

# Being **INDIGENOUS** **IN ASIA**

AIPP Strategic Plan  
2025-2029



Asia Indigenous  
Peoples Pact



A person in traditional indigenous attire stands on a hillside, pointing towards the distance. The person is wearing a feathered headdress, a patterned loincloth, and has a large bundle of green leaves or fabric draped over their shoulder. They are holding a long spear. The background shows a vast, hazy landscape of rolling hills and mountains under a cloudy sky.

## The Strategic Plan: Our Shared Vision for Reclaiming the Future

This Strategic Plan—encompassing our long-term Strategic Direction and the Four-Year Strategy (2025–2028)—reaffirms the commitment of AIPP members to advance the right to self-determination and territorial sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples across Asia. Rooted in over eight years of dialogue, collective action, and critical reflection, it embodies a movement-led transformation—one shaped by the knowledge, struggles, and unwavering resolve of Indigenous Peoples themselves.

This process grew from AIPP’s critical self-reflection—a moment of reckoning where members and leaders recognized the urgent need to revitalize unity and solidarity.

In some countries, fractures had deepened, platforms for dialogue had eroded, and collaborative agenda-setting had stalled. A lack of shared understanding around co-responsibility also weakened both coordination and collective ownership across the network.

This Strategic Plan responds to those challenges by re-centering indigenous agency and rebuilding trust through action.

A profound transformation became imperative—one that would realign AIPP's structure and culture with indigenous core values, foster deeper coordination and accountability, and rebuild trust across the network. This was never just about technical fixes; it demanded a fundamental shift in strategy—prioritizing long-term movement-building and systemic change through strengthened collective capacity.

Members articulated a clear mandate: revitalize internal dialogue, deepen trust, and cultivate leadership from the ground up. They affirmed that AIPP's bottom-up ethos could only thrive if members themselves drove local action—ensuring the movement remained rooted in sovereignty, solidarity, and self-determination.

AIPP's response to these challenges has been both systematic and visionary—a multi-year, multi-layered process of reflection, consultation, and strategic action.

This comprehensive journey includes:

**2018-2024:** Deepening local and regional engagement through country-level reflections across seven countries.

**2019-2025:** Strengthening cross-border solidarity through Sub-Regional Consultations.

**2020, 2022, 2023:** Advancing indigenous rights and advocacy through three regional strategic workshops on Lands, Territories & Resources.

**2022-2024:** Three regional-level exchanges to bolster frontline resilience for Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders.

**2021:** Building political knowledge and leadership for systemic change through the Self-Determination and Democracy Course.

**2022:** Connecting indigenous struggles to global democratization and fostering solidarity and movement-building through the International Conference on Self-Determination.

**2023:** Consolidating Asian indigenous perspectives through the Regional Conference on Self-Determination.

**2024:** Empowering and recognising grassroots leadership through the AIPP School of Participation.

**2017-2024:** Refining AIPP's dual-track approach through biannual reviews harmonizing upstream (international/regional advocacy) and downstream (community-driven action) strategies.

The above is more than a timeline—it's the blueprint for a movement realigning itself with the power of its people. Emerging from these transformative processes, AIPP members have united behind a bold, actionable vision for the future. Towards this end, AIPP members have committed to:

- Deepening political education and leadership development through initiatives like the Course on Democracy and Self-Determination and the AIPP School of Participation. The goal is to equip a new generation of leaders with the strategic vision to navigate systems of power—while grounding them in the sacred responsibility of indigenous governance.

- Building sovereign futures through strengthening indigenous self-governance models that reflect our peoples' autonomy, and by establishing national Centres of Defenders and promotion of Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- Applying the Bottom-Up Consensus where members lead frontline change, shaping agendas from villages to global stages.
- Fostering unity through co-responsibility so that there are clear accountability frameworks between members and the Secretariat in agenda-setting, programme implementation, advocacy, and movement-building.
- Strengthening internal coherence through integrated planning, monitoring, reporting, and documentation to maximize both impact and cost-efficiency.
- Rooting every strategy in ancestral wisdom by grounding AIPP's policies, lobby, campaigns, advocacy and movement-building in collective dignity and indigenous knowledge.



This Strategic Plan is more than a roadmap—it is a bold assertion of political will. It embodies the resurgence of indigenous agency, the reimagining of movement infrastructure, and a unified vision for reclaiming the future.

Rooted in the resolute solidarity of our members, this document embodies our collective resolve to move forward as one—united in purpose, strengthened by wisdom, and grounded in shared struggle.



## A Transformative Shift: Grounding AIPP in a Self-Governance Approach

This Strategic Plan marks a decisive turning point in the journey of AIPP and its members. For the first time, our collective direction is framed explicitly within a self-governance approach; not merely as a thematic pillar, but as the core organising principle that binds our shared vision, actions, and identity.

Historically, Indigenous Peoples in Asia have lived under diverse systems of community-based governance that ensured balance between human communities and the natural world. These were systems where decision-making, accountability, justice, and care were rooted in the consent of the governed, the wisdom of elders, and the spiritual guardianship of the land. This plan reclaims that heritage not only as a cultural memory, but as a living foundation for political strategy and institutional coherence.



The self-governance approach allows AIPP to:

- **Reconnect strategy with identity:** By placing indigenous self-governance at the centre of our framework, we align political goals with the lived realities of our peoples—anchoring our movement in sovereignty, autonomy, and collective dignity.
- **Unify fragmented efforts:** In the past, advocacy, capacity-building, and community actions sometimes moved in parallel. Through a self-governance lens, these now converge into an integrated movement-building strategy in which every programme strengthens local autonomy and regional solidarity.
- **Ensure coherence across scales:** Whether engaging in local organising or global advocacy, this approach provides a common thread, ensuring that actions at every level are accountable to and guided by indigenous-led models of governance.
- **Move from representation to reconstruction:** Rather than merely demanding a seat at

the table, we are rebuilding our own tables; instituting self-governing models at community level and advancing their recognition by states and international mechanisms.

- **Foster long-term transformation:** Technical interventions alone cannot sustain indigenous survival and resurgence. This plan affirms that lasting change must be rooted in political, cultural, and spiritual foundations that only self-governance can nurture.

This is not just a shift in emphasis; it is a structural realignment of AIPP's movement architecture where solidarity is deepened through co-responsibility, where leadership is built from the ground up, and where the long struggle for rights is sustained by the strength of our own institutions.

In this way, the Strategic Plan becomes more than a roadmap, it is a declaration of indigenous political imagination. It expresses our commitment not only to resist dispossession and disempowerment, but to rebuild the political and social orders that honour and assert Indigenous Peoples' place in history and in the future.

# BEING INDIGENOUS IN ASIA

## AIPP's STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029

The Indigenous Peoples of Asia are many peoples. We all have our own distinct language, culture, customary laws and social and political institutions that are very different from those of the dominant people in our countries.

It is estimated that over 300 million Indigenous people live in Asia, representing hundreds of distinct ethnic groups. These communities continue to preserve, practice, and pass down their unique cultural traditions, languages, social structures, and ways of life.

While we find an enormous diversity among Indigenous Peoples, collectively, our common struggle has always been to attain the right to self-determination.

The early autonomous indigenous communities were the first self-governing polities prior to the formation of nation states. These communities practised forms of self-governance that were organically developed, and negotiated, within a strong village or community as its foundation.

In such customary governance systems, the primary authority for governance resided in the community itself. It follows, therefore, that the ownership



and control of our customary lands, territories and resources was also under customary governance.

The primary purpose of governance was to ensure the well-being of the community of humans and non-human beings within our territories.

Across the world, Indigenous Peoples have been colonized. It makes little difference whether they were forced to live in countries created and ruled by the descendants of settler colonialists from overseas. Or, like in Asia, in countries created after the colonizers had left and that are now ruled by the elites of dominant native ethnic groups. What all Indigenous Peoples have in common is the experience of discrimination, dispossession, and dis-empowerment that follows colonization, and above all: the loss of self-determination.



## The Current Situation

One of the most pressing issues for indigenous communities in Asia is the struggle for land and resource rights. Our communities have an intrinsic connection to our ancestral lands, which are vital for our cultural identity and survival. However, under neoliberal development, our territories are increasingly commodified—through urbanization, industrial expansion, tourism, and carbon markets—while simultaneously being portrayed as underdeveloped. This facilitates capital accumulation through resource extraction and displacement, even as the state introduces welfare schemes to legitimize its control. The merging of extractive and welfare agendas underscores a deepening internal colonialism, where Indigenous homelands are absorbed into the market economy as resource frontiers.

As our lands face escalating threats—from rampant deforestation and destructive mining to militarization and industrial agriculture—we are witnessing not just catastrophic biodiversity loss, but also the forced displacement of our communities, the annihilation of our livelihoods, and the systematic erosion of our



cultures. Across Asia, Indigenous Peoples remain disproportionately trapped in severe poverty. While national poverty rates may decline, the growing wealth gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations reveals a deepening crisis of inequality that demands urgent action.

The other main challenge we are facing is the non-recognition of our identity and right to self-determination. While some Asian countries, like the Philippines, have made progress in recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples, implementation remains inconsistent, and other countries have yet to provide legal frameworks that adequately protect indigenous rights. This applies above all to the right to self-determination and, as part of it, self-government.

Many of our communities have been forcefully relocated, our lands taken away, our forests destroyed, our mountains mined, and our valleys dammed and flooded. Children are forced into schools where none of our languages are spoken, where none of our knowledge and values are taught. In addition, proselytization by mainstream religions has led to the loss of many elements of our culture, in particular traditional spirituality. And we are all forced to live under governments that are not our own, in which

we can hardly participate, and on which we have no influence.

As a result, Indigenous Peoples all over Asia often face significant social and economic disadvantages. Limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities perpetuates cycles of poverty and marginalization. Language barriers, cultural discrimination, and geographic isolation further exacerbate these challenges.



## What Needs to Change

To bring about the changes we need for our communities to regain control over our life and destiny, we first must embark on a process of decolonization, including that of the mind. It is a necessary step to create space for re-acquiring old visions, worldviews, value systems and practices, which are the foundation of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination. This will enable Indigenous Peoples to rebuild, recover and restore consensual social and political order, and free institutions.

The pursuit of self-determination in Asia requires a process of democratization and democracy. The state is required to revisit its institutional architecture for accommodating and protecting the right to self-determination and self-government of Indigenous Peoples.

The right to self-determination is central to Indigenous Peoples' struggle, as it enables us to grow individually and as communities in our self-determined manner. As such, AIPP's vision and mission has always been grounded in self-determination.

Inseparable from self-determination is ownership and control over lands, territories and resources, which alone allows indigenous communities to continue their guardianship of their territories for the benefit of their future generations and the wider society, which they are part of. Restoring Indigenous Peoples' guardianship of their land has become an even more pressing need in light of the climate crisis humanity is facing. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples in Asia need to step up their struggle for the recognition of our right to lands, territories and resources.



## How to Bring About Change: A Long-Term Framework for Action

Lasting and meaningful change requires more than a vision—it demands clear goals, a well-defined strategy, and actionable steps to turn aspirations into reality. Our four-year strategic plan bridges this gap by aligning immediate actions with a long-term strategic direction, ensuring that every effort contributes to transformative outcomes.

AIPP's Strategic Plan bridges aspiration and action through a two-part framework for sustainable change:

**Long-Term Strategic Direction** – Defines our overarching goals and priorities, ensuring alignment with our mission.

**Four-Year Strategy (2025–2029)** – A focused, six-pillar action plan with clear objectives, key activities, and measurable outcomes, developed for each of the six pillars in a separate document, to drive progress and accountability.

By integrating immediate action with sustained vision, we create a clear path toward achieving our strategic goals—efficiently, effectively, and with lasting results.



# VISION

Indigenous Peoples in Asia enjoy the right to self-determination, and to our land, territories and resources, which allows our communities to live a life in dignity, and in accordance with our own culture, customs, and traditions

POLITICAL GOAL

SOCIAL GOAL

ECONOMIC GOAL

STRATEGIC DIRECTION  
3 Priorities

4-YEARS STRATEGY  
6 Pillars



## INSTITUTIONAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Transparency & Accountability | Participation,  
Trust & Respect | Sectoral Justice



# VISION

## POLITICAL GOAL

Cohesive and sustainable living within a framework of responsible freedom

## SOCIAL GOAL

Reaffirm and strengthen the principle of guardianship over lands, territories, and resources

## ECONOMIC GOAL

Resist the commodification of our territories while revitalizing livelihood sovereignty of our communities

**Upholding  
Indigenous Vision  
and Core Values**

**Advancing  
Indigenous  
Self-governance**

**Land and  
Territorial  
Sovereignty**

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION: 3 PRIORITIES

**Mobilizing  
Members and  
Networks**

**Strategic  
Regranting  
Program**

**AIPP  
School of  
Participation**

**Centers  
of Excellence  
in Village  
Governance**

**Centers  
of  
Defenders**

**Regional  
and  
International  
Advocacy**

### 4-YEARS STRATEGY: 6-PILLARS FRAMEWORK

**Women's Rights & Gender Equality | Intersectional Justice | Indigenous Youth**

### CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES

## INSTITUTIONAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES



## **Our Vision for the Future**

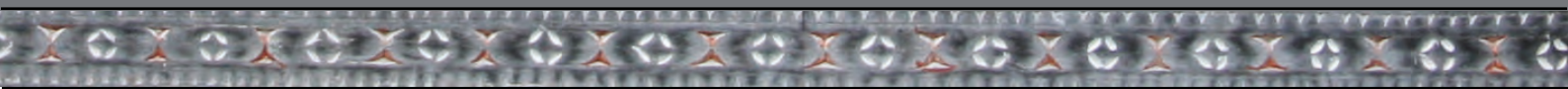
AIPP's vision is that:

Indigenous Peoples in Asia enjoy the right to self-determination, and to our lands, territories and resources, which allows our communities to live a life in dignity, and in accordance with our own culture, customs, and traditions.

## **Our Mission**

AIPP's mission for the coming years remains the same as stated in its founding Charter, which is:

To strengthen solidarity and linkages among the Indigenous Peoples organisations and movements in Asia, and to strengthen the position of Indigenous Peoples in Asia in pursuance of its long-term vision.



## Our Strategic Goals

Regaining self-determination and control over our territories involves a process of decolonizing, healing, transformation and mobilization of peoples.

The **political goal** is to establish cohesive and sustainable collective living within a framework of responsible freedom.

The **social goal** is to reaffirm and strengthen the indigenous principle of guardianship over lands, territories, and resources — ensuring equitable access, secure ownership rights, and the agency to negotiate, all of which are vital for sustaining harmony and continuity for future generations.

The **economic goal** is to resist the commodification of our territories while revitalizing livelihood sovereignty, fostering resilience and self-sufficiency within our communities. This approach champions a transformative shift toward a global economy rooted in environmental sustainability and social justice — one that prioritizes collective well-being over corporate profit and shareholder exploitation.



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To achieve the political, social and economic aspirations of the Indigenous Peoples' movements across Asia, we need to affirm our past ideals, build upon our current strengths, and plan strategically for the future. To do this, we need to revisit or rediscover the core values of our indigenous heritage and wisdom and make them the foundation of our collective struggle.

# I. AIPP's Long-term Strategic Direction

## The Foundations of our Common Identity and Struggle

To steer AIPP towards these political and social goals – and in our pursuit of a future where Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty, rights, and wisdom are fully realized, where Asia's democratic systems are shaped and enriched, and where we lead in the sustainable stewardship of lands and territories – AIPP has developed a Long-term Strategic Direction to guide us. Towards this end, AIPP will streamline its future activities along **three strategic objectives**:

1. To have a common understanding of, and an agreement on, the *core values of our indigenous heritage and wisdom* as the foundational basis of the Indigenous Peoples' movement in Asia.
2. To have indigenous *self-governance working as a practical model of governance* in communities of our member organisations, and that its essential principles are accepted by states, shaping and enriching Asia's democratic systems.
3. To attain the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' *right to customary lands, territories and resources* in the countries of AIPP's member organisations, contributing to sustainable stewardship of lands, territories and resources.



In keeping with these strategic objectives, AIPP's Strategic Direction has *three strategic priorities*, for which *programmatically components* are identified.

## Strategic Priorities and Programmatic Components

### Strategic Priority 1:

#### Upholding Indigenous Vision and Core Values

Guided by indigenous wisdom, we commit to embedding indigenous knowledge, values, and principles into all aspects of our work. This foundation ensures authenticity, respect, and sustainability in everything we do.

The urgent need for decolonization, healing, and reclaiming indigenous worldviews and values is underscored by the significant damage inflicted upon indigenous societies through centuries of colonization and cultural suppression.

This has necessitated a profound self-reflection among both elders and youth within our communities. Elders bring invaluable wisdom and historical perspective, while the youth offer fresh energy and new insights.

Together, they must take stock of what remains of their indigenous spirituality, values, and knowledge systems.

This inventory is crucial for understanding the current state of our cultural heritage and identifying areas in need of revival. Initiating this restoration process involves a concerted effort in raising awareness, educating both indigenous and non-indigenous populations about these worldviews, and building capacities within communities to safeguard and promote their cultural identities. Through these steps, indigenous societies can begin to heal from past traumas and reclaim their rightful place and identity within the broader national and global contexts.

Therefore, in our strive to uphold the indigenous vision and our core indigenous values, we must first have a common understanding of, and an agreement on, the core values of our indigenous heritage and wisdom as the foundational basis of the Indigenous Peoples' movement in Asia.

To operationalize this priority, all our initiatives, policies, and actions will be grounded in the following foundational principles:

**Cultural Integrity** – Ensuring indigenous knowledge systems, traditions, and values guide decision-making.

**Meaningful Inclusion** – Engaging indigenous voices at every stage, from design to implementation, and in monitoring and evaluation.

**Respectful Partnerships** – Collaborating with communities in ways that honor autonomy and reciprocity.

**Sustainable Impact** – Aligning outcomes with long-term indigenous priorities, in cooperation with like-minded external partners, rather than external agendas.



Honoring this vision requires we first attend to two essential transformative actions:

### **1. Decolonizing, Healing, and Reclaiming Indigenous Worldviews and Values**

There is an urgent need among both indigenous elders and youth for self-reflection on the extent of the damage done to indigenous societies. We need to take stock of what is left in terms of indigenous worldviews, spirituality, values, and knowledge. And to initiate a process of healing, restoration and reclaiming what has been lost. This is to be supported by awareness-raising, education and capacity-building.

### **2. Revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Strengthening Data Sovereignty Protection**

Indigenous knowledge is being lost at an unprecedented speed. Multiple factors—such as modern education, mainstream media, proselytization, and outmigration of youth and women—have resulted in the disruption of intergenerational knowledge transfer. At the same time, indigenous knowledge is being appropriated and used for commercial interests, without prior consent.

As such, documentation of indigenous knowledge by Indigenous Peoples themselves is essential to uphold its governance and to ensure the integrity of the collected

data and information. Sovereignty over collected data, whether gathered by Indigenous Peoples or others, must also be safeguarded.





relationships by which authority is exercised, decisions are made, and policies are implemented.

Government is the body that has been given the authority and responsibilities to make decisions and to enforce them through established rules.

While some Indigenous Peoples may still be able to exercise some level of customary self-governance at the

Strategic Priority 2:

## Advancing Indigenous Self-Governance

The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). To fully realize self-determination, Indigenous Peoples must establish, and exercise self-government supported by a functional governance system.

Governance is the process through which an organisation or a society are directed and ordered. Indigenous governance involves how indigenous values and foundations steer the mechanisms, processes, and



local level, many if not most have been deprived of their right to constitute their own self-governing institutions—that is, to have their own government.

By this strategic priority, we aim to have indigenous self-governance working as a practical model of governance in communities of our member organisations, and that its essential principles are accepted by states, shaping and enriching Asia's democratic systems.

To reclaim our inherent right to self-determination through community-led governance structures and culturally aligned institutions, AIPP will focus on these programmatic components:

### 1. Supporting Indigenous Peoples' Self-government

This programmatic component facilitates self-reflection among Indigenous Peoples in Asia on the state of self-determination, with a particular focus on self-government. It supports initiatives to revitalize and strengthen existing self-governance structures or to revive and reconstruct self-government as a consensual political order in communities where it has been lost.



This component also fosters the integration of indigenous values and governance principles with globally recognized standards of good governance, such as democracy, representation, accountability, and participation.

### 2. Strengthening Indigenous Leadership

Effective self-governance of indigenous nations, communities, organisations, networks, and alliances relies on capable leadership rooted in indigenous values and guided by principles of good governance.

This programmatic component is designed to empower current indigenous leaders while nurturing



the next generation of leadership—with a special focus on indigenous youth, women, and persons with disabilities. By investing in their skills and vision, we ensure a strong foundation for sustained self-determination and resilience.

As a regional movement, AIPP must prioritize cultivating transformative leadership among Indigenous youth, women, and persons with disabilities. This requires clearly articulating the values, qualities, and vision that will guide the leaders of tomorrow—ensuring they are equipped to uphold indigenous rights, sovereignty, and sustainable futures.

### 3. Empowering Community-led Organizing

Well-organized and resilient communities form the foundation of indigenous self-governance. Several of AIPP's member organisations have successfully engaged in community organizing for decades, often with AIPP's support. This programmatic component builds on the experiences of these partners, fostering lateral knowledge exchange and mutual support among member organisations to strengthen community organizing efforts.

Partners in some countries, like Malaysia and Cambodia, are planning to incorporate the training



on self-governance and democracy in their existing community organizing programs.

#### 4. Advancing Indigenous Self-Determination through Political Advocacy for Democratization

To realize the internationally recognized right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, states must not only acknowledge and protect this right but also adapt their legal and policy frameworks accordingly. This is crucial for strengthening democracy in their countries.

Across Asia, democracy has faced significant challenges in recent years. While some countries, such as China, Vietnam, and Laos, remain under one-party rule,



Myanmar is under military dictatorship. And other countries, like Thailand, are only nominally democratic. There is also a growing trend toward authoritarianism, like in India.

Through this programmatic component, AIPP aims to advocate for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination in Asia, while also joining regional and global efforts to strengthen democracy and the rule of law.



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### Strategic Priority 3:

## Land and Territorial Sovereignty

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Indigenous Peoples maintain a profound and multi-dimensional relationship with their lands, territories, and resources. For many of our communities, their livelihood continues to depend on the land, forests, rivers, or seas. We also have a deep cultural and spiritual connection to our territories.

A key aspect of this relationship is the collective nature of land ownership. While some lands and resources may be individually owned, many others—such as forests, pastures, rivers, and specific areas of the sea—are held under collective tenure.

In recognition of this profound connection, Indigenous Peoples' right to their lands, territories, and resources is acknowledged in international law as a fundamental and inherent right. This is enshrined in instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the International Labour Organisation's Convention No. 169 (ILO 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.



Under this strategic priority, the objective is to secure legal recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples' customary rights to lands, territories, and resources across all AIPP member countries, while advancing sustainable stewardship practices rooted in indigenous knowledge. This will be done through the following programmatic components:

### 1. Securing Land and Resource Rights

Indigenous Peoples' right to their lands, territories, and resources—especially those held under collective tenure—are often not recognized by states, which typically only acknowledge individual private ownership.

This programmatic component focuses on advocating for legal and policy reforms to include the recognition of customary tenure systems for lands, territories, and resources, with particular emphasis on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. AIPP will continue to raise awareness and conduct advocacy efforts aimed at securing recognition of customary tenure and Indigenous Peoples' rights to our lands, territories, and resources.

### 2. Strengthening Indigenous Territorial and Resource Governance Systems

As a result of the lack of recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands, territories, and resources, our territories are increasingly encroached upon by settlers, private companies, and the establishment of protected areas. In addition, the state-sponsored promotion of 'modern' land-use practices, coupled with the devaluation of traditional land use and management in mainstream education and media, has weakened territorial and resource governance within indigenous communities.



This programmatic component aims to revive and strengthen customary systems of territorial and resource governance, adapting them to changing conditions brought about by government policies and climate change. Activities will include awareness-raising, dissemination of relevant information, and sharing of experiences through exchanges between communities.

Additionally, this component will involve sustained advocacy for the application of international law, including the UNDRIP, ILO Convention 169, and the common provisions on permanent sovereignty over land and natural resources in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

### **3. Supporting Indigenous Stewardship of Ecosystems, Climate Action and Resilience**

The territories of Indigenous Peoples often overlap with some of the world's best-preserved forests and most biodiverse areas. Studies have also shown that forests are better protected within indigenous territories. As forests and other natural landscapes such as savannas and wetlands serve as vital carbon sinks, conserving

these landscapes has become a key component of the global strategy to address the climate crisis.

This programmatic component emphasizes the need for a holistic, human rights-based approach to environmental conservation and climate change mitigation. It advocates for the recognition of indigenous communities as essential partners in environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and climate action, by acknowledging our rights to lands, territories, and resources, promoting community-based conservation, and fostering a truly collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach.



# AIPP's Institutional Values and Principles of Engagement

As we operationalize these strategic priorities in alignment with our Vision and Core Values, we commit ourselves to the fundamental principles:

- **Transparency and Accountability**

As an organisation rooted in the principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, AIPP stands firmly against corruption in all its forms. We recognize that robust anti-corruption measures are essential to ensuring transparency, accountability, and trust in our operations, as well as in the broader pursuit of justice and equity for Indigenous Peoples.

In accordance with AIPP's Constitution, bylaws, and core values, we enforce a strict zero-tolerance Anti-Corruption Policy to uphold accountability, integrity, and transparency. This policy defines ethical standards—specifying prohibited and permitted conduct—for all AIPP officers, staff, member organisations, partners, and beneficiaries of AIPP funding or services. Compliance with

all applicable domestic and international anti-corruption laws is mandatory, including prohibitions on improper payments, gifts, or undue inducements to or from any entity, whether private, public, or governmental. These obligations extend to all interactions with governments and their agencies.

- **Participation, Trust and Respect**

A key guiding principle in AIPP's collaboration with members and network partners is meaningful participation, grounded in mutual trust, respect for their autonomy, and recognition of their unwavering commitment and integrity.

Participation has always been the lifeblood of indigenous communities—the vital force that sustains their meaningful, interconnected existence. Through reciprocal engagement, it creates shared spaces of belonging while forging the very foundation of freedom—a freedom deeply rooted in collective life and mutual responsibility.

By upholding and promoting the principle of participation in our work, we cultivate a shared vision and collective strategies that strengthen unity across Asia's indigenous rights movement. More profoundly, this commitment to participation helps revitalize the very essence of indigenous life—restoring the vitality of community-based living systems and intergenerational ways of being.

- **Sectorial Justice**

Through our steadfast commitment in upholding and advocating the values of respect and participation, AIPP champions gender justice in all aspects of our governance, programs, and organisational culture. We also prioritize the meaningful inclusion of indigenous youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, ensuring that their voices also shape our collective future.

These principles and basic values form the foundation of our cross-cutting strategic priorities.



## Cross-cutting Strategic Priorities

AIPP has identified three cross-cutting strategic priorities that are systematically integrated throughout all programs and initiatives. Rather than be standalone efforts, these priorities are intentionally interwoven into every dimension of our work. This holistic approach ensures unified, transformative impact across all sectors while advancing our comprehensive vision for indigenous community empowerment.

Our three cross-cutting strategic priorities are the strands we weave into every initiative—binding alignment, strengthening impact, and crafting transformative change for indigenous communities.

### 1. Indigenous Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Indigenous women endure intersecting forms of discrimination—marginalized for their identity as Indigenous Peoples, their gender, and often their economic status. Even within their own societies, many face systemic exclusion, particularly in decision-making

and governance, where their voices are routinely suppressed despite their vital roles as knowledge-keepers and community leaders.

As primary caregivers and custodians of land and traditional knowledge, indigenous women bear a disproportionate burden when faced with dispossession, climate change, and resource depletion. Their vital roles in sustaining families and ecosystems make them especially vulnerable to the cascading effects of environmental degradation and economic marginalization—yet their leadership remains critical in building resilience.



Across all programmatic components, we will actively address indigenous women's needs through two key approaches: ensuring equitable participation in leadership and decision-making, and implementing targeted initiatives designed to dismantle barriers and amplify their voices.

## 2. Indigenous Youth

Even though youth comprise almost half of the global population, they are rarely involved in decision-making. This is also true for indigenous societies. When youth are not included in decision-making, their views are not properly reflected, resulting in decisions that poorly match the youth's needs. Their exclusion from decision-making can also create intergenerational tensions, limit the youth's opportunities to contribute to the community's well-being, and even cause outmigration.

Among many Indigenous Peoples, youth are entrusted with delegated responsibilities and leadership roles as part of the 'learning by doing' process. They are given full leadership roles once deemed qualified and meritorious. However,



compulsory modern education and mainstream media often contribute to their alienation from their culture, exacerbating the inter-generational divide.

Therefore, AIPP strives to actively involve youth in all our programs, prioritizing their participation in specific areas such as leadership development and community organizing.

### 3. AIPP's Intersectional Justice Commitment

AIPP is committed to addressing intersectional discrimination rooted in overlapping identities such as indigeneity, disability, and gender. This is achieved by promoting inclusive policies and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, with an initial focus on indigenous persons with disabilities (IPwD) organisations. We define these organisations as being primarily composed of, led, and governed by IPwD (or the sectors they represent), authentically representing their voices, rights, and concerns.

Across Asia, 45 million indigenous people with disabilities endure profound and distinct challenges. A significant number live in poverty and are denied access to basic rights and essential services. Fragmented networks and limited alliances weaken their collective

advocacy, leaving their voices unheard. Structural and social barriers further exclude them from political representation and meaningful participation in decision-making, deepening their marginalization and perpetuating systemic inequality.

To address these challenges, AIPP will develop a comprehensive, long-term strategy integrated into its programmatic components. The goal is to create inclusive and empowering platforms that amplify the voices of IPwD, with a focus on building and strengthening networks and alliances. These initiatives will also include capacity-building efforts to empower indigenous communities to effectively address their issues.

While focusing on the issues faced by IPwD, we remain open to and encourage the participation of other gender-diverse or intersectional groups in our activities. This approach aims to build deeper insights into the overlapping challenges faced by various groups and consolidate their concerns, enabling AIPP to address these issues more effectively as our work progresses.



## II. AIPP's Strategy for 2025-2029

### Towards a Common Identity, Shared Struggle and a Collective Future

AIPP's Strategic Direction recognises the importance of mutual learning and empowerment among indigenous communities. This strategy fosters an environment where knowledge and experiences are shared, and capacities are built collectively. By engaging in mutual learning, our members can strengthen their skills, increase their self-confidence, and take a more active role in advocating for their rights and interests.

Additionally, AIPP recognises the critical need to develop and enhance leadership qualities within indigenous communities. We also understand the challenges posed by political constraints and limited institutional capacity, and the crucial role of essential financial support in overcoming these hurdles.

Our approach is guided by a rights-based, community-centered, and intersectional framework that aims to achieve unity among the various indigenous groups and networks, thereby creating a stronger, more cohesive movement across Asia.

In this respect, a 6-pillar framework has been put in place for the coming four years, designed to ensure cohesive, high-impact implementation of our Strategic Direction. These interconnected pillars are:

1. Mobilizing AIPP Members and Networks
2. The Strategic Regranting Programme
3. The AIPP School of Participation
4. The Centers of Excellence in Village Governance
5. The Centers of Defenders
6. Regional and International Advocacy



# 1. Mobilizing AIPP's Members and Networks

Over the past three decades of its existence, AIPP has succeeded in creating an integrated, regional Indigenous Peoples' movement in Asia. Its membership has been steadily expanding while six coordinated networks—on indigenous knowledge, media, human rights defenders, women, youth and land and territorial platform—have been formed.

AIPP's members and networks will remain central to realizing its strategic direction at the local, regional, and global levels. AIPP will not only focus on consolidating and expanding its membership but also on enhancing the capacity of its members and networks by encouraging their active participation and delegating responsibilities for activities at all levels. This approach will foster solidarity among members, thereby strengthening the Indigenous Peoples' movement in Asia.

To achieve this, AIPP will restructure, redirect, refocus and strengthen its work in the secretariat. We will also improve its cooperation and coordination with our members and the Executive Council along the following lines:

## A. Restructuring the Secretariat

To enhance coordination and responsiveness at the local level, AIPP is shifting from a Programme Theme-based structure to Sub-Regional Teams. The existing six thematic programmes will be consolidated into four Sub-Regional Teams: East Asia, Southeast Asia, Mekong, and South Asia.

This restructuring is designed to better address the specific needs and contexts of each sub-region. The Secretariat's management structure will also be adjusted to provide strategic oversight, as well as support in identifying, developing, and implementing country-specific programmes in alignment with AIPP's Strategic Direction and the Strategy for 2025-2028.



As part of this transition, the role of Programme Committees will be phased out. Instead, Executive Council members from each sub-region will take the lead in guiding and monitoring programme implementation within their respective Sub-Regional Teams.

### **B. Institutionalizing and Strengthening Country Focal Organisations and Committees**

Establishing and empowering Country Focal Organisations and their Committees (Political Advisory Committee or Core Committee). These entities will share responsibilities and collaborate closely with the Sub-regional Teams of the AIPP Secretariat. Identification and agreement on Country Focal Organisations will be prioritized where they are currently lacking.



### **C. Facilitating Country-Level Processes and Sub-Regional Consultations**

Conducting consultations and processes at both country and sub-regional levels through the Sub-regional Teams, in cooperation with the Country Focal Organisations and their Committees.



## D. Providing Comprehensive Capacity Building

Offering extensive capacity-building programs for AIPP office holders (Executive Council members), Secretariat staff, Country Focal Organisations, and Country Coordination Teams. Training will cover critical topics such as the concept of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous self-governance and democracy, and lands, territories, and resources. The goal is to ensure a comprehensive and unified understanding of the key issues that AIPP addresses in its initiatives. Additionally, the training will

provide practical orientation and skill development to operationalize coordination and management mechanisms between Sub-regional Teams and Country Focal Organisations.

AIPP will implement a performance management system featuring regular staff evaluations to assess effectiveness, identify development needs, and strengthen organizational capacity. As a movement-driven organization, we need to also scale up our Secretariat's capacity to provide more responsive, high-impact technical support to member organizations across all operational levels.



To effectively implement this strategy, four Sub-regional Teams will be established within the Secretariat, staffed through a reorganization of existing thematic programs and management teams.

Concurrently, ***Country Focal Organisations and their Committees*** will be formed in every country, alongside the integration of AIPP member organisations and the establishment of a structured framework for collaboration with sub-regional teams. Additionally, ***country-level and sub-regional annual consultations*** will be conducted to ensure continued collaboration and strategic alignment.

To advance this effort, a Statement of Goal and Purpose (for country-level processes) has been developed and adopted in principle by a majority of members across all countries. This statement will serve as the framework for reorganizing and streamlining country-level processes, ensuring alignment between the AIPP Secretariat and Country Focal Organisations in movement-building initiatives.



## 2. The Strategic Regranting Programme

The Strategic Regranting Programme (SRP) is a pivotal initiative by AIPP, aimed at directly supporting grassroots indigenous organisations. This program seeks to establish a regranting mechanism that addresses the unique challenges faced by these organisations, particularly in securing funding.

The SRP focuses on providing micro and small grants, as well as action grants, which are specifically designed to overcome barriers such as political constraints, administrative challenges, and limited institutional capacity. By offering direct funding access, the SRP empowers grassroots indigenous organisations to more effectively pursue their missions and advocate for their communities.

The SRP grants are expected to strengthen the capacity of indigenous organisations and communities to achieve self-empowerment, to participate actively in solidarity-building efforts, and foster deeper connections among Indigenous Peoples, reinforcing the Indigenous Peoples' movement across Asia.

Priority for grants will be given to:

- Organisations led by indigenous women, youth, and persons with disabilities;
- AIPP members and networks facing significant challenges in securing donor funding;
- Indigenous communities strengthening or piloting initiatives on self-governance and territorial sovereignty;
- Initiatives aimed at community-led organizing and movement building on the ground.



This targeted support plays a vital role in advancing AIPP's vision and objectives. It not only strengthens indigenous movements but also fosters solidarity across Asia, creating a unified front for advocating indigenous rights and promoting indigenous values and governance systems.

To strengthen accountability, AIPP will facilitate dialogue between the Secretariat, Executive Committee, members and partners to align on transparent regranting procedures, standardized implementation methodologies, and mutual accountability mechanisms. This shared understanding will ensure consistent, principled operations across all levels of our movement.



### 3. The AIPP School of Participation

The AIPP School of Participation (ASP) was launched in November 2024 as a regional programme designed to complement the AIPP Indigenous Self-Government and Democracy (AISGD) course. The ASP focuses on developing second-line indigenous leadership, primarily targeting youth leaders within the Asia Indigenous Youth Platform (AIYP) and member and network organisations. We are committed to actively promoting and facilitating the participation of indigenous women leaders and representatives from organizations serving IPwDs in the ASP.

The ASP course seeks to recover and revitalize Indigenous Peoples' values to guide governance systems and land stewardship. Through critical reflection and identification of core principles, it aims to strengthen indigenous societies' foundations.

AIPP believes that a strong understanding of the right to self-government, along with robust indigenous governance systems, is essential for indigenous leaders and communities to negotiate with states from positions of strength and translate their rights into democratic practice.

A new cohort of indigenous scholar-activists and youth leaders is expected to be actively networked and engaged in driving pluralistic nation-building and state democratization. Their efforts will include pioneering innovative approaches to territorial governance, conservation, and climate action.

Previously conducted at the regional level, the AISGD course will now be delivered exclusively at the community level as part of the Centers of Excellence in Village Governance programme.



## 4. The Centers of Excellence in Village Governance

The Centers of Excellence in Village Governance (COE-VG) programme builds on AIPP's Indigenous Peoples' Self-Government and Democracy course—launched in 2021—which focuses on leadership capacity building and grassroots community mobilization. It also integrates the Indigenous Community Protocols Initiative, led by PACOS Trust, which has been actively evolving for two decades.

This project unites the self-government movements that underpin both initiatives, leveraging their visions and scaling up lessons-learned to enhance indigenous governance at the community level.

Both projects emphasize self-governance and sovereignty over lands, territories, and resources as a fundamental goal for Indigenous Peoples in Asia. The Self-government and Democracy course is aimed at reviving and recovering Indigenous Peoples' governance systems through critical reflection and identification of the core values and principles governing and organizing indigenous societies.

Its primary objective is to cultivate a pool of indigenous leaders well-versed in the knowledge and practice of indigenous governance systems such that the nucleus for a regional movement for indigenous sovereignty, self-government, and democratization can be consolidated and advanced in Asia.



Indigenous Community Protocols are self-determined governance tools, created by and for indigenous communities to guide collective decision-making and external engagements. By documenting customary institutions, rules, and regulations rooted in indigenous worldviews, values, and principles, these protocols reinforce collective governance structures. In doing so, they uphold Indigenous Peoples' inherent right to self-determination and strengthen their autonomous governance systems.

Through the Centers of Excellence initiative, AIPP partners with indigenous communities to recognize and amplify self-governing communities that are revitalizing their customary institutions. These communities will serve as foundational models driving a long-term movement for indigenous self-determination and participatory democracy. By showcasing their success, they will inspire and strengthen other indigenous communities in reclaiming and advancing their own governance systems.

Building on the two established Centers of Excellence in Village Governance (COE-VG) in Thailand and Sabah-Malaysia, the initiative continues to expand. Several promising communities in Malaysia and Thailand have been identified as potential future COE-VGs, with

plans underway to recognize additional exemplary communities across other countries in the region.

The COE-VG initiative is designed to catalyze a self-governing movement across the region through organic, community-driven expansion. As participating communities strengthen their governance systems and revitalize traditional knowledge, they naturally become mentors and resources for neighboring indigenous groups. This creates a powerful ripple effect where:



- Knowledge and capacity grow exponentially through peer-to-peer learning;
- Best practices evolve as more communities adapt and refine governance models;
- A regional network emerges of interconnected self-governing communities; and
- Collective self-determination strengthens as more groups develop customized governance plans and institutions.

To scale up this initiative across indigenous communities in Asia, candidate communities are identified and prioritized based on their demonstrated commitment and established practices in the following key areas:



**a) Indigenous knowledge and cultural revitalization:** Rediscovering, recovering, and reconnecting with their worldviews, values, principles and practices to empower and strengthen their community-led governance structure.

**b) Strong land, territory and resource protection and management:** Asserting indigenous governance over ancestral territories, upholding sustainable resource management rooted in traditional ecological knowledge, and resisting environmental encroachment through community-led protection systems.

**c) Strong institutions:** Reinforcing customary guardianship, full and meaningful participation of all community members—across generations, genders, and social groups—in collective decision-making, conflict resolution, and the administration of customary justice systems.

**d) Resilient, community-based livelihood systems:** Aspiring to an adaptive and resilient livelihood system based on a diversified and cooperative model, collective resource sharing of goods, labour and knowledge, enhanced self-

reliance, and the conservation of local plant and animal species.

**e) Strong indigenous leadership:** Leadership rooted in ancestral values and worldview, practicing consensus-based collective governance, nurturing inter-generational knowledge transmission, cultivating distributed leadership across genders and generations, and advancing self-determined education systems.

**f) Gender and intergenerational equity in governance:** Actively advancing women's and youth leadership through distributed power structures, ensuring full participation at all decision-making levels, grounded in both universal human rights principles and indigenous cultural values, and fostering an intercultural approach to rights-based governance.

**g) Vision for the care of our common good:** Honoring the profound material and spiritual interdependence of all existence, rooting governance in ancestral values of mutual respect and reciprocity and cultivating holistic and collective wellbeing.

AIPP's hope is that during the Strategic Plan tenure, there will be CoE-VGs established in several countries, facilitated and supported by AIPP. Each CoE-VG will be serving as a dynamic regional hub for indigenous governance innovation and peer learning.

And we expect that more communities would have also prepared and adopted their own customized Community Protocols as tools for improved territorial and resource governance.

Through these CoE-VGs, we hope to cultivate a new generation of indigenous leaders who are deeply rooted in indigenous values and indigenous governance systems. They will be equipped with tools and knowledge to overcome systemic barriers to self-determination and autonomy.



## 5. The Centers of Defenders

To support and empower indigenous human rights defenders across Asia, AIPP has launched its 'Centers of Defenders' initiative. During the 2024 Asia Preparatory Meeting for UN engagement, AIPP officially recognized two pioneering institutions as the first designated Centers of Defenders: Kapaeeng Foundation (Bangladesh) and Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP).

The 'Center of Defenders' (COD) designation recognizes Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights Defenders organisations that demonstrate:

- **Courageous Leadership** and commitment to protecting indigenous rights;
- **Consistent frontline defense** of indigenous communities, and effective interventions against criminalization of defenders; and
- **Impactful contributions** that advance indigenous self-determination, justice and dignity while fostering equitable peace.

More than a program, the COD embodies the collective aspirations of AIPP and the IPHRD Network—turning our shared vision for justice into concrete protection and empowerment.

The COD serves as an inspiration for the IPHRD network, demonstrating courageous leadership in action. It is also a living testament to indigenous resilience, offering tangible hope to communities under threat.



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While AIPP provides foundational support for the CODs, these centers will serve as dynamic engines of change—working in tandem with AIPP to propel our collective vision forward through four key pillars: capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, solidarity, and advocacy.

The CODs will serve as a driving force in mobilizing and empowering Indigenous women human rights defenders, while strategically amplifying their advocacy impact. To operationalize this commitment, clear guidelines for focal and member organizations on safeguarding indigenous women defenders will be developed. A robust complaint mechanism will also be developed to enable swift, effective responses to threats against indigenous women and intersectional groups. And protective measures that address both their immediate security needs and long-term safety planning will be implemented.

This initiative will also create multiplier effects across AIPP's core priorities: cultivating a new generation of indigenous leaders, advancing gender-responsive protection systems, strengthening self-governance and territorial sovereignty, and implementing UNDRIP at community and national levels.

As they effectively challenge systemic oppression and injustice at all levels, Indigenous Human Rights Defenders will receive, through our CODs, comprehensive support to fearlessly advance indigenous rights and collectively strengthen movements for self-determination.



## 6. Regional and International Advocacy

Since its establishment, AIPP has played a pivotal role in advancing Indigenous Peoples' rights globally. The organisation, for example, was instrumental in both shaping and securing the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007.

AIPP maintains its strong advocacy presence across key international platforms, actively shaping policies that affect Indigenous Peoples specifically and humanity generally. This includes advocacy on human rights (through regular engagement with the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP); advocacy on Corporate Accountability (by influencing standards at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights); and advocacy on Environmental Justice (by advancing indigenous perspectives in climate change (UNFCCC) and biodiversity (CBD) negotiations).

AIPP advances its advocacy through strategic public engagement and policy influence. This includes

targeted media campaigns amplifying indigenous voices on global platforms, high-level diplomacy with government representatives and multilateral institutions, and direct policy advocacy with bilateral and intergovernmental organisations. AIPP will also prioritise strengthening its six partner networks—particularly those representing indigenous women, youth, and persons with disabilities—enabling their full participation in both AIPP-led advocacy and their own independent initiatives.



## Achieving the Common Goal

Our long-term vision is that Indigenous Peoples in Asia get to enjoy the right to self-determination, and to our lands, territories and resources. This will allow our communities to live a life in dignity, and in accordance with our own culture, customs, and traditions.

As we advance toward full self-determination, we ground our journey in the enduring wisdom of our ancestors. By reclaiming and revitalizing the core values of our indigenous heritage—reciprocity, resilience, and collective governance—we ensure that our struggle for sovereignty remains rooted in our identity and traditions.

These principles will guide our path forward, transforming not only our goals but how we achieve them. Together, we will build a future where self-governance flourishes as the living expression of our collective memory and shared destiny.

While we honor the diverse priorities of our members, we unite under one sacred vision: a world where indigenous sovereignty breathes life into every community, every system, and every generation to come.





*Publisher*

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