

Commission on Status of Women Fifty-seventh session (4-15 March 2013)

Priority theme: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls

Statement by Indigenous Women from Asia-Pacific and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Asia is homeland to an estimated 2/3 of the world's approximate 370 million indigenous peoples. Indigenous women suffer disproportionately from a multi-fold of discrimination and oppression based on their ethnicity, race, location and economic status together with their sex. Indigenous peoples may be known by other terms in their own countries, as 'ethnic minorities', or 'hill tribes', or 'adivasi' or 'orang asal' or 'masyarakat adat' and so on. Our reference is inclusive of all peoples who chose to self-define as 'indigenous' regardless of national government terminology.

The root causes of violence affecting indigenous women continue to highlight how interconnected the depletion of our natural environment and resources is to our status. The blatant disregard to our traditional customs and practices, loss of lands, sea resources, waters and forests due to commercial logging, plantations, agro-business ventures, extractive industries, protected areas, dams, worsening armed conflicts and militarization on indigenous territories are seriously impacting on the lives of indigenous women. For instance in Bangladesh, occupation of indigenous people's land, evictions and sexual harassments, including rape and murder of indigenous women by military and settlers continues. In 2012 alone 75 indigenous were subjected to violence. Of this 17 were raped and 7 of them were raped and killed (Kapaeing Foundation 2012 Human rights report). In Mindanao, Philippines, Juvy Capion, the 28-year-old women leader and wife of a tribal leader and their two sons aged 13 and 8 were killed in October 2012 by the military forces because of her community's (Blaan people) opposition to mining. Juvy was two months pregnant.

Belonging to an indigenous community means that women suffer from double discrimination despite the commitments to women's human rights. This is due to delays in integrating universally accepted human rights standards especially CEDAW and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the state governance as well as in the traditional governance systems and non-implementation of existing laws and policies. Therefore indigenous women suffer all the discrimination, exploitation, marginalization and human rights violations indigenous peoples are experiencing across the world as women and as indigenous.

Women in particular feel the impact of loss of territory and access to resources since they are more directly responsible for agricultural work and food production as well as for taking care of and bringing up their children. Often, dispossession goes hand in hand with violence by state armed forces, settlers or the security personnel of private companies. The

occupation of indigenous peoples' land not only means forced eviction but murder and sexual harassment including rape of indigenous women. On top of these, indigenous women have least access to justice, legal support and other needed services.

Recommendations

- 1) Facilitate support in enhancing capacities of indigenous women on indigenous women's rights to enable women to participate in decision making mechanisms including in traditional decision making structures and leadership
- 2) Support a targeted information dissemination and education campaigns to change the mindset and underlying cultural and social values that permit gender violence especially witch-hunting and low regard to indigenous women, among others
- 3) Ensure the participation of indigenous women in the different committees, which are formed by state (ministries and departments) to address the issues concerning women and indigenous peoples, and on VAW/G.
- 4) Include the effective participation of indigenous women in the formulation of national women development policies and plan of action on violence against women
- 5) Encourage governments to take effective measures to prevent all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous women [article 22 of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)] and establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their adherence in respecting the rights of indigenous women, including their entitlement to lands, territories and resources, protection of their livelihoods, health and wellbeing among others.
- 6) Facilitate the development of holistic and culturally sensitive approaches, interventions and services for the protection, rehabilitation and care of victims of VAW especially amongst indigenous women and girls,
- 7) Victims of VAW amongst indigenous peoples shall be provided with universal access and holistic approach to free formal legal aid support services and access to justice

Finally, we encourage member states in our region to include indigenous women in their delegation and to work closely with indigenous women leaders to ensure the reflection and inclusion of their views and inputs in any draft outcome document and the respect for their rights are upheld in national position papers and interventions as well as in outcome documents.