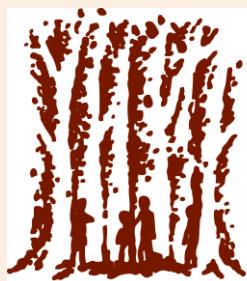


June 2011

# FPP E-Newsletter: Special edition on gender



Forest  
Peoples  
Programme

## FPP E-Newsletter: Special edition on gender

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Guest author: Rini Ramadhanti

Rini Ramadhanti is the director of the NGO Institute Social and Economic Changes (ISED). She has been working for the last decade to assist rural communities in Riau, and especially women, to improve their livelihoods and to engage with development proposals from the government and industry.

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Cover photo: Women from Teluk Meranti take the lead in a demonstration at the head office of Pelalawan District Government, pressing for recognition of their rights over the forest areas licensed to the APRIL pulp and paper company. August 2010/Rini Ramadhanti.

Photo on page 1: A family affected by cyclone Aila looks for shelter, Bangladesh/Unnayan Onneshan.



Dear Friends,

The work of the Forest Peoples Programme is to support indigenous peoples and other forest peoples to defend their human rights, in particular their collective human rights to self-determination, to their lands, territories and cultural heritage, to self-representation, and to exercise their customary law. In adopting a rights-based approach we also accept that these collective human rights must be exercised in ways that are consistent with other human rights. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples makes the very same point. A basic principle of human rights law is non-discrimination and much of the purpose of the UN Declaration and other laws and jurisprudence related to indigenous peoples is to redress centuries of injustice based on ingrained prejudice, outright discrimination and ensuing violence against indigenous peoples.

A gendered approach immediately brings out the fact that indigenous men and women, lower status groups, the elderly and children, all experience these injustices differently. Indigenous women may be more easily deprived of lands than their menfolk, may be subject to sexual exploitation and further discriminated against when it comes to pay, education, health-care, access to justice and the other services of the State. Sometimes it is indigenous men who suffer, notably when hunting peoples lose access to their territories and game, and they are deprived of the honour and identity that comes from their valued role.

In working with forest peoples to end discrimination, we face with them the further dilemma that not all discrimination and injustice comes from outside but may inhere in their own customary systems. The articles assembled in this special edition of our newsletter open up this aspect of our work with our partners. In Indonesia, Thailand and Guyana attention to women's systems of land use shows how these complement male systems of land use.

When indigenous women also mobilise to defend their rights, then the collective force of the society is strengthened, not divided. This E-bulletin highlights discussions among indigenous women themselves, on how best to approach issues of gender discrimination in their own countries and communities. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has been particularly responsive to the push by indigenous women in Africa to gain redress. At the same time our partners in Nepal, Colombia, the Philippines and Uganda affirm their wish to see their rights addressed within the framework of indigenous rights and not in opposition to it. What this means above all is that in building solutions to injustice this must be done by the peoples themselves through the mobilization and transformation of their own societies and not through imposed programmes of social reform.

Self-determination without discrimination is the way to build better futures and in doing this each people will find their own path, starting as they do in different places and having their own ways of dealing with each other. For us in FPP, we are happy to see our partners' work on Gender and Land Rights beginning to bear fruit and look forward to continuing to support them on this new journey.

Marcus Colchester

Director

Forest Peoples Programme

# 1. Women's struggle for their lands and livelihoods in the Kampar Peninsular, Indonesia

Rini Ramadhanti

In mid 2009, I started making regular visits to the village of Teluk Meranti to meet the women and talk about their current living conditions and the issues that affect them. Teluk Meranti is a village of about one thousand people next to the Kampar Peninsular, a peat swamp forest in Riau, on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. On my first visit we discussed women's fears of losing their agricultural lands and forests, and their desire to further develop their gardens and small businesses. The women were concerned about a plan of the government and the pulp and paper company APRIL to create a pulpwood plantation covering 56,000 hectares and take over a forest that their community have managed for generations.

In previous months, several meetings had been held in the village to discuss this threat but the meetings were dominated by men; if women

attended at all, they would just sit at the back of the room and wouldn't be asked to speak. Women in their village were not given the opportunity to add their voice and opinions to community discussions.

In coastal and lowland areas of Riau Province, most communities are part of the Malay ethnicity, and traditionally live from fishing and river trade. Riau Malay culture is guided by the norms of Islam, especially for women. The Teluk Meranti community is typical of Malay lowland villages, having a patrilineal kinship system, and the public space within the community is almost exclusively the domain of men. The role of women has been limited to family or household affairs but this situation is changing slowly, and women in Teluk Meranti in particular have recently become more engaged in community discussions and decisions.

Over 2009 and 2010, I made regular visits to meet with the women of Teluk Meranti, and our group discussions led to concrete plans for the women to increase their income from production and sale of craftwork and food crops. We also discussed the threats to their village lands and forests, and shared information on the negotiations between their men and the pulp and paper company.

Having received and discussed this information amongst themselves, some of the women gained the courage to enter into meetings with their men and express their concerns.

With support from various parties, including some of the village men, the women shared their concerns in village meetings on how they thought that the Acacia plantations would create social and economic problems for women. During the same period, protests by NGO's at the provincial, national and international level highlighted resistance to APRIL's plans to clear peat forests.

In response to the controversy, in February 2010, the National Minister of Forestry visited the community of Teluk Meranti, to explain the government's plans for the Kampar Peat Forests. The women of Teluk Meranti confronted the Minister as he stepped out of his helicopter for a brief visit. They informed him that they did not want their forests and gardens taken over for Acacia plantations.



Women from Teluk Meranti take the lead in a demonstration at the head office of Pelalawan District Government, pressing for recognition of their rights over the forest areas licensed to the APRIL pulp and paper company. August 2010/Rini Ramadhanti.

Women leaders from Teluk Meranti were also vocal in expressing their concerns when journalists and a parliamentary commission visited their community later in 2010 to discuss the controversial plantations. The courage of the women of Teluk Meranti to speak out in village forums and also when dignitaries and outsiders visited their community is a clear sign that these women wish to play a broader role in discussions



Ibu Upik Desmidarti explains to the district government the problems that her village faces due to the APRIL pulpwood plantations taking over their forests. August 2010/Rini Ramadanti.

and decision-making within their community. Unfortunately, when the community selected its leaders to negotiate with APRIL, no women were included in the negotiation team.

Today, part of the forests of the community of Teluk Meranti have been cleared for Acacia, but the struggle of the women to secure their rights to their customary lands, improve their economies and to have their voices heard goes on.

*About the Author:* Rini is the director of the NGO Institute Social and Economic Changes (ISED). She has been working for the last decade to assist rural communities in Riau, and especially women, to improve their livelihoods and to engage with development proposals from the government and industry.

## 2. Gender dimensions in indigenous peoples' customary use of biodiversity

Recent work carried out by various indigenous peoples, such as community mapping and documenting traditional resource use, has resulted in interesting insights into the different gender dimensions in their customary use of biodiversity. In many indigenous communities, there are clear divisions in men's and women's roles and tasks relating to biodiversity use. This article shares some examples from case studies carried out by the Wapichan people from South-west Guyana and by the Karen and Hmong people from Northern Thailand.

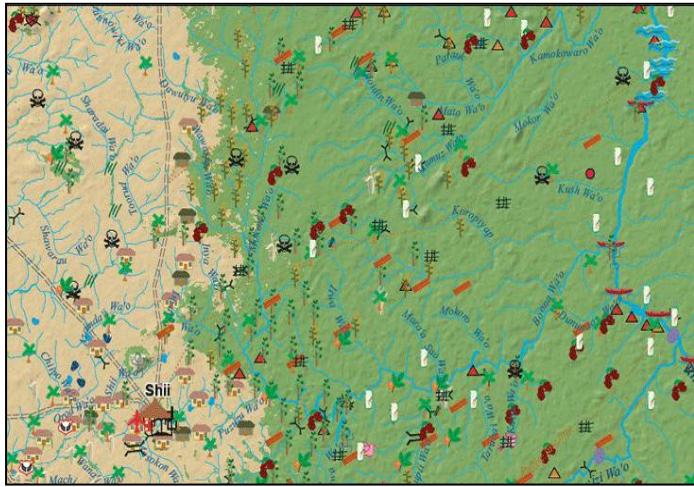
### *Wapichan – South-west Guyana*

The illustration below shows a small part of the Wapichan territorial use map; the symbols on the map indicate different activities and resources – for instance places with valuable wood species, fishing grounds, or fruit trees. The map illustrates how some activities are carried out close to the villages, whereas others take place further (and sometimes very far) away - deep in the forests or savannahs or



Map of Indonesia

along rivers and creeks. To complete the map and the case study, both men and women were interviewed and involved so that all areas and associated knowledge were incorporated.



Wapichan men mostly use the more remote parts of their territory, which are generally more than 10 km away from the villages and consist mainly of good hunting and fishing grounds. They have extensive knowledge of these distant areas, for instance regarding the occurrence of different types of game and their abundance. Wapichan men also have a very deep understanding of this particular forest environment, knowing where they can find fruits, and useful trees and plants for construction and craft materials. Remote areas of their territory are also used by the *marunao* (the shaman) who visits key places to perform various rituals, such as far off mountains.

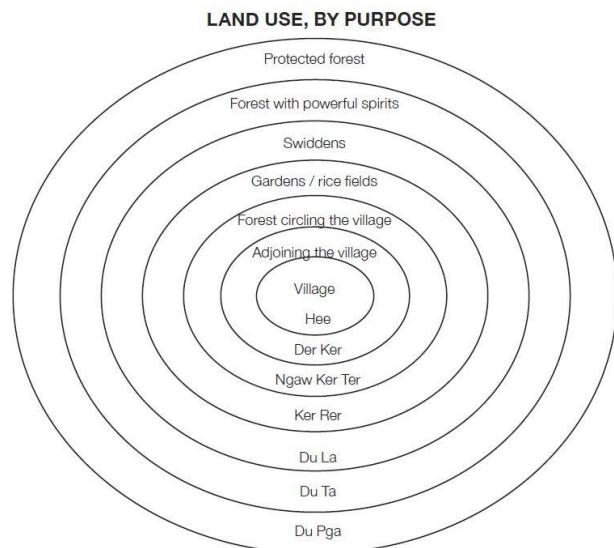
Areas closer to the Wapichan's villages are mostly used by women and include gathering grounds for craft materials, firewood, grubs and fruits, medicines, spirit charms, as well as water springs and sources. They also regularly use nearby areas to collect clay for pottery, and fishing grounds and washing areas along the creeks. Therefore women hold detailed knowledge of the health and nature of the ecosystems closer to the community.

#### Karen and Hmong – Northern Thailand

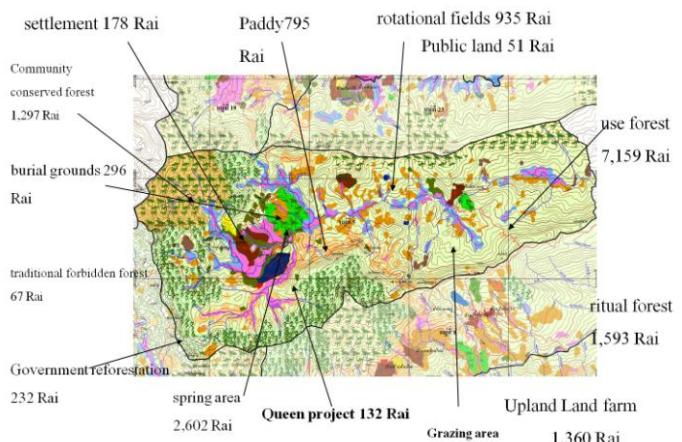
Karen and Hmong indigenous peoples from Northern Thailand have also engaged in a thorough community-based mapping of their ancestral areas, as well as conducting their own research to document their customary practices and traditional knowledge related to biodiversity use and conservation. Similarly to the Wapichan, women

and men in Karen and Hmong communities have different types of tasks and knowledge related to land use, but both are considered to be of equal importance to the community.

The map and diagram below indicate circles of different land use types surrounding Hmong and Karen settlements. These different zones reflect the division of work between men and women: in general, the outer parts of the community's lands are men's domain and the women use areas closer to the settlements.



Land use map of Mae Tae Khi



Karen and Hmong women have a number of important roles: they manage the household, taking care of the family and preparing food; they fish, gather plants and fruits, collect seeds for plant and crop breeding and maintain the farming lands; and they collect and use herbal medicines and source natural colours for dying. They are also skilled at weaving, embroidery and whisky making. Karen and Hmong men have built up considerable knowledge relating to wild animals and they know where to find and how to harvest materials for

house construction. Men carry out the tasks involving heavy labour in the fields, including



Karen and Hmong women have many tasks including fishing, farming, collecting plants, fruit and seeds and preparing food

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digging the new rice paddies. They also construct houses, make musical instruments and craft metalwork.

In relation to traditional practices and ceremonies, women take care of the preparations while men conduct the actual ceremonies in the forest - some sacred ceremonial sites are prohibited for women. Women carry out most ceremonies at home (for instance those related to preparing food). Both men and women, in particular elders, play an important role in the preservation and transmission of knowledge and language to the children in the community cultural centers.

In a process to demarcate their community farming lands within and/or bordering two national parks, Hmong and Karen women are playing an important role in pointing out the exact farming areas, while men position land posts to physically demarcate the community boundaries.

In general, Karen and Hmong men attend more trainings and meetings outside the community and they learn more new skills and technologies. Women have the opportunity to participate, but sometimes this is limited because they lack a good command of the languages being used or they are not familiar with the topics being addressed. Women tend to spend less time away from the home due to the need to attend to daily household tasks. For this reason women have withdrawn from mapping exercises, which involve many long fieldtrips.

Hmong and Karen men attend external events and are responsible for sharing information

with their communities through village and watershed network meetings. Women have their own groups and networks for sharing information, knowledge and skills, for example on garden biodiversity management, food preparation and animal husbandry.

Interestingly, women are given the lead role in critical negotiations over ancestral land boundaries with government officials. According to the Karen and Hmong, the fact that women

are even-tempered benefits the dialogue and they are seen as naturally skilled in resolving conflicts. The key overall

aspect that was highlighted in both the Wapichan and Hmong/Karen communities' case studies was that women and men play diverse but complementary roles for the sustainable functioning of their communities.



Men carrying out a ritual ceremony

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To read the full reports from Guyana and Thailand and other case studies by indigenous peoples and local communities from Suriname, Bangladesh, Cameroon and Venezuela on their customary use of biological resources please visit: [forestpeoples.org/topics/convention-biological-diversity-cbd/publication/2010/customary-use-biological-resources-artic](http://forestpeoples.org/topics/convention-biological-diversity-cbd/publication/2010/customary-use-biological-resources-artic)

### 3. Advocacy efforts lead to African Commission's increased consideration of indigenous women's rights

The recognition of indigenous peoples' rights is a recent development on the African continent. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has, over the last decade, given heightened attention to indigenous peoples' rights, notably through the creation of its Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities (WGIP) in 2000. This is mostly due to the efforts of civil society organisations which have documented the obstacles faced by indigenous peoples in the enjoyment of their individual and collective rights, and which have brought the many instances where these rights have been violated to the attention of the Commission.

Until recently, the focus on indigenous peoples' rights has not always been accompanied by special concerns for the rights of indigenous women. In Cameroon, concerted efforts by indigenous peoples' and women's organisations have prompted the African Commission to pay special attention to the situation of indigenous women within the country and, more generally, have influenced the development of relevant human rights standards at the regional level. With such efforts, the African Commission has demonstrated increased sensitivity to the rights of indigenous women. Among notable recent developments, the African Commission adopted an important resolution on the rights of indigenous women in Africa at its last session in April - May 2011 and, at the same session, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa launched the publication *Indigenous women's rights and the African human rights system: A toolkit on mechanisms*, prepared by the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur.

#### Partners' activities in Cameroon

In preparation for the examination of Cameroon's State periodic report by the African Commission in May 2010, the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), in collaboration with local partners, undertook consultations with communities in Eastern and Southern Cameroon in March 2010. The purpose of the study was to gather information on the situation of indigenous women in Cameroon's forests in order to better inform the elaboration of a supplementary report to the African Commission and to report on the



Indigenous women from DRC and Kenya with the Special Rapporteur and the Chair of the African Commission, Banjul April 2011/Stéphanie Vig.

situation of indigenous women and peoples in the country. Then, later in March 2010, indigenous women in Cameroon also had the opportunity to voice their concerns at the National Forum on Forests which welcomed the participation of 11 indigenous women.

Building on their supplementary report submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,<sup>1</sup> in January 2010, CED, the Réseau Recherches Actions Concertées Pygmées (RACOPY), and FPP

<sup>1</sup> The report submitted to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in January 2010 is available at: [forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2010/02/cerdcameronsubmissionjan10eng.pdf](http://forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2010/02/cerdcameronsubmissionjan10eng.pdf)

included the issues raised by indigenous women and their communities during the consultations and at the National Forum on Forests in their supplementary report to the African Commission.<sup>2</sup> These issues included the multiple forms of discrimination faced by indigenous women in society; the violation of their reproductive rights; indigenous women's increasing lack of access to health care, water, and traditional resources; and the obstacles to conducting their traditional and income-generating activities, which contribute to food insecurity, greater marginalisation, and extreme poverty. The report recommended that the Commission urge the State of Cameroon to take concrete measures to protect doubly marginalised indigenous women.

### The African Commission's Concluding Observations

The Concluding Observations<sup>3</sup> that followed the consideration of Cameroon's State report are remarkable for the number of recommendations relating to the rights of indigenous peoples. Many of the recommendations can be said to draw on the information outlined in the supplementary report submitted to the Commission. In addition to recommending that the State of Cameroon "*[h]armonize the national legislation with the regional and international standards on the rights of indigenous populations/communities*" and "*work towards the consideration of their cultural peculiarities*", the African Commission also expressly directed the State of Cameroon to "*[t]ake special measures to guarantee the protection and implementation of indigenous women's rights due to their extreme vulnerability and the discrimination to which they are subject to.*" These recommendations constitute important legal standards and a significant step for indigenous peoples and women. They can now be used at the national level for the recognition and implementation of their rights.

<sup>2</sup> The report submitted to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in May 2010 is available at:  
[forestpeoples.org/topics/african-human-rights-system/news/2010/10/african-commission-concerned-violations-indigenous-p](http://forestpeoples.org/topics/african-human-rights-system/news/2010/10/african-commission-concerned-violations-indigenous-p)

<sup>3</sup> The Concluding Observations and Recommendations on the Second Periodic Report of the Republic of Cameroon, adopted by the African Commission at its 47<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session in May 2010 are available at:  
[achpr.org/english/other/Con\\_Oberservations/Cameroon/3rd\\_rpt.pdf](http://achpr.org/english/other/Con_Oberservations/Cameroon/3rd_rpt.pdf)

### Latest developments on the rights of indigenous women

Important developments for indigenous women emerged from the African Commission's latest ordinary session, held from April 25 to May 13, 2011 in Banjul, The Gambia. On April 28, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Commissioner Soyata Maïga, launched a new publication entitled, *Indigenous women's rights and the African human rights system: A toolkit on mechanisms*, developed by FPP and its partners in collaboration with her office. The Special Rapporteur lauded the publication as an important tool for civil society organisations to promote and protect the rights of indigenous women on the African continent. She expressed her hope that through the information provided in the toolkit, organisations would better understand how to become involved with the African Commission and the African human rights system in general.

Another important development reached at this session was the adoption by the African Commission of a resolution on the rights of indigenous women in Africa.<sup>4</sup> This marks the first time that the Commission specifically addresses indigenous women's rights in a resolution. Building on the 2010 Concluding Observations of the Commission in relation to Cameroon, as well as on a number of recommendations by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities made through a number of country visit reports, the resolution confirms the attention now given by the Commission to the specific situation of indigenous women. The resolution recognises, among other things, the "*crucial role played by indigenous women in the protection and preservation of natural resources and in the protection, development and transmission of indigenous knowledge and culture*" and urges State parties to:

*"Collect disaggregated data on the general situation of indigenous women;  
Pay special attention to the status of women in their countries and to adopt laws, policies, and specific programs to promote and protect all their human rights;"*

It further requests "*all other concerned actors, notable NGOs, technical and financial partners to support the*

<sup>4</sup> CHPR/Res.183 (XLIX )2011: Resolution on the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Women in Africa, available at:  
[achpr.org/english/resolutions/Resolution183\\_en.htm](http://achpr.org/english/resolutions/Resolution183_en.htm)

efforts of States Parties in the implementation of policies and programmes in favour of indigenous women”.

The heightened attention awarded to indigenous peoples and to indigenous women re-affirms the place of the Commission as an effective forum for African indigenous women to raise their voice and to participate in the Commission's various standard-setting mechanisms.



Baka women and children consultation, Cameroon.  
March 2009/Valérie Couillard.

## 4. Indigenous women shape women's rights

The voices of indigenous women have repeatedly reminded national governments, human rights bodies and other national and international fora that their human rights as women need to be addressed as the rights of *indigenous* women. Accordingly, indigenous women have called on the United Nations bodies and processes related to women to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples “as a minimum standard in the fulfilment and enjoyment of rights by indigenous women”<sup>5</sup>.

This call includes an affirmation that the objectives of the wider women's movement, including equal status and pay, as well as the full participation of women in decision-making and the integration of mainstreaming gender perspectives, will be meaningless if inequalities between nations, races, classes and genders are not simultaneously challenged.<sup>6</sup> Women's rights must therefore be understood within a wider economic, social and cultural context and appropriate standards to address the violations faced by indigenous women must address their specific status as both women, and indigenous persons.<sup>7</sup>

### Indigenous peoples' rights and women's rights

As in other areas of indigenous peoples' rights, rights to lands and resources firmly underpin indigenous women's declarations and public statements. Indigenous women have emphasized that lands and resources are bound to their crucial roles as guardians of traditional knowledge related to health and herbal medicine, customary use of natural resources, as well as language and transmission of indigenous knowledge in all

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Asian Indigenous Women's Network to the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 18-29 May 2009, second recommendation.

<sup>6</sup> Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women, NGO Forum, UN Fourth World Conference on Women Huairou, Beijing, Peoples Republic of China, 7 September 1995, paragraph 16.

<sup>7</sup> See among others: Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women, NGO Forum, UN Fourth World Conference on Women Huairou, Beijing, Peoples Republic of China, 7 September 1995; The Manukan Declaration of the Indigenous Women Biodiversity Network, Manukan, Sabah, Malaysia, 4-5 February 2004; Bringing Indigenous Perspective to the International Arena: An Indigenous Women's Conference, International Indigenous Women's Forum Declaration, New York, 27 February, 2005.

spheres. Military operations and extractive industry developments also place indigenous women's struggle to be free from gender violence in the context of the denial of their right to own and control their territories.

Indigenous women have used the state reporting mechanism of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (ICEDAW) to seek redress for the challenges facing them.<sup>8</sup> The Committee that oversees ICEDAW has, over the years, generally proven reluctant to affirm clear specific standards for indigenous women. The Concluding Observations adopted by the Committee more often place indigenous women's rights together with the rights of other 'vulnerable groups', which includes rural women, minorities and children. This vision of indigenous women denies their place as holders of a specific set of rights and responsibilities and instead makes them victims. This approach has also not provided national decision makers with clear standards to adequately address the issues facing indigenous women, and has excluded the collective rights and land rights attached to their claims. One of the reasons for this lack of specific standards is that the structure and essence of ICEDAW does not naturally encompass indigenous women's issues. Indigenous women's organisations wanting to use the mechanisms attached to the Convention to advance their human rights thus find themselves having to re-shape their concerns within a framework that lacks sensitivity to their specific situation as indigenous women.

The mainstream women's rights movement has not always proven an easy partner for indigenous women's own advocacy. Feminist speeches in general have been criticised by indigenous women as 'words written by white women, for white women'<sup>9</sup>, with similar concerns expressed about wider human rights discourse generated through ICEDAW, the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform. However some agencies and bodies have recognized these difficulties and tried to change them, such as the Commission on the Status of

Women which recommended the effective participation of indigenous women in the follow-up, implementation and monitoring of women's rights.<sup>10</sup>

### Quest for a framework inclusive of indigenous women's rights

General human rights mechanisms can be effective advocates of indigenous peoples' rights. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has proven active in affirming the relationship between the land rights of indigenous peoples and the human rights of indigenous women, through its Concluding Observations and through the adoption of a General Recommendation on gender related dimensions of racial discrimination.<sup>11</sup> The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights also looked at indigenous women's issues through the lens of indigenous peoples' rights, issuing specific standards at first mainly within the mandate of its Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities (WGIP). More recently, the Special Rapporteur on women's rights in Africa, who is also a member of the WGIP, has initiated programmes and standards specific to indigenous women.

Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) supports our partners in using these human rights standard setting mechanisms, and others, to gain recognition of the specific issues facing indigenous women. At the African Commission, intense advocacy work from indigenous organisations led to: the adoption of the first Concluding Observations containing specific recommendations on indigenous women<sup>12</sup>; the Special Rapporteur on

<sup>10</sup> "Recognizing that profound gaps exist between indigenous women and other groups, which will affect the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; Recommends that Governments, intergovernmental agencies, the private sector and civil society adopt measures that ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women in the implementation, follow-up work and monitoring of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals" Indigenous Women Beyond the Ten-Year Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action E/CN.6/2005/L.10, Commission on the Status of Women, Forty-ninth session, 28 February-11 March 2005

<sup>11</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation No. 25: Gender related dimensions of racial discrimination: 1391st meeting 20 March 2000, Contained in document A/55/18, annex V

<sup>12</sup> Concluding Observations and Recommendations on the Second Periodic Report of the Republic of Cameroon, adopted by the African Commission at its 47<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session in May 2010 are available at:

<sup>8</sup> For a list of standards adopted by CEDAW, see: Compilation: General Comments and Concluding Observations pertaining and relevant to indigenous women, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1993-2010, Forest Peoples Programme, May 2011

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in: Myrna Cunningham, 'Indigenous Women's Visions of an Inclusive Feminism' Development, 2006, 49(1), (55-59) 1011-6370/06. Available at: [sidint.org/development](http://sidint.org/development)

the rights of women in Africa explicitly highlighted the direct link between indigenous peoples rights and the rights of the women belonging to these communities<sup>13</sup>; and a resolution on the rights of indigenous women in Africa was adopted by the African Commission.<sup>14</sup>



Mutwa woman who attended a community sensitisation visit by UOBGU on land rights and education, November 2010, Kisoro District, Uganda.  
©United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBGU)

A report prepared by Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu, a Colombian organisation of indigenous women, for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues' (UNPFII) visit to Colombia in July 2010, highlighted various issues, including the insecurity of land tenure, the disproportionate impact of land grabbing on indigenous women and the sexual violence perpetrated by military forces in Wayuu territory. Following their visit to Colombia, the UNPFII issued a press statement and a report

[achpr.org/english/other/Con\\_Oberservations/Cameroon/3rd\\_rpt.pdf](http://achpr.org/english/other/Con_Oberservations/Cameroon/3rd_rpt.pdf)

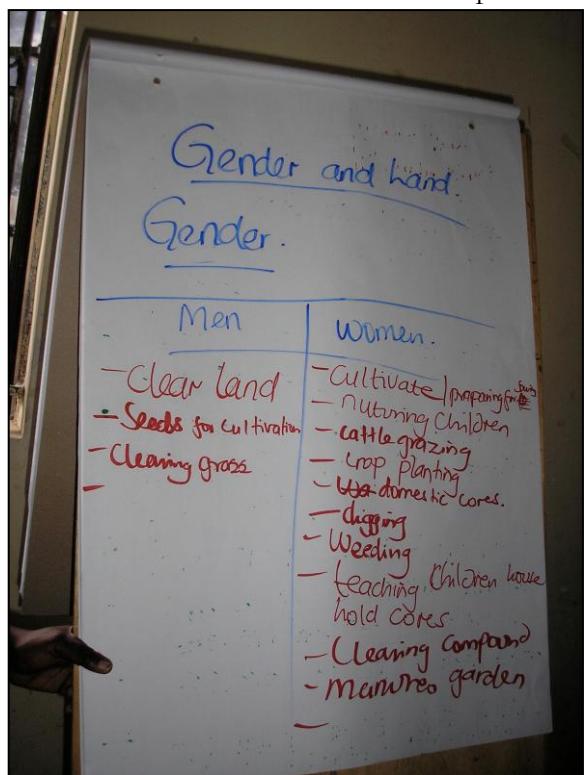
<sup>13</sup> Soyata Maiga, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa in: 'Indigenous women and the African human rights system: A toolkit on mechanisms', Foreword, Forest Peoples Programme, 2011. Available at: [forestpeoples.org/topics/african-human-rights-system/publication/2011/toolkit-indigenous-women-s-rights-africa](http://forestpeoples.org/topics/african-human-rights-system/publication/2011/toolkit-indigenous-women-s-rights-africa)

<sup>14</sup> [achpr.org/english/resolutions/Resolution183\\_en.htm](http://achpr.org/english/resolutions/Resolution183_en.htm)

that provides recommendations specific to Wayuu women.<sup>15</sup>

Asian indigenous women's organisations were also supported in convening a regional workshop in the Philippines in November 2010. The workshop report highlights again the centrality of land rights for indigenous women in Asia and emphasises the need for enhanced informed participation of indigenous women in human rights mechanisms, including the ones under the ICEDAW. The Asian Indigenous Women Network (AIWN) is currently preparing a guide to the mechanisms and standards of the ICEDAW for indigenous women in Asia.

Ugandan and Nepali indigenous women have taken the opportunity to submit alternative reports to the ICEDAW Committee on the occasion of the examination of their states' report before the Committee, scheduled respectively in October 2010 and July 2011. In their reports, Batwa women stressed the need to connect the violations of their human rights to the eviction of their people from their ancestral lands and the land dispossession



Gender and land rights workshop discussion, Kisoro, Uganda, February 2009/Valérie Couillard.

<sup>15</sup> "The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues concludes visit to Colombia" UNPFII press release, 8 Sept 2010, available at [un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Colombia\\_press\\_release\\_2010.pdf](http://un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Colombia_press_release_2010.pdf); Situation of indigenous peoples in danger of extinction in Colombia, Summary of the report and recommendations of the mission by the Permanent Forum to Colombia, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, E/C.19/2011/3, 11 February 2011, paragraphs 23, 24, 26, and 83.

they have faced since. The Committee noted ‘with concern the particularly marginalized situation of the Batwa women’ and urged Uganda ‘to continue to intensify the implementation of gender-sensitive poverty reduction and development programmes in rural and urban areas and to pay particular attention to the Batwa women in the development of such programmes.’<sup>16</sup>

This recommendation however dealt with the issue from the individual rights standpoint and was quiet as to how their human rights fitted in the wider indigenous peoples’ rights legal framework. Nepali indigenous women will submit their report to the ICEDAW Committee this month, also placing land rights at the heart of their submission, in the hope that this human rights body will adopt clear recommendations that they can use to advocate for the full realisation of their rights at the national level.

Indigenous women’s reports:

- [Cameroon alternative report to ACHPR](#)
- [Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu report to UNPFII for the visit to Colombia](#)
- [Alternative report in connection with the report of Uganda to CEDAW](#)
- [Gender and land rights in Asia - Workshop report](#)



Landscape from Batwa community land in Murubindi, Uganda, February 2009/Valérie Couillard.

<sup>16</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding Observations Uganda, CEDAW/C/UGA/CO/7, 22 October 2010

## New publications from FPP

### 5. Compilation of General Comments and Concluding Observations relevant to the Rights of Indigenous women adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1993 – 2010

English:[forestpeoples.org/topics/gender-issues/publication/2011/compilation-general-comments-and-concluding-observations-adopt](http://forestpeoples.org/topics/gender-issues/publication/2011/compilation-general-comments-and-concluding-observations-adopt)

French:[forestpeoples.org/fr/topics/problematiques-de-genre/publication/2011/compilation-recommandations-generales-observations-f](http://forestpeoples.org/fr/topics/problematiques-de-genre/publication/2011/compilation-recommandations-generales-observations-f)

Spanish:[forestpeoples.org/es/topics/las-cuestiones-de-genero/publication/2011/recopilacion-recomendaciones-generales-y-observaci](http://forestpeoples.org/es/topics/las-cuestiones-de-genero/publication/2011/recopilacion-recomendaciones-generales-y-observaci)

### 6. Toolkit on Indigenous women's rights and the African Human Rights System

A new publication entitled “Indigenous women’s rights and the African human rights system: a toolkit on mechanisms” was launched at the end of April 2011 during the session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights in Banjul, The Gambia. The launch was officiated by Commissioner Soyata Maïga, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, who also contributed to the toolkit. It was elaborated in consultation with local, regional, and international partners who work with indigenous women and indigenous peoples’ organisations. The toolkit consists of a series of informative notes that review human rights standards pertaining to indigenous women in Africa and the different mechanisms available to promote and ensure the protection of these rights. It aims at providing NGOs and indigenous women’s organisations in Africa with a helpful resource to guide their effective use of the various African human rights mechanisms. The toolkit is available online in English and French at:

English:[forestpeoples.org/topics/african-human-rights-system/publication/2011/toolkit-indigenous-women-s-rights-africa](http://forestpeoples.org/topics/african-human-rights-system/publication/2011/toolkit-indigenous-women-s-rights-africa)

French:[forestpeoples.org/fr/topics/systeme-africain-des-droits-humains/publication/2011/trousse-d-information-sur-les-droits-d-0](http://forestpeoples.org/fr/topics/systeme-africain-des-droits-humains/publication/2011/trousse-d-information-sur-les-droits-d-0)

## Looking ahead

### 7. Upcoming FPP publication: Toolkit on Indigenous women’s rights and the Inter-American Human Rights System

The Inter-American human rights system mechanisms will be looked at through the lens of indigenous women’s rights in this upcoming publication. Partners held a meeting to develop the toolkit with Forest Peoples Programme in April 2011 and are planning to hold trial training sessions with indigenous women’s organisations to test and further improve the training materials before their final publication later in the year.

### 8. Upcoming AIWN and FPP publication: Guide to CEDAW for indigenous women in Asia

Asian Indigenous Women’s Network and Forest Peoples Programme have developed a series of booklets addressing the human rights framework, the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of women as enshrined in and protected by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. The booklets have been designed specifically to address the situations of indigenous women in Asia and include a detailed compilation of existing CEDAW jurisprudence related to indigenous women.