

# “Water is life”

A position paper on: Indigenous Women’s role in Water Governance in Asia






For further information

Indigenous Women Programme

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## Introduction

Water governance is one of the most pressing issues of Indigenous communities in Asia since the neoliberal policy promoted unabated private sector's participation in management of natural resources leading to transnational corporations' monopoly of water resources in the Global South. This is reflective of thousands of hydropower dams applications, and control over lands and seas in Indigenous lands and territories in Asia-Pacific by corporations causing the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples' water resources. Dispossession of water resources is compounded by extreme weather conditions depleting the remaining water resources governed by Indigenous communities. Domestic and agricultural use of water are primarily women's domain but their participation in planning and water management continue to be a challenge.

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)—a regional membership network of 46 Indigenous Peoples' organizations from 14 countries in Asia—has been working with its network of Indigenous women (IW) and their representative organizations in the region to build a knowledge-base on Indigenous women's experiences and challenges of water governance in Asia. As a result, Indigenous women are now invited to participate and speak at various platforms, meetings, and conferences such as consultation with the UN, Human Rights Council, Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation and attending the 2nd Dushanbe Water Conference in Tajikistan. However, lack of funding and tokenized approach for inclusion of Indigenous women is limiting their meaningful participation in these water related policy-making spaces.

Moreover, there is very little formal literature on water governance in relation to its impact on Indigenous women in Asia. The tendency in the results can be explained through the double marginalization of 'indigenous' and 'woman'. Water governance is a heavily male dominated field even in the Global North—a recent survey of worldwide transboundary river basin organizations revealed that women occupied less than one-fifth of their highest leadership positions (Best, 2019). Indigeneity creates an additional layer of marginalization on Indigenous women; for example, in the Melamchi region of Nepal, there is a lack of representation for women and Indigenous groups in local water management despite special provisions provided by the government (Grumbine et al., 2015, p.7). Similarly, in Malaysia, the Indigenous Peoples lack economic accessibility to water, sanitation, and hygiene services, leading to higher levels of child malnutrition among them compared to other rural groups (Maniam et al., 2021, p.8). A recent publication entitled 'Gender Dynamics in Transboundary Water Governance' (ter Horst, Zwartveen, & Sehring 2022) fills in the much needed gap in the literature by examining transboundary waters from a feminist perspective. However, there is not much focus on the experience of Indigenous women in Asia. Women are at the top of the hierarchy of the uses of water in the Indigenous communities of the Philippines, both for sacred rituals and for domestic use (Rola et al., 2015). In Malaysia, the Indigenous Orang Asli women—who do not have access to water services—prefer to maintain menstrual hygiene by washing their entire body in the river as much as three times a day (UN Human Rights Council, 2019). Studying water governance in tandem with the experiences of Indigenous women in Asia is timely and necessary.



Photo by [Giuliano Gabella](#) on [Unsplash](#) Location- Nong khiaw, Laos

## Methodology

An initial literature review was carried out exploring existing information on Indigenous women's role in water governance in Asia. Following the literature review, multiple consultations were carried out with around 80 participants (73 women and 7 men) representing 26 organizations from 12 countries working with diverse groups of Indigenous women and communities in four subregions of Asia namely South Asia, Southeast Asia, Mekong, and East Asia in September 2022. A list of participating organizations is available in Annex-1. Three consultations were carried out online via the Zoom meeting platform whereas one consultation took place face to face with the Isnag Indigenous women of the Philippines. The consultations revolved around the following themes:

- 1) Indigenous women's role in water governance;
- 2) Indigenous women's challenges to water governance;
- 3) Women-led solutions to water governance; and
- 4) Recommendations.

This position paper was developed based on the findings from these consultations in combination with the literature review. The purpose of the paper is to inform policy makers at the national, regional, and international levels about Indigenous women's roles and their key collective messages and demands related to water governance from Asia.

## Context

### Indigenous women's connection to the earth and water

In 2020, the United Nations Secretary General highlighted that the key to environmental sustainability is restoring the broken relationship of human and nature. By restoring means learning from the practices and worldviews of Indigenous Peoples who live in coexistence with all life. Lutz (2005) posits that there is much to learn from Indigenous Peoples in terms of living in harmony with nature and the water. Indigenous nurturing worldviews and practices on natural resources lead the way towards sustainability of the world's water resources. They take pride in their innovative and environmentally sustainable ways of adapting to forces that are not within their control.

In the Indigenous Peoples' world view, the forests are the realm of spiritual forces. They believe that the world is inhabited by powerful spiritual forces to whom people must pay their respects and come to terms with. The spiritual forces can be benevolent and act as protectors if the people make use of the natural resources with respect and in moderation. The forces can also withdraw their protection if the principle is not observed.



Photo by [Simon Berger](#) on [Unsplash](#) Location- Laos

Specific rules and taboos define how human beings interact with the environment. These rules and taboos ensure that practices will not trespass the limits set by spiritual forces. For instance, among the Indigenous Peoples practicing shifting cultivation in Southeast Asia, it is common to never clear and cultivate in areas near the water sources to avoid blocking or disturbing the flow of water. Most of the rules observed in livelihood activities such as hunting, fishing, and foraging are aimed at avoiding overexploitation or exhaustion of natural resources (AIPP & Oxfam, 2018).

In southern Philippines, Bae Inatlawan, a tribal woman leader of Bukidnon, Mindanao said that Indigenous Peoples like them consider the forest as the extension of their life. "We need to guard it for the next generation. We are the guardians of the forests and its rare and endemic species," she said adding that her people are performing rituals to appease the gods to protect them from danger (Abano, 2020).

Indigenous Women of Cambodia and Vietnam continue to believe in spiritual forces guarding the water resources. They believe that the disruption and destruction of water habitats anger the powerful spirits and bring negative consequences among the people in the form of diseases and disasters. They believe that the spirits of the water are particularly powerful that when displeased, can endanger the whole community (AIPP & Oxfam, 2018).

Monika Konglah from the Khasi community inhabiting the borderland of Meghna basin in Bangladesh articulates the interconnectedness of the forest and the water to their Indigenous identity well. She explains that the life of her people depends on the forest and it is their responsibility as a people to take care of the forest. By taking care of the forest, she means taking care of all the elements in it most especially the water which gives life to trees, streams, and all the life forms in the forest. Without the forest, her people would be nothing (Bisht et al., 2021).

## Indigenous Peoples' right to water

The right to water is a basic human right and is a prerequisite to all other human rights including the right to life. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) interpreted the right to water as a human right to which everyone is entitled without discrimination to "sufficient, safe, acceptable physically and affordable water for personal and domestic uses" (Lutz, 2005).

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in a fact sheet entitled "The Right to Water" mentioned that the access to clean and safe water for Indigenous Peoples is dependent on their control over their ancestral lands and natural resources. The non recognition of their rights to their lands, territories, and resources have far reaching implications to Indigenous Peoples' enjoyment of their right to water. Lakes, rivers, and other water systems are used traditionally by Indigenous Peoples and their access is threatened by encroachment or expropriation by the States and corporations. Lutz (2005) posits that States are mandated to ensure the recognition and respect of Indigenous Peoples' right to water in their ancestral lands. The ICESCR states that the State shall ensure that access of Indigenous Peoples to their water resources is protected from unlawful pollution and encroachment by policies, agricultural, and corporate interests. It is also the burden of the States to provide resources to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women for them to exercise their self-determination in designing, delivering, and controlling their access to water.

## Findings

### Indigenous women's role in water governance

Most of the participants in the consultations refer to water as 'life' for them and their people. They use water in agriculture, daily activities including health, sanitation, and cultural purposes. Indigenous women ensure food, water consumption, and sanitation at the household level. In Cambodia and Vietnam, gardening, raising livestock, and participation in fishing expeditions using simple tools are also responsibilities of Indigenous women. Most importantly, Indigenous women ensure that the water is safe for consumption (AIPP & Oxfam, 2018).

Kakay Tolentino from the Dumagat Indigenous group in the Philippines shared during the consultation that Indigenous women are the vanguards, or keepers of their water in the rivers. "Our river water is big and abundant so we must treasure it," she said. Her community is a semi-nomadic people in the Sierra Madre mountain range who are closely connected to the river water because rivers are their main source of livelihood, source of potable water for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing, and for farming purposes. Their access to water is threatened to be displaced with the construction of Kaliwa dam but she said that Indigenous women have a crucial role in keeping, managing, and defending their water and this includes defense from construction of dams.



Photo by [Tomáš Malík](#) on [Unsplash](#) Location- Mekong River Delta, Vietnam

In Southeast Asia in the far north of the Philippines, the Isnag Indigenous peoples of Kabugao, Apayao, dubbed as the river people, mentioned that the Apayao river is part of their life and death, and their joys and sorrows. Lolita Alab, a respected elder said that aside from serving as a transport system and source of food, Apayao river also marks every death of their people. Every death deserves a restriction of activities in portions of the river and every celebration deserves community feasts by the river. The river, Lolita Alab mentioned, is a living being as long as it flows freely.

Also, Isnag Indigenous women of the 21 villages of Kabugao work in the swidden farms uphill near the river planting rice, corn, and other vegetables, and are engaged in fishing for their families' consumption. In the remote areas of Kabugao where water systems are not in place, women dig wells in the river banks where they fetch water for drinking. The settlements of the Isnag of the Kabugao are all found near the Apayao river. They say their identity is rooted in the river. For generations, they weathered the ebbs and flows of the river and have learned to coexist with the river and the mountains. The Apayao river was just recently declared as one of the cleanest rivers in the Philippines. It is considered as one of the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) of the Philippines and is a home for diverse flora and fauna.

In Cambodia, Indigenous women representatives from Prov, Kouy, Po Norng, and Khmer Loa Indigenous communities shared that water is life because everyday, they get up and water is the first thing they use and see. They use water for cooking, washing, shower, animal husbandry, growing vegetables and rice, and most especially, water houses their needed food which is fish. The eco-tourism aspect of the river is supporting the communities' income.

“Most of the people here are engaged in farming, vegetable growing, and fishing as a family, they are completely dependent on the Mekong River. The turbidity that affects the health of the main species of fish [is causing extinction] and there is a lot of moss, which causes many trees in the water to die. These are the issues that affect Indigenous women and children, who are the biggest users of water.”

Likewise, a participant from the Taokas people in the Waraoral community in Central Taiwan said, they make a living from agriculture and they are famous for growing water bamboo shoots. Near their community are rivers for fishing. Most of their traditional plants are found in the rivers. Her life revolves around food, farming, and laundry which are all dependent on water that is why management and sustainability of water is very important to her and her community.

In South Asia particularly in Nepal, the Tokpe Gola community with a population of 1500 relies on agriculture for livelihood. Traditionally, women are in-charge of collecting water from ponds. The community regard the water sources as very important not only for their survival but also for their spiritual life. This is also true among the Tharu agricultural community in Rapti-Sonari Rural Municipality of Banke District in Nepal. The community, composed of 300 households, has three ponds and one river where the people rely for agricultural irrigation, fishing, and watering their vegetable gardens. The ponds and the river are also important for community rituals and celebrations.



Photo by [Vince Gx](#) on [Unsplash](#) Location- Cần Thơ, Vietnam

## Indigenous women's challenges to water governance

### Government control of water and other natural resources

Indigenous ways of thinking about water and rivers can often be in conflict with the national laws, where the state asserts its ownership of rivers and treats water like an extractive resource. Taylor, Longboat, and Grafton (2019) thus criticize the OECD's 12 Principles on Water Governance (2015) for "[assuming] state authority over water governance, [making] invisible Indigenous Peoples' own water governance systems and [perpetuating] the discourses of water colonialism" (p.1).

Construction of dams worldwide peaked in the 1970s and became a symbol of development but increasing protests of communities including Indigenous Peoples who were displaced, blocked access to water and natural resources compelled the World Commission on Dams to conduct a rigorous assessment on the cost benefit of dams. In their report in 2000 entitled "Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision Making", the commission posits that dams may have contributed to development but the benefits from it cannot compensate its irreparable damages to the environment, the communities it has displaced, the rights of people it has violated (World Commission on Dams, 2000). Cariño, J. (1999) mentions that since the 1950s, dams constructed in Indigenous Peoples' territories caused massive rights violations including dispossession from their lands and natural resources, non-compensation and lack of compensation, and lowering of living standards. She adds that Indigenous women are harder hit by displacement since they rely on common resources such as forests and rivers for daily survival and some Indigenous women are not compensated because traditionally, properties are not registered in their names.

AIPP (2015) has contested the idea that hydropower dams are considered as clean energy stating that large dams emit massive amounts of methane, causing severe damage to critical ecosystems and communities. In Asia, large dams have violated Indigenous Peoples' "right to lands, cultural integrity and free prior and informed consent" citing that state security forces are deployed in Indigenous territories to quell community resistance resulting in egregious human rights violations. AIPP stresses that hydropower dams are false solutions to climate change.



Photo by Falco Negenman on Unsplash Location- Cái Răng, Cần Thơ, Vietnam

The conflict between Indigenous customary law and state law in governing water is visible in the Philippines, where on one hand, the Water Code grants ownership of the country's water to the state, but on the other hand the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) gives Indigenous Peoples' rights over water resources that fall within their ancestral domains (Rola et al., 2015; Rola et al., 2016). This legal overlap, in practice, often translates to the state enforcing only the Water Code. In this instance, Indigenous Peoples consider water to be a communal resource, whereas the state considers water as a resource to be priced and granted access to accordingly. A similar conflict can be noticed in Cambodia as well—a study of the Cheay Areng and Lower Sesan 2 dams finds that monetary compensations and resettlement packages are inadequate in assuaging the nearby Indigenous communities, because these packages fail to take into account cultural and spiritual ties to ancestral lands (Hensengerth, 2017).

These tensions were also noted by consultation participants who noted that in the Philippines, Taiwan, and Japan, parts of their traditional lands are declared as public lands which limit their access to water and other resources. In Northeast India, water is becoming a privilege instead of it being a fundamental right.

Kakay Tolentino from the Philippines mentioned during the consultation that state laws are in constant conflict with customary laws and stewardship and land ownership of Indigenous peoples. While the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 recognizes the Indigenous People's ancestral lands and territories, the forestry code declares that the lands that exceed 18 percent slope are considered public lands and all the resources in it state-owned. This law justifies the encroachment of extractive concessions like mining through the Mining Act of 1995 in ancestral lands without recognizing the Indigenous Peoples' rights to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

In Sabah Malaysia, the Dusun community has set up a protocol for a 'gravity water supply system' (a community system for sourcing fresh water from the streams) but the government rejected this solution arguing that it is overlapping with government projects. The river water is contaminated with poison due to large scale agricultural activities sponsored by the government and this led to extinction of fish which is the main food source of food for Indigenous communities.

In Taiwan, traditional areas are listed as national lands or public lands hampering Indigenous Peoples to dig wells in their own communities. Currently, communities are using unclean water which is affecting their health. Also, the distribution of water resources is in the hands of the government and Indigenous communities have no right to manage. On the other hand, Indigenous communities have traditional laws for rivers that prohibit even the government from disturbing the natural direction of the river. The river resources affect the community's hunting, farming, and rituals.

Also, in Japan, the Japanese government restricts the Ainu people from fishing and hunting in the river denying them of their right to practice their traditions that are connected to the rivers threatening their cultural continuity.

In Northeast India, the Central Ground Water Authority has a scheme that contradicts the traditional practice of Indigenous Peoples like paying lump sum money to the government for water services. This is also contradictory to the principle of water being a fundamental right.

## Protected area systems

In Nepal and Philippines, policies on protected area systems are hampering Indigenous women and their communities to access water and other resources from their traditional territories. The Philippines has a law called the National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS) of 1992 that has caused physical and economic displacement among indigenous peoples. In Nepal, militarization of conservation areas through conservation policies are hampering Indigenous communities' access to water and other resources. It is also putting Indigenous women at risk of gender-based violence in the course of collecting water and other resources for their daily use. Also in Nepal, the animal preservation initiative, particularly the breeding center for crocodiles, is putting the lives of Indigenous women at risk when collecting water in the areas where the breeding center is located.

## Impacts of development aggression and hydropower dams

AIPP and Oxfam (2018) found that the rapid exploitation of natural resources such as forests, water, and soil has impoverished Indigenous Peoples, and endangered their livelihoods and cultural and spiritual lives. This so-called development impaired them of what they envision as their development. The presence of plantations, commercial farming, hydropower dams, and logging that are accompanied with massive influx of immigrants who are non-indigenous, caused massive displacement and further marginalization of Indigenous Peoples of the Mekong sub-region. Indigenous Women are particularly impacted by development aggressions as they have been displaced in their various roles as food producers, managers of resources, repositories of Indigenous knowledge and practices, and the promoters of community cohesion and identity. With the disruption caused by development aggression, Indigenous Women are struggling to cope with the changes.



Photo by Falco Negenman on Unsplash Location-Nepal

Across all four subregions, dams for hydropower and water supply of metropolitan areas are seen as the major threat to Indigenous Peoples' access to water. Dams for the communities in the riverbanks means physical and economic displacement from their traditional territories subsequently blocking them access to their streams, and rivers which they consider as the basis of their lives and continuity of their cultural identity.

In Northeast India and Nepal, dams have caused the denial of access to water among Indigenous communities. Dams in Nepal caused the siltation of rivers upstream and drying of water sources resulting in shortage of water for domestic and agricultural use. The Indigenous women representatives of Nepal mentioned that the impacts of dams are not reflected in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and dams are even said to be a clean energy but in reality, dam construction does not adhere to human rights and does not recognize Indigenous knowledge.

In Cambodia and Vietnam, the disruption of water flow caused by dam constructions, and other exploitative activities are limiting Indigenous women's access to water and dispossessing them of their livelihood areas (AIPP & Oxfam, 2018).

In the Philippines, the government, in partnership with foreign investors, is building hydropower dams in the territories of Indigenous Peoples. Currently, the Kaliwa Low Dam project, funded by China, is continuously opposed by the Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women. Despite the resistance from Indigenous women and their communities, access roads are now being aggressively built to pave the way for the construction of the dam (AIPP, 2022).

In a similar manner, the proposed construction of dams along the Apayao river in the Philippines are riddled with violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) as explained by Isnag women during the consultation:

“The Isnag women of Kabugao, Apayao in the Philippines are battling two (2) large hydropower dams to be constructed along the Apayao river which can submerge many villages, uproot them from their basis of identity, erase their community history, and displace them from their economic survival which depends on their mountains and the river. The hydropower dams by Pan Pacific Renewable Power Philippines Corporation recently obtained their FPIC through a fraudulent process alleged with bribery, forgery, and intimidation. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) certified the social acceptability of the two (2) dams in August 2021 and March 2022 despite overwhelming opposition evidenced by three community resolutions of non-consent carried out in several community mobilizations.”



Photo credit to Chini Maya Majhi Location- Nepal

“The Kaliwa dam project in the territory of the Dumagat and Remontado indigenous peoples in Rizal and Quezon provinces of the Philippines is also riddled with bribery, collusion and intimidation against indigenous peoples. The Kaliwa dam that is supposed to deliver water to the Metro Manila area is a project of the Philippine government supported by China.”

Abano (2020) also mentioned that in recent years in the Cordillera region of Northern Philippines, the lush forests and pristine rivers changed rapidly due to the construction of several huge hydropower dams such as the Binga dam, Ambuclao dam, and San Roque dam that significantly damaged the watershed and caused massive siltation of river systems. Indigenous Ifugao women today play a vital role in the opposition to another dam to be constructed along their livelihood areas covering 81 villages in four municipalities.

Some of the participants from Mekong particularly in Laos mentioned the realities of being displaced from their traditional land due to the construction of hydropower dams. The ethnic groups namely, Lao-Tai, Lao-Pao, and Hmong in Khammouane province were relocated from the river banks to the higher levels which removed them from their source of livelihood and from the water source. The relocation site has low quality and quantity of water. The water is not clean enough so the villagers have to buy water for drinking, which is not even enough water for them. As a result, conflict is arising between the communities. One representative said that in the relocation site, river water is polluted and not suitable for agriculture.

We have water for our households, but not for production. We cannot use the natural river because it is polluted by factories, the gold mine, and the hospital upstream. In our old village, we farmed naturally without chemicals. Now we need chemical fertilizers or the degraded soil will not allow the crops to produce any yield. We also don't have enough land to increase production.

Another participant mentioned,

The land is unsuitable and the water is insufficient for production. I cannot plant crops other than cassava. The river is unusable due to pollution from the factory. There aren't any fish or natural food either. Even livestock raising (chicken) was not successful because there was a disease outbreak and they all died.

Another added that there is not enough labor to generate income for their family.

Income from cassava planting is insufficient because there is no market for our crops. Even though we have water for consumption, it is not enough for production. Sometimes there is not enough water for the rice fields. So instead, I help my brother with raising his livestock.

In Cambodia, a participant working at 3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN) mentioned that the construction of a large hydroelectric dam along the Sesan river (Lower Sesan 2) has affected the traditional land of 44,521 people in 67 villages. About 5,490 people from 9 villages in Andaung Meas were displaced as a result. Furthermore, 183 families in Kbal Romeas and 900 villagers in Srekor lost all of their properties, houses, farms, and ancestral stone in the Lower Sesan 2 reservoir. They have been denied access to the river since the construction of the dam was completed in 2018.

Their community used to grow vegetables along the riverbank but nowadays they have to earn money through other means to buy vegetables. Instead of farming, they now sell their labour to banana farms, rubber farms, cashew nut farms, and construction sites to earn money. According to a report released by Human Rights Watch in 2021, the Lower Sesan 2 dam is part of the Chinese government's trillion-dollar investment and infrastructure project “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI). Most of the displaced people belong to the Bunong, Brao, Kuoy, Lao, Jarai, Kreung, Kavet, Tampuan, and Kachok communities. The report also documents how the officials violated the “free, prior, and informed consent” of affected Indigenous peoples.

In the north of Thailand in Chiang Rai province, a dam built on the Mae Kok river in 1991 has affected the Indigenous Thaiyai, Lahu, akha, Thailue, Lisu, ieu mien, Karen, and Hmong peoples who live along the river. The impacts include loss of local species of fishes, loss of farmland, and loss of income from ecotourism due to decreased level of water. The Mae Kok river flows from the hills in Myanmar through Tha Ton to Mekong river.

AIPP and Oxfam (2021) in a study highlighted that Lao PDR's rapidly growing hydropower development is causing the displacement and resettlement of many Indigenous communities. The National law of Lao PDR provides safeguards among the affected communities including ethnic communities which include compensation, resettlement, and development plan in the relocation areas. In the study, the women of the five upstream resettlement communities impacted by the Theun-Hinboun Power Company hydro-dam project in Khamkeut District, Khammouane Province shared about their difficulties in terms of livelihood. They had enough water for household consumption but they lacked water for agricultural production in these resettlement areas. Similarly in Vietnam, rapid construction of hydropower dams upstream are affecting the lives of Indigenous communities and local communities downstream (AIPP, 2022). A previous study has shown that the construction of Son La dam in Vietnam caused women's loss of access to their river and hampered their roles as water providers leaving many households to water scarcity. Despite the many responsibilities of Indigenous Women involving water, their expertise in ensuring water quality is hardly recognised (AIPP & Oxfam, 2018).

## Corporate control and pollution of water resources

Pollution and scarcity of water bodies have been raised as challenges to Indigenous women's access to safe and clean water. Pollution is mainly caused by large plantations, mining and other corporate activities.

Dewi (Perempuan AMAN) from Lombok in Indonesia mentioned that her people used to be nomadic and they used to safeguard their clean springs and water was abundant for community use until forest clearings by companies happened since 1975 destroying their sources of water causing drought in the dry season and flooding in the rainy season. Mills were constructed polluting the water sources. Now, we have to buy water for our consumption

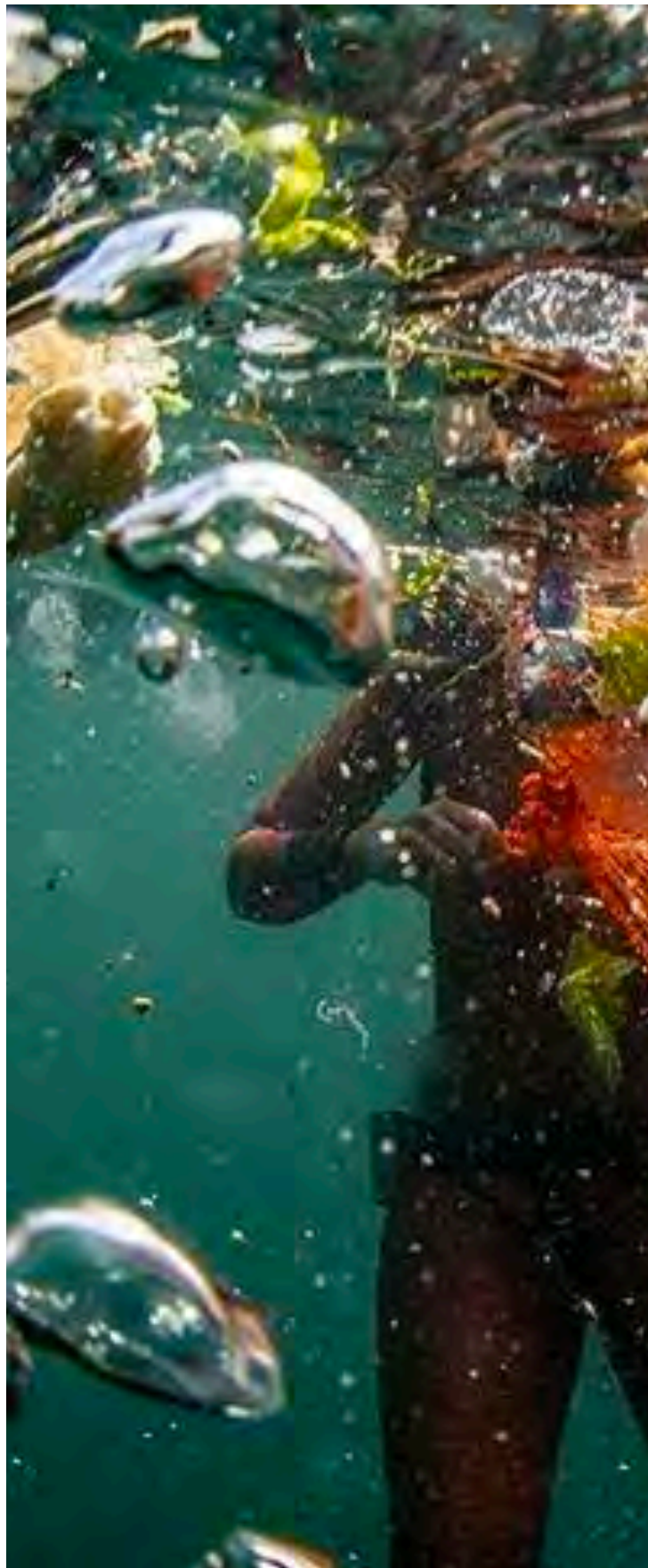
“Water is a source of life. We won't live without it. We are in need of clean water. We have springs that we are protecting. Now, the springs are polluted and unhygienic.” - Dewi from Lombok.

In Malaysia, as main food producers, Indigenous women are affected with the contamination of the river water due to the occurrence of large agricultural and industrial activities and used chemicals. The contamination led to the extinction of fish which is the main food source of the Indigenous community. In Bangladesh, the tobacco production by a British company is polluting water bodies by dumping the waste water used for boiling tobacco leaves directly to the rivers and streams. Hence the Indigenous villagers, especially the children, frequently fall sick. Also, teak tree plantation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is causing the scarcity of water, denying the villagers of enough potable water for domestic use. According to the participants, a teak tree consumes 40 liters of water daily.

In Taiwan and Thailand, commercial farms are using agricultural chemicals that are seeping into the water system and polluting even the sources of drinking water and water for domestic use.

In Cambodia, those who are engaged in fishing are having difficulty due to the significant decline of fish because of pollution caused by banana farms. The nine indigenous groups that depend on the Sesan river for livelihood are suffering the health impacts of water pollution.

In Thailand, mining concessions are highly polluting water with cyanide and other chemicals from the mines, causing skin diseases, and other afflictions among the women and children. Participants posit that the government is opening up Indigenous lands and territories for investors who come and violate their rights impacting their livelihood and resources.



Location- Taiwan

## Impacts of climate change and environmental degradation

Aside from the loss of access to water resources, the Indigenous communities are now struggling with extreme and unpredictable weather conditions brought by climate change. Raygorodetsky (2018) posits that Indigenous peoples only comprise 5 percent of the world's population yet they are protecting 80 percent of the global biodiversity. They are the least contributors to climate change and yet, impacted the most by climate change because of their high level of dependency on and unique relationship with nature and natural resources.

Indeed, climate change has impacted all the subregions in Asia as explained by the participants of the consultations. Disruption of weather patterns, extreme weather conditions such as prolonged drought and frequent flooding have significant effects on Indigenous women's access to safe and clean water for household use and for agriculture purposes and on the decline of food productivity.

### Water scarcity

One of the most common impacts of climate change is water scarcity due to drying up of water sources since droughts are more pronounced. Soil erosion, and frequent flooding pollute wells and ponds, and disrupt the natural flow of water. All of these lead to a water crisis.

A 23-year-old Indigenous woman from Lalawa Village of Covalima Municipality in Timor-Leste, shared that the population of her municipality is 68,863 which is inhabited by Tetum, Bunak, and Kemak peoples. They rely on water for survival since they are using it for their domestic necessities and agricultural activities such as for growing maize, rice, cassava, vegetables and other plants. Even though water is accessible to the communities, during prolonged rainfall, and dry season, the water is not potable and scarce.

“During the rainy season, we cannot access water and the river destroys our local products. Because the river swells and is not potable, we have to run to other villages to fetch water for consumption.”

The Indigenous women from the Gurung community living in the Himalayan foothills in Nepal ensure that water is available in the household. When water is scarce, the women travel to remote areas in search of potable water. Due to the earthquake, the water sources shifted and went farther from the community. They cannot even drink from the well like before, so women have to endure the distance just to collect water.

In the mainlands of India, the Uraon, Kharia, and Munda Indigenous communities who rely on water resources such as the well, river, and rainwater for their daily survival are experiencing a more pronounced water crisis in the tribal villages.

Likewise, In Bangladesh, Indigenous communities are experiencing extreme changes in climate which is making drinking water more and more inaccessible. Their water sources dry up during summer causing scarcity of drinking water. Extreme flash floods and landslides that never happened before, are more frequent in border areas like Madhupur and Sylhet, making water sources non potable. This is also true in the Tripuri community in Northeast India, in Indonesia, and in Cambodia.

In Taiwan, extreme droughts during the dry season are becoming more regular. Forest fires became more frequent because of the rise of temperature causing the water sources to dry up and destabilizing the ecosystem.



Location- Nepal

## ***Impact on agriculture***

Water scarcity also decreases agricultural productivity. In Thailand and Laos, the decline of farm produce is affecting the incomes of families. They are struggling for water during the dry season and are even creating conflict between and among communities. Drinking water is not clean enough, that is why they need to buy it for their daily consumption.

In Kg. Malinsau village of Ranau district in Sabah, Malaysia, extreme weather conditions such continuous rain for months and or prolonged hot and dry seasons are affecting agricultural production of Dusun Tinagas people who rely on cultivating paddies on the hills. Flooding is causing the once very fertile lands to become sandy and unproductive. The hot and dry season is drying up the water sources.

For the semi-nomadic Dumagat Indigenous women in the Philippines, fishing is affected with the frequent flooding and soil erosion. The irrigation of their semi-permanent farms are also affected because the flow of water is disrupted. Also, in Japan, the typhoons and snowstorms in the past ten years have caused serious damage to the natural environment, adversely affecting food sources of the Ainu people living in the Hokkaido Island.

Indigenous farmers can no longer predict the start of the seasons that guide their planting and harvest seasons. In Northern Thailand, Indigenous knowledge on foreseeing the weather patterns has been uncertain. The weather patterns used to guide their agricultural activities before. Today, the uncertain torrential rains destroy their plants and farmers have to replant time and again. In Cambodia, the river water unpredictably swells at night affecting those who are growing vegetables near the river. Another participant from Timor-Leste shared, “In the dry season, we cannot plant our local products, especially rice fields.”

## ***Impact on traditional practice***

Traditional practices and rituals are also at risk because water sources where they perform these rituals are either poisoned from large scale agricultural practices or drying up due to climate change. In Taiwan, Su Hsin from the Hazoban community of the Papora people located in Puli township, Nantou county in Central Taiwan mentioned that their water is their way to maintain linkage to their ancestors. She explained that her people hold an annual ceremony in the river or any body of water near their community. In the said ceremony, they touch the water and send a message to their ancestors to come home and celebrate with them. The yearly union strengthens their connection to their people and to their ancestors.

If the water resources are polluted or depleted, they will lose their connection with their ancestors which will eventually lead to the weakening of their cultural integrity. Thus, her people believe that water is crucial for their economic and cultural survival. Their water resources are threatened with chemical pollution from agricultural farms and impacts of climate change like extreme droughts and frequent forest fires.

In Nepal, Tokpe Gola community worships lakes thus, it is inherent for them to not pollute the water. The ponds and lakes are now drying up due to climate change. Similarly it is an ancestral tradition of the Newar people to clean up and worship all water resources such as ponds, wells, stone spouts on the day of the celebration of Sithi Nakha, especially in Kathmandu Valley. Many of such water and stone spouts are drying out due to haphazard and unplanned urbanization in the valley making it difficult to continue the traditional practice.



Location- Taiwan

## Deforestation compounding climate change

In Northeast India, the identified deforestation as one of the drivers of the depletion of water sources aside from climate change. The Zomi community consisting of nine (9) tribes from the hills of Manipur are dependent on underground water, rivers, and streams that flow within and around the hills and towns. Massive deforestation in the hills and climate change however led to the pollution and drying up of their streams and rivers and depletion of underground water. These have caused a water crisis and dependence on the Public Health Engineering Department, which is sadly irregular and unreliable.

In Indonesia, particularly in East Kalimantan, forest clearing has caused frequent flooding during the rainy season and people have no source of potable water so they need to buy. Many people are using wastewater for daily use. Deforestation also changed their traditional systems of livelihood. For example, gathering of rattan has to be stopped because rattan has been depleted and there is a law prohibiting them from exercising their traditional livelihood like gathering forest products.

## Other harmful practices

Aside from corporate activities, several participants also mentioned harmful practices that contribute to the pollution and depletion of water sources. In Laos, unsustainable ways to catch fish like their neighboring village using electrocution and dynamite are drastically decreasing the riverine resources and polluting the water. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, water pollution is increasingly becoming a problem with tourists polluting the natural water streams and fountains from which the communities drink water. There are also existing illegal sand and gravel extraction which is affecting the water.

## Indigenous women bear the brunt of water scarcity

Indigenous women bear the brunt of water scarcity. It is women's traditional role to ensure water for their families. They are the ones thinking of how to manage with very little water and this role can lead them to vulnerability to gender-based violence. This was explained by the participants of Northeast India which also reflects the realities of other women across the subregions. Water scarcity is also adversely affecting women's sexual and reproductive health.



Location- Manipur, India

## ***Increased risk of gender-based violence against Indigenous women***

Participants from mainland India mentioned that the water crisis is making Indigenous women more vulnerable to intimate partner's violence since women's traditional role is to ensure that water is available at the household level. When women fail to provide water to their family, it can stir conflict in the household, leading to intimate partner's violence.

With scarcity of water, women also have to travel longer distances in search of water. In the Philippines, frequent flooding and soil erosion destroyed the geography and diverted the flow of springs. Dumagat Indigenous women shared they must walk miles from their settlement to fetch water. They also have to walk farther to access water for bathing and washing. This is also raised by the participants of Northeast India, India (Mainland), and Bangladesh where water sources are getting farther from the community, putting Indigenous women and girls at risk to violence when collecting water for household use. In Timor Leste, women have to look for water even late in the night, or have to line up for long hours or go to another village to fetch water.

## ***Adverse affect on Indingeous women's sexual and reproductive health rights***

Water scarcity is even affecting the sexual and reproductive health rights of Indigenous women in Bangladesh and India (mainland). Indigenous women in Bangladesh are avoiding menstruation by taking pills since menstrual periods require a lot of water. This was also one of the findings of a research by the National Indigenous Disabled Women's Association in Nepal where lack of access to water is affecting the menstrual hygiene of Indigenous women with disabilities. In addition, the participants from Nepal mentioned that only 1.1 percent of the Indigenous women and girls with disabilities have access to forest, water, and food which is resulting in food and water scarcity among them. Natural disasters like the earthquake, and climate change have more pronounced impacts to Indigenous women and girls with disabilities.

## **Obstacles for a full and active participation in decision making processes**

There is a need to interrogate existing systems which have historically excluded women and marginalized communities in decision-making in water governance.

The lack of women's participation fails to take into account their lived experiences which is resulting in biased policies, plans, and projects. A feminist framework will address the discrimination in water governance and ensures the livelihood of women and marginalised communities (IWRAW, 2021). Indigenous women's multiple burdens in the household and community levels hamper their participation in community initiatives to protect natural resources. When women are given the chance to attend, their active participation is barred by gender biases (AIPP & Oxfam, 2018).

Some of the obstacles described by Indigenous women during the consultation are described below.

## **Traditional gender roles restrict women's leadership**

Indigenous women are the major water users and bear the burden of protecting and managing water at the household and community levels. In spite of this fact, across all subregions of Asia, traditional gender roles that restrict Indigenous women's leadership are still one of the main barriers to women's active and meaningful participation in decision making processes in water governance.

In Timor Leste, men do not allow their wives to participate in activities outside the home. Wives are confined in the home and men are the ones making all the decisions. In Taiwan, the management of resources between communities lacks women's perspectives because women have no chance to participate in the discussion and decision making processes. This is also true in Vietnam, where the role of women is not recognized in water governance by community and society. During worship events/festivals, Indigenous women are relegated to prepare and serve food while men play leading roles. Across all sub-regions, there is gender division of work where women are in-charge of domestic matters while men are in-charge of matters outside of the home. This is why women can hardly participate in the decision making process of the community related to water and other natural resources.

This is also true among the Isnag and Dumagat Indigenous women in the Philippines where women are traditionally considered subordinate to their male counterparts, which mutes their voices in discussion and decisions regarding water resources.

Adding to traditional gender roles, Indonesia mentioned the low level of education of women compared to men that limits their potential in joining and participating in activities related to water processes. As the participants put it, “Women have limited rights to make decisions. Indigenous women are considered as the second class in our community and they do not consider our voices.” This is also echoed by participants of Malaysia saying that women have low self-esteem and do not have time spared for self-development. Men are dominating all kinds of decisions.

## Indigenous women are left out of the formal water governance process

Aside from male dominance in private and public lives among Indigenous communities in Asia, participants also mentioned that Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women are outrightly left-out of the formal water governance related processes. In Laos, Ethnic women’s participation in decision making in the water user group is still low because only a few women are included in the village committee. The participation is hampered by social norms that look down on ethnic people. Other barriers include low levels of education, male domination in the village, and language barrier - most of the ethnic women speak their ethnic language and cannot speak the mainstream Lao language. In Bangladesh, the government does not involve the Indigenous women at all levels. There is no allotted seat for Indigenous women’s representation. In Thailand, Indigenous women are less represented in community meetings and are not included in the management committee at the local level.

## Tokenist representation of Indigenous women

Participants of Nepal and Malaysia mentioned tokenist representation from authorities and politicians as one of the obstacles to women’s meaningful participation in decision making. In Nepal, the participants described tokenist representation as just for the sake of having one Indigenous women participant in the meeting room. Indigenous women are not given space to meaningfully participate in discussion. The government is taking a blanket approach instead of assessing different capacities and knowledge that Indigenous women have in managing water systems. In Malaysia, Indigenous Peoples’ issues are used by politicians as tokens to further their political agenda. There are no sincere initiatives to champion Indigenous People’s rights.

## Militarization/ extrajudicial killings of activists

In the Philippines, militarization, red tagging or terrorist labeling, and extrajudicial killings against government critics and against women environment defenders are hampering the full participation of Indigenous women in all discussions and decisions including that of water governance. The recent massacre among Indigenous Peoples in the Visayas Island who were known to be vocal in their opposition to Jala-ur and Pan-ay dams has instilled fear among Indigenous women and communities facing similar issues. The Isnag Indigenous women battling the construction of two hydropower dams are being labeled as rebels or enemies of the government just to discredit the legitimate issues that they are raising and eventually, to silence them.

## Women-led local solutions to water governance

Asian Indigenous women regard the water as an extension of their lives to which they need to protect. As major water users Indigenous women have a crucial role in water management. They are at the forefront of water protection and conservation and this role is highly recognized in most Indigenous communities.

In Cambodia, women are the ones patrolling as watchdogs against illegal fishing and they often face challenges such as threats from illegal fishers, traders, and families involved in illegal activities. While they are patrolling to protect their natural resources, they are risking their lives from the reprisals of the perpetrators of illegal fishing (AIPP, 2022).

In Malaysia, a water conservation system called “Tagal Suhai” is practiced by men and women and is now adopted for replication in other communities. The challenge now is how to monitor the system with the reality that water is scarce (AIPP, 2022).

An online women and youth exchange was organized by the Indigenous Peoples’ and Community Conserved Areas and Territories (ICCA) Consortium on Indigenous ways of managing the river systems and the challenges they face in terms of government policies and projects in the Philippines. A Pala’wan Indigenous Woman from Palawan shared that they are nurturing their watershed by regular practice of tree planting. Their lives, she said, are dependent on the river and the forest and it is their responsibility to protect it. A Dumagat woman of Southern Tagalog whose people are affected with the construction of Kaliwa Dam project to siphon water for the cities of Metro Manila mentioned their traditional ways of fishing and ways of nurturing the river.

They ensure that the river remains clean and safe to be passed to the next generations. The youth mentioned that they need to cultivate their relationship with their elders to know more about protecting and caring for their ancestral domains (Alegre, n.d.).

At the global level, the Right Energy Partnership with Indigenous Peoples was created to put human rights and Indigenous Peoples at the center of renewable energy. This platform seeks to highlight the initiatives and innovations to renewable energy that are run and managed by Indigenous Peoples including Indigenous women. Some of the initiatives highlighted were the community owned and democratically managed micro-hydro power systems in the Cordillera, Philippines and Sabah, Malaysia. These micro-hydro power systems are supporting community livelihoods. These initiatives are microcosms of just transition to renewable energy that reflect community empowerment through inclusive and participatory approach leading to empowerment of Indigenous Women and enhancement of community-led development (IPMGSDG, 2018).

Amid the huge challenges of development aggression, corporate control of water resources, and climate change, the participants mentioned some good practices in managing their water resources at the community level. They shared traditional systems and practices that they are strengthening to solve the water problem. Some women participants mentioned carrying out campaign and advocacy work towards blocking the entry of extractive and destructive companies in their traditional lands. These findings are summarized below.

## Regenerating and conserving water sources

In Nepal, the Rai and Tokpegola Indigenous communities have been reviving and protecting their water resources by planting trees, and making natural barriers to avoid contamination. In India (Mainland), they are promoting the planting of trees that are known to Indigenous Peoples to effectively hold water like the tree they call “saal” and bananas. While in Nepal, a women-led organization is educating the community to stop planting a tree called “baikana” which the people are unknowingly planting causing the depletion of water.

Aside from tree planting, Indigenous women of Bangladesh, and Northeast India are encouraging rain water harvesting, and cleaning up of ponds and wells to conserve water.

In Indonesia, Indigenous women are actively involved in safeguarding the forest and managing the water at the community level. They have a protocol that when they cut down one tree, they need to plant a replacement. A violation thereto has a sanction.

## Leading awareness raising and advocacy work

There are women-led organizations carrying out information drives regarding the conservation and protection of water. As an urgent task, Indigenous women facing development aggression involving their water resources are carrying out campaign and advocacy work hoping to stop mining, hydropower dams, and other corporations from controlling, and polluting their water resources.

In Indonesia, the women help in raising awareness by reminding the community to not throw trash in the river and iterate the need to maintain the flow of water.

“As indigenous women, we are starting to do advocacy work regarding our indigenous land, forests and to protect our springs. We are managing our land by living in sustainable ways. We plant species of trees that keep water. We also plant bamboo - it can keep water. We need to protect the forest in order to protect our springs. - Indonesia participant.”

In Northeast India, the Zomi Mother's Association (ZMA) has started awareness campaigns on clean water and sanitation of water resources. The ZMAs have carried out clean up drives of polluted and dried streams and rivers flowing in the heart and around the town of Lamka along with the District Administration. They have worked side by side with the Forest Department of the State Govt in promoting afforestation.

Despite the challenges of a patriarchal society among the Isnag Indigenous people of the Philippines, young women are now leading the community campaign and advocacy work to stop the construction of hydropower dams that threaten to erase their homes and block their access to their rivers. With higher levels of education among the young Isnag women, their roles are crucial in the people's opposition to the dams. These young women are leading information and education campaigns in their communities regarding the technicalities and impacts of the dams to their lives and livelihood. They are guiding their elders in the administrative and legal procedures in battling against the hydropower company. They are also techno-savvy and are effectively using social media to drumbeat their demands to the company and to the government.

Recently, they trooped to Metro Manila with their elders to request an audience with concerned government agencies to seek their help regarding the issue. With the help of their networking activities, they organized a press conference hoping that their voices could be heard.

Also in the south of Manila, Indigenous women from the Sierra Madre mountain range are leading and participating in advocacy, networking, dialogues, and legislative lobbying to stop the construction of dams especially that the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) is in the process of issuing the Certification Precondition (CP) greenlighting the construction of the dam. The indigenous women were instrumental in the establishment of a broad network called No to Kaliwa Kanan Laiban Dams network composed of Church people, politicians, lawyers, students and other sectors that are supporting the plights of indigenous Dumagat. The women are also maximizing social media, mainstream media to raise awareness regarding the impacts of the dam to indigenous communities and to expose the irregularities of the FPIC process facilitated by the NCIP.

Abano (2020) mentioned that Shirley Kimmayong, an Indigenous woman from Ifugao is frequently organizing capacity building activities among women in her village to study about the impacts of the dam project in their river ecosystem, and to their cultural and spiritual areas. Despite the dangers of being active in the defense of their land, they continue to do what they need to do to protect their lands and rivers for the next generation.

In Cambodia, women played a crucial role in stopping a banana plantation from using their lake. The banana plantation firm (Hong An Lomphat company) decided to stop using the lake because of women's strong objection. After several protests, the company wrote a contract committing to stop using water.

## Strengthening Indigenous practices

The participants also shared some notable traditional practices that are sustaining and protecting not only the water but all the natural resources in their ancestral lands.

### Tagal system

In Sabah, Malaysia, an example of a women-led water management is the setting up of community protocols through the Tagal system - community river management. The objective is to ensure that the stream of the river flows without interruption, and free from local disturbance. "We set small punishments for those inside and outside the village who come to catch fish and violate the protocols.

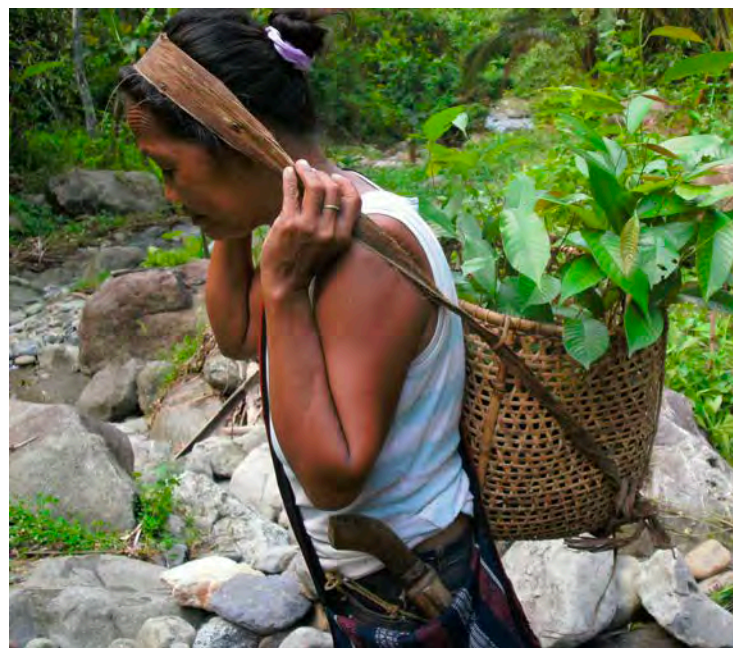
"We are trying to conserve our river," the participant said. Through the Tagal system, Dusun Indigenous women earn income through small eco-tourism. It also increases the number of fish because the women try to prohibit all the communities to use chemicals for agricultural activities. This way, it will encourage the breeding of riverine fish. They are also prohibiting the catching of small fishes.

"We are keeping the river safe from pollution, clean, and recreational. We have over 100 tagal systems in nine (9) villages. We are working with the fishers department, government agencies, and NGOs to conserve the river from pollution and how to make eco-tourism profitable and sustainable for indigenous women. "Tagal" means no," - shared Hilda, from the Dusun community of Sabah

### Lapat system

For the Isnag women in the Philippines, the Apayao river has defined the life and death of their people. When someone dies in the village, they declare a portion of the river restricted for any activities especially fishing for one or more years depending on the life story of the dead. They call this traditional practice, lapat. Lolita Alab explained that when a person dies, his/her life stops and restricting any activities in a portion of the river shows that a part of nature also mourns with the family. This practice helped in the preservation of riverine resources in the Apayao river.

In Nepal, participants highlighted the need to encourage traditional forest/water management practices such as community governed forest where families take turns in managing water wells.



Location-Philippine

## Recommendations

Time and again, the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women to all the decision making processes related to water resources is most important. IWRAW (2021) posits that feminist water governance does not only mean hiring more women among the decision makers but ensuring that at all levels, women are participating in governance, management, execution, and outreach. A feminist framework will put women as vital in water governance system and actively reconstruct the said system through community centered lens. This framework envisions a world where water is no longer a privilege but a right.

While it is recognised that Indigenous philosophy is the way towards water sustainability, there is a reality that these worldviews are changing brought about by many factors such as lived experiences, changing social-ecological, spiritual, and cultural dynamics.

With this, there is a need for better ways at bolstering the interconnectedness of people and nature especially among Indigenous women in the Meghna and Mekong basins who are the main water managers. Also, there is a need for women's voices to be integrated in water management through their active participation in the decision making process (Bisht, Ryntathiang, Chakma & Rout, 2021).

To achieve Indigenous women's meaningful participation in water governance, participants of the multiple consultations recommend the following:

### Apply a systemic approach to water governance

Management of water resources should be integrated into climate change policies and must involve Indigenous Peoples. Also, water should be treated not only as a resource ready to be exploited but a resource for the people. It should be managed and developed for the people and not for profit.

Water governance should be socialized and localized. Communities should be able to manage their water resources through a socialized system.

### Enable Indigenous women's meaningful participation

As the major water users and water protectors, Indigenous women should be one of the major stakeholders in water governance. Indigenous women should have equal rights and opportunities with men in terms of decision making processes and an environment should encourage listening to the perspectives of women.

Policies should foster solidarity and an enabling environment for Indigenous women's participation.

To ensure women's meaningful participation, Indigenous women and women with disabilities should be included in all levels of discussions and decision making processes related to water governance. The processes should be inclusive even to women with low levels of literacy.

A Gender Impact Assessment should be conducted to establish an accurate baseline for measuring gender targets. The results should form the basis of a localized Gender Equality Strategy to guide future activities.

Measures to integrate ethnicity into all social impact assessment processes should be implemented and awareness among all stakeholders should be improved.

### Strengthen Indigenous women's capacity to engage in water governance

Asian Indigenous women emphasized the need for strengthening their capacity on water issues and water management for enhancing their role in navigating challenges to water governance.

It is crucial to build the capacity of women including those with disabilities and those who cannot read and write about water governance, advocacy work, and leadership. Also, information about water governance should be shared and understood by all women especially those in the remote areas. Strengthening women's capacities will help achieve their meaningful participation.

Community level awareness raising activities for eliminating gender-based violence is needed for Indigenous women's empowerment. This includes improving their knowledge of Family Law and developing their skills on reporting mechanisms, access to justice, and services for survivors of violence. This way, women can effectively carry out their roles in water management at the household and community levels.

## Protect Indigenous Peoples' rights

The issue of water governance for Indigenous women should start with respecting the rights of Indigenous communities over their traditional lands, waters, and territories especially in the context of international corporations and extractive industries. It is only in this way that Indigenous women and the rest of their people can effectively safeguard the natural resources. Indigenous territories should be free from state sponsored intimidation. It is important to prioritize the issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls in the context of land management and water governance.

Corporate projects such as hydropower dams should respect and uphold the rights of Indigenous women and their communities to a genuine process of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and Environment and Cultural Impact Assessment.

## Foster intergenerational knowledge transfer

Indigenous women recommend strengthening Indigenous water governance systems rather than being subsumed in the existing water governance system.

There should be exchange of knowledge and ideas to help in the interpretation of the water law in indigenous language. Food practices including traditional knowledge and practices need to be documented and shared with other communities to empower people of all genders as agents of positive change.

Participants of the consultations recommended that Indigenous women are trained to maximize technology alongside indigenous knowledge on water protection and regeneration. Waste water retention was highlighted to process gray water to be fit to use. The use of "azola", a gray water purifier, can be promoted to transform the waste water for gardening and irrigation purposes.

## Provide climate financing to support Indigenous women led solutions

Indigenous communities have contributed insignificantly to the greenhouse gas emissions but they remain on the frontline line of the climate crisis. Indigenous women and girls living in Asia are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to their close relationships with the environment and water resources on which their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices depend. The consultations inform us that Indigenous women are not helpless victims of the climate crisis.

Policy makers should acknowledge Indigenous women have the potential to play an important role in leading and managing sustainable solutions to climate change in relation to water governance and natural resource management. Climate financing thus should ensure availability of flexible, readily accessible, and locally appropriate funding for Indigenous women led projects. In addition, the climate fund should support non-economic losses and damages experienced by Indigenous communities in relation to climate change, such as loss of their indigenous traditions and cultural heritage.

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## Annex-1: Participant organizations

<b>South Asia</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Country</b>
Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network ( <a href="#">BIWN</a> )	Bangladesh
<a href="#">Kapaeeng</a> Foundation	Bangladesh
Interstate Adivasi Women's Network ( <a href="#">ISAWN</a> )	India (Mainland)
South Vihar Welfare Society for Tribal <a href="#">Ashray</a>	India (Mainland)
Indigenous Women's Forum of North East India ( <a href="#">IWFNEI</a> )	North East India
<a href="#">Borok</a> Women's Forum (BWF)	North East India
National Indigenous Women's Forum ( <a href="#">NIWF</a> )	Nepal
National Indigenous Disabled Women's Association ( <a href="#">NIDWAN</a> )	Nepal
Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities ( <a href="#">NEFIN</a> )	Nepal
Nepal Indigenous Disabled Association (NIDA)	Nepal
<b>South East Asia</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Country</b>
<a href="#">PEREMPUAN AMAN</a>	Indonesia
<a href="#">Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia</a> ( <a href="#">JOAS</a> )	Malaysia
<a href="#">Covalima</a> Youth Center	<a href="#">Timor Leste</a>
<a href="#">Bai</a> - National Federation of Indigenous Women's Organization	Philippines
<a href="#">Isnag</a> Indigenous Community	Philippines
<b>Mekong</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Country</b>
Cambodian Indigenous Women's Association	Cambodia
3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN)	Cambodia
Oxfam Cambodia	Cambodia
Northeastern Rural Development	Cambodia
My Village Organization	Cambodia
<a href="#">MVi Siem Bok</a> Commune	Cambodia
<a href="#">MVi Kbal Romeas Chas</a>	Cambodia
<a href="#">MVi Sre Sronuk</a>	Cambodia
<a href="#">MVi KohSneng</a>	Cambodia
<a href="#">MVi Sre Kor</a>	Cambodia
<a href="#">MVi Thmey</a>	Cambodia
Gender Development Association ( <a href="#">GDA</a> )	Laos
Centre for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas (CSDM)	Vietnam
Oxfam Vietnam	Vietnam
Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand ( <a href="#">IWNT</a> )	Thailand
International Rivers (IR)	Thailand
<b>East Asia</b>	
<a href="#">Papora</a> Indigenous Development Association ( <a href="#">PIDA</a> )	Taiwan
<a href="#">Waraoral</a> Indigenous Community	Taiwan
Association of the Indigenous Peoples in the <a href="#">Ryukyus</a> ( <a href="#">AIPR</a> )	Japan



