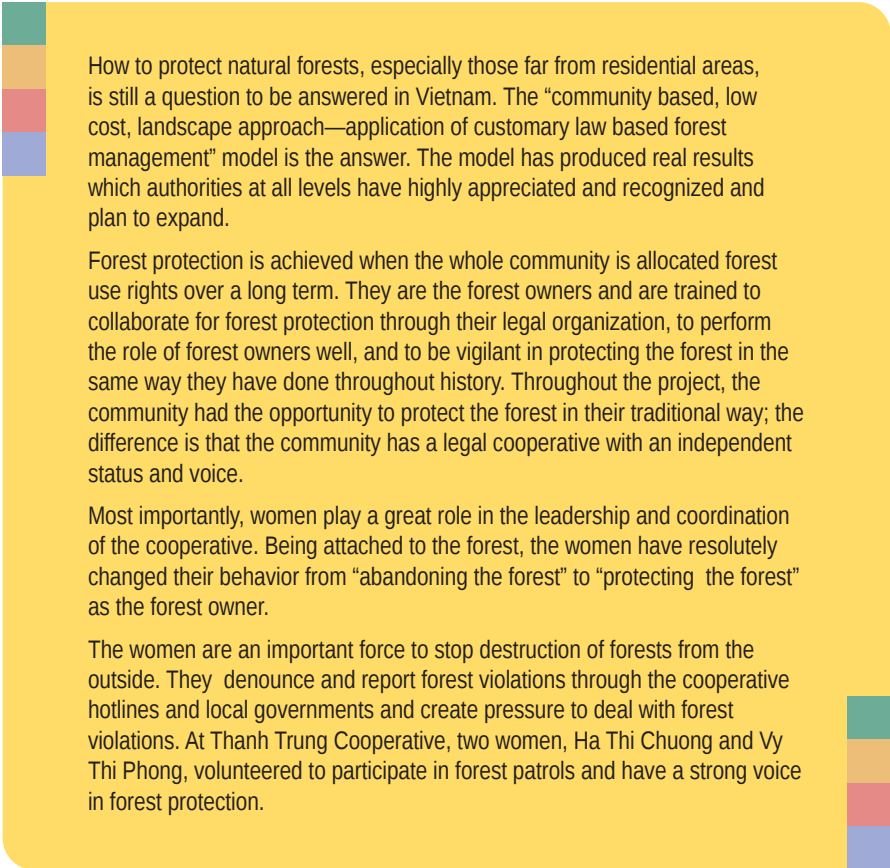
Most natural forest areas in Vietnam are often far from residential areas. This is also true of the 1,800-ha natural forest allocated to the 18 communities in the two cooperatives.

The question is how can communities protect the forest that is located far from the residential area? The answer is a model of “inter-community, low cost landscape approach—application of customary law based forest management.” The model has been successfully piloted by the two cooperatives. Through this model, 18 community forest owners united as an alliance to protect the forest together. To run the alliance, the concerned parties have formulated detailed agreements with clear responsibilities of each party. This has led to the development of a protocol on community forest protection using many customary laws that have been approved by the district government and successfully applied in the concerned areas.

The community forest owners of Thanh Son Lam and Thanh Trung Cooperatives collaborate in forest protection, monitoring forest developments and settlement of forest violations in the 1,800-ha natural forest. At present, the forest is well protected, and illegal logging and cutting down of young trees for firewood that leads to death of trees have been prevented. The forest quality has improved, the forest canopy has gradually closed, the wild animals have returned, many species have been restored and developed, and water from the forest has increased and is cleaner. The local people change the way they deal with the forests—from not protecting forests to safeguarding them. This is a big change in perception and belief. Forests are further protected at low cost in terms of time and money. Patrolling of forest areas does not need to be done much, because the members of the cooperatives, es-

pecially women, have joined in protecting the forest from the outside, forming a wall with thousands of eyes to watch over it.

As a result, the forests are better and greener, developing and creating large stands of wood and non-timber forest products from which community forest owners can generate a legal income over the long term (at least 50 years). In addition, the forests are enhancing water sources and helping mitigate floods and other effects of climate change. The successful forest protection creates a solid foundation for the cooperative of forest owners to participate in the REDD+ program as stakeholder through a legal entity—the cooperative and cooperative association—over their allocated forest.



How to protect natural forests, especially those far from residential areas, is still a question to be answered in Vietnam. The “community based, low cost, landscape approach—application of customary law based forest management” model is the answer. The model has produced real results which authorities at all levels have highly appreciated and recognized and plan to expand.

Forest protection is achieved when the whole community is allocated forest use rights over a long term. They are the forest owners and are trained to collaborate for forest protection through their legal organization, to perform the role of forest owners well, and to be vigilant in protecting the forest in the same way they have done throughout history. Throughout the project, the community had the opportunity to protect the forest in their traditional way; the difference is that the community has a legal cooperative with an independent status and voice.

Most importantly, women play a great role in the leadership and coordination of the cooperative. Being attached to the forest, the women have resolutely changed their behavior from “abandoning the forest” to “protecting the forest” as the forest owner.

The women are an important force to stop destruction of forests from the outside. They denounce and report forest violations through the cooperative hotlines and local governments and create pressure to deal with forest violations. At Thanh Trung Cooperative, two women, Ha Thi Chuong and Vy Thi Phong, volunteered to participate in forest patrols and have a strong voice in forest protection.

Community forest owners have the opportunity to access the state’s forest protection policy/and program, creating new income for the community and women through their legal entities.

When the more than 1,800 hectares of natural forest was temporarily managed by the Commune People’s Committee, the community could not participate in the State Forest Protection Program. But after these were allocated to 10 community forest owners (633.6 ha) in Cat Van commune and 8 communities (1,200 ha) in Thanh Lam commune, and especially after they had established two legal cooperatives that jointly protected forest areas at low cost, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Thanh Hoa province and district authorities signed contracts for forest protection with the cooperatives through the State Forest Protection Program rather than with the Commune People’s Committee.

In 2016, the 10 community forest owners of Thanh Son Lam cooperative signed a forest protection contract with Nhu Xuan District People’s Committee on an area of 633.6 hectares of natural forest in Cat Van commune; by 2017 they had obtained VND333,286,000 for forest protection. In May 2018, after being trained on “Inter-community, low cost landscape approach—application of customary law based forest management” model, the Nhu Xuan District People’s Committee also stopped the forest protection contracts with the Commune People’s Committee and signed a contract to protect 1,200 hectares of forest with eight community forest owners in Thanh Lam commune through their Thanh Trung Cooperative. The eight communities will similarly benefit from the State Forest Protection Program, a new revenue stream for the members of the cooperative.

With the formation of their cooperative and the successful protection of the forest through the model of “Inter-community, low cost, landscape approach —application of customary law based forest management,” 18 community forest owners of Thanh Son Lam and Thanh Trung cooperatives have been given new opportunities by the District People’s Committee to participate in the Sustainable Forest Development Program for the period 2018-2020. The cooperatives of community forest owners have signed contracts for forest protection on 1,800 ha of natural forest at a low cost of about VND60,000/ha/year. This creates a new source of income as the comparative cost for forest protection under the State Forest Protection Program is VND200,000 to VND300,000/ha/yr. Successful forest protection is the foundation for communities to participate confidently in the REDD+ program as a stakeholder.

Readiness in participating in REDD+ as forest owner and owner of “Community-led REDD+ Initiative through legal entity”

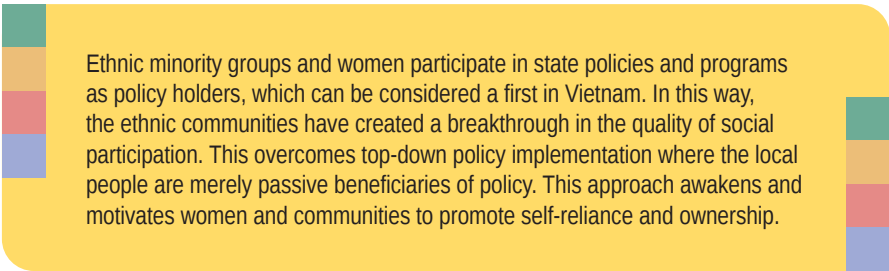
Up to 2026, the 18 community forest owners of the Thanh Trung and Thanh Son Lam cooperatives have united as the Alliance of Coop of Community Forest Owners to manage some 1,800 hectares of forest. They will also develop the proposal, “Community-led REDD+ initiative through legal entity,” to participate in the Northern Central Emissions Reduction Program implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Thanh Hoa province. The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility is committed to pay for emissions reduction after a result-based verification of 10.3 million tons of CO₂ equivalent to US\$51.5 million (cost per ton of CO₂ is \$5).

To participate in the Emissions Reduction Program for their allocated forest area with result-based payment, each cooperative has formed a Technical Team. The technical team is comprised of volunteer farmers with extensive experience in forest protection and trained to use GPS to measure the

area of forest land and timber volume in the forest. This not only helps the cooperatives of community forest owners to participate in the Emissions Reduction Program, but also to exploit legal timber harvesting applications. The technical team is also capable of building a database by identifying, photographing, and locating NTFPs in the forest to develop a longterm business strategy for NTFPs (medicinal plants, etc.).

The cooperatives are equipped with a map of the different levels of timber reserves and the permanent plots, which helps the forest owner to track changes in forest timber volume. With this capacity, technical teams and leaders of the cooperatives can design the proposal by themselves and apply for permits to exploit timber in natural forests according to state regulations. In this way, they avoid the situation “Stealing their wood” in their own forest due to the lack of capacity and permit.

With such capacity, the cooperatives can help the members who are planting the large timber forest to calculate the amount of plantation timber and to ask for government permission for harvesting the timber. They can sell large quantities of timber, look for the highest price to sell these, and avoid the situation where traders ask them if they have the license to harvest timber and where households have to sell the wood to them at low prices.



Ethnic minority groups and women participate in state policies and programs as policy holders, which can be considered a first in Vietnam. In this way, the ethnic communities have created a breakthrough in the quality of social participation. This overcomes top-down policy implementation where the local people are merely passive beneficiaries of policy. This approach awakens and motivates women and communities to promote self-reliance and ownership.

Communities, especially women, change and join hands to protect the land ecosystem, promote organic agriculture and improve local product quality

Local people, especially women, have abused the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, using less organic fertilizers. With chemical use in farming for many decades, they face problems of soil depletion, polluted water, increased chemical use to maintain the same productivity for agricultural production, all of which lead to higher production costs even as paddy prices remain low.

In addition, product quality does not meet the demand of safe food in the market. For many years, there was no policy to protect the quality of soil, and the local people had no knowledge of the side effects of farm chemicals and the vital role of the ecosystem. The trained “farmer experts” have been disseminating this knowledge to the members of SGGs. The members of the 18 SGGs in the two cooperatives have been raising awareness about the forest and farm ecosystems including the harmful effects of excessive use of chemicals on soil ecosystems and health. In a SGG forum, an elderly lady said, “Why did you not tell us before? If we knew, we would not use chemicals anymore, we would go back to traditional farming using manure.”

To promote organic agriculture, improve soil quality, and protect soil ecosystems, women and men in SGGs have been trained to make compost at home from by-products such as manure, straw, rice husk, leaves, and effective microorganisms. The technology of making biological insecticides from garlic-ginger-chili-wine has been introduced to men and women to produce on their own.

Compost and biological insecticides are used to fertilize vegetables and rice, which have helped to improve soil quality, soil porosity, and product quality. The vegetables grown with compost are considered to have better taste. These are the first steps to gradually promote organic production, gradually reducing the use of chemical fertilizers.



Making compost in backyards with by-products such as manure, straw, rice husk, leaves and effective microorganisms.



Making compost in backyards with by-products such as manure, straw, rice husk, leaves and effective microorganisms.



Biological insecticides made of alcohol, garlic, ginger, chili.

A number of households in the cooperatives have completely abandoned the use of chemical fertilizers, using compost for rice and vegetable plants. Approximately 85 percent of households have renounced the use of chemical herbicides. In particular, the women first understood the role of soil and forest ecosystems and climate change; they then abandoned the habit of burning straw in their fields with the thought, “burning straw harms the environment, the soil ecosystem; the straw needs to be retained for composting.”

The cooperatives are equipped with machines to produce their own feeds for livestock and poultry from local products such as bran, maize, cassava, vegetables, grass, snails, crabs, and fish. With the processing of this food grain, the farmers do not have to buy expensive industrial feeds. Many households use these feeds and they claim to make good use of agricultural products, especially yellow snails (a kind of snail that harms rice plants) for processing feeds, which reduce purchase of commercial feeds. By doing this, the households and women will produce clean, organic meat products.

Creating added value from products that are more competitive—production of potential, non-chemical products using traditional methods—and access to national market

In 2017 the two cooperatives formed bamboo shoot production groups, 95 percent of which were headed by women. The groups experimented with the production of dried bamboo shoots called “*Dried bamboo of Bu Mun natural forest—no chemicals.*” The bamboo shoots are collected from the Bu Mun natural forest.

The bamboo groups of the cooperatives have jointly developed bamboo processing through the traditional method, ensuring that the bamboo shoots are not contaminated with any chemicals. In 2017, 93 kg of dried bamboo shoots were tested in the Hanoi market, with a price from 25 percent to 35 percent higher than the local price. The cooperative has a leaflet listing the product with the seal of the cooperative

specifying the address of the person responsible for product quality and the name of the donor (Tamalpais and Tebtebba). In 2018, there were orders in greater quantity and sold at higher prices.



Instead of individual production and sale of dried bamboo shoots to traders at household level at low prices, the bamboo product is produced and sold by groups by contract signed by the cooperative in the Hanoi market. This not only builds a local product brand, brings more income to the producer, but also contributes to the supply of safe products to consumers and safeguards community health. The production of dried bamboo shoots under the cooperative's coordination has created additional income for the community, helping to prevent overexploitation of bamboo shoots that destroys the bamboo plant.

Positive changes in ethnic minority women: Target women have become more confident and active in social work

Through the project, the target ethnic minority women, for the first time, learned and came to know about human rights, citizen's rights, women's rights, forest rights, and some forest laws and policies. This helps the women change their mindset: they start thinking about rights, they start to have a say in the community, and they are more confident in making decisions at home and in community organizations.

They started making decisions and implementing decisions in the cooperative. Before the project, the target ethnic minority women did not want to attend meetings or training organized at the village level. They changed; they wanted to attend meetings and to participate in the training courses organized by the cooperative. In village meetings previously, the women just whispered to each other, daring not to say anything either in agreement or disagreement. Now, they dare to fight and to criticize in a positive way.

Together with other women in the SGGs in the cooperative, the target women have made great contributions to the protection of the natural forest and they are proud of it. They have started to participate in decision-making processes and in the leadership of the cooperatives. They are confident with their legal entity, reassure themselves with the seal of the cooperative, and gain trust when working with government and partners.

Overcoming barriers, they hold leadership positions in the cooperatives, self-governing groups, and the forest management team of the cooperative. Three of six leadership positions in the cooperative are held by women. The rights-based approach has become the mindset of some of the women leaders.

Through the cooperative, the community, most of whom are women, has started to sign contracts to sell their local products, discarding middlemen and thus fetching better prices. The distinct values of the cooperative motivate the

women to take action collectively and be more confident in making and implementing decisions.

Ms. Ha Thi Chuong of the Thai ethnic group is one of the six leaders of Thanh Lam Cooperative. Before the project, she was little involved in social work and village work, rarely attending meetings and did not like participating in training courses in the village or in the commune. Like many other women, Ms. Chuong has changed a lot. Apart from being a leader of the cooperative, she was one of the members of the FPIC team. "I understand more, know my rights, women's rights, the law, I will fight against the wrong things to protect women's rights. Now we have a cooperative with a legal entity and a seal. I'm more confident, not afraid any more to speak out," she remarked.

Ms. Chuong actively met with commune and district authorities to discuss procedures for setting up the cooperative and to complete the forest allocation documents for the community. She is one of the women participating in the Forest Management Group, joining the cooperative as the head of the Board of Supervision and head of the dried bamboo production group. She is very active in supervising the cooperative's activities and advises the members, especially the poor women.



Summary of Findings

As the case study shows, ethnic minority women, together with the community, can actively participate and contribute to society, access relevant policies and programs with their own initiatives to overcome their communities' problems, and contribute to climate change mitigation and sustainable development. These can be achieved if they are provided the opportunities to increase their capacity in a holistic, integrated, and proper manner in the areas of rights, policy, community institution development, governance, and technical knowledge to ensure collective rights and action.

Other notable findings were:

- Traditional knowledge and practices are critical in contributing to high effectiveness of the forest allocation process and forest management;
- Application of both customary law and state law through collective action of the community, especially collective monitoring by women of the natural forest, is key to forest management at low cost, especially remote forests;
- The women are the first persons to protect the soil ecosystem by giving up the use of chemicals in agriculture production when they understand the role of ecosystems;
- Enhancing rights awareness and capacity of ethnic minority women so that they are able to exercise their rights through legal community-based entities, for example, the community cooperative and its legal alliance, is the shortest and effective path to realize the rights of ethnic minorities and of women and women's empowerment.



Recommendations

From the case study, the following recommendations should be considered for the realization of the rights of ethnic minorities, especially of women, gender equality, and self-determination of communities:

Equal access to forest use rights for both men and women: The forest should be allocated to the traditional cluster of households, not village; this can restore the traditional relationship in managing the forest effectively at a low cost. Single women or female elders who cannot work should be included with the communities in accessing forest use rights. With 50 years of forest use rights, the communities and women are assured opportunities to invest in their forest and create long-term income

Community-based institutional development with both men and women as members: The community with women and men as forest owner should be supported to establish a legal community-based organization based on national law, for example, the cooperative according to the Law on Cooperatives 2012. With such an entity, the communities have a legal framework to work collectively to create added value such as protecting the remote forest at low cost, actively implementing policies as policy owner not passive receiver, and integrating into the market beyond their locality to sell local commercial products.

Capacity building in a holistic, integrated and gender-balanced way for ethnic minorities: Capacity building should be considered as a right for women, ethnic minorities, and most vulnerable people and should be done through a bottom-up approach to ensure ethnic minority women and men can execute and protect their legal rights actively through full ownership and leadership over their natural resources and legal entity.

Preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge and practices: Traditional knowledge and practices, especially in forest management and livelihood resilience for forest dependent local people, should be preserved and protected.

Promotion of participation of women in society: Once the women understand their rights, are trained to build their capacity, have their own legal entity like a community cooperative (one form of rural enterprise), they can act as crucial actors with self-determination to contribute actively to sustainable development.

Endnotes

¹ Kinh are the majority group who speak Vietnamese.

² Project “Supporting Ethnic Minority Communities Better Access to Forest Use Rights, Establishment of a Forest Resource Monitoring System with Comprehensive Participation of People in the Forest Co-Management Model”; Project on “Capacity Building for Ethnic Minority Communities to actively participate in the REDD+ as independent actor through legal entity”; Project on “Promotion of long-term strategy for nature-based livelihood resilience and sustainable income generation basing on traditional non-chemical agriculture production.”

³ Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

⁴ The project was co-implemented by Tebtebba and Center of Research and Development in Upland Areas, which is part of the Indigenous Peoples’ Global Network on Climate Change and Sustainable Development (IPCCSD).

⁵ Eleanor Dictaan–Bang-oa, Empowering Indigenous Women in Asia for REDD+, Climate Change and Sustainable Development: Strengthening Indigenous Women’s Roles in Community Resilience and ensuring Benefits Therefrom – Final Project Report (PO 7181734), December 2017.

⁶ The village is a grassroots population organization in rural Vietnam. Under the Constitution of Vietnam, the village is not a state administrative unit. In the new administrative system, the last unit is the commune.

The stories that emerge reveal that in various indigenous communities, indigenous women are hurdling barriers in arenas beyond their traditional domestic domain. Although still marginalized and burdened by multiple work, indigenous women are proving that they can actively engage in their community's economic and political development, rather than remain passive receivers of programs and policies.

