

VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN ASIA

In behalf of the Asia Caucus, the Asia indigenous Women's Network in collaboration with the different indigenous peoples' and women's organizations BAI-Philippines (Federation of Indigenous Women in the Philippines), Kapaeeng Foundation and Maleya of Bangladesh, the National Indigenous Women's Federation of Nepal, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, would like to seek your attention on the unabated aggression on the rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous women in Asia that continue to impede on our full development as women and as peoples, thereby the achievement of the MDGs or the Post-2015 development agenda currently under negotiation.

Information on rape and sexual violence against indigenous women to undermine community solidarity is alarming. In Bangladesh, at least two hundred forty five (245) indigenous women were raped or sexually harassed since 2007, 211 of which took place in the Chittagong Hilltracts, according to reports by the Kapaeeng Foundation, an indigenous peoples' human rights organization. 19 cases of rape of indigenous persons in the past four months, including 12 children, occurred in the CHT and 2 were subsequently murdered (both in Kagrachari). Earlier used as a weapon of war, violence against indigenous women is now being used to establish a climate of fear and facilitate land grabbing.

In Nepal, we are happy to note reports from the Free Kamlari Development Forum and the National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities that as of 2013, there are about 1,200 Kamlaris rescued from bondage since 2001 in conformity with the state's Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act. We commend the state of Nepal for this effort to address this issue of bonded labour which has affected generations of the Tharu indigenous peoples due to impoverization. However, among them, some 100 have reportedly returned into Kamlari servitude due to lack of support services to enable them either to go back to school, employment or income generating activities. An estimated 900 kamlaris in the districts of Dang, Baki, Burdya, Kohlali and Kanchapur still remain bonded to their landlords.

Last April 2, in southern Philippines, some 307 Ata - Manobos families (1,353 individuals; 515 children) from their villages in Talaingod, Davao-del Norte were forced to evacuate due to relentless military harassment, human rights violations and indiscriminate firing and aerial bombing around their community. Four pregnant women reportedly gave birth prematurely and a 12 days old baby died from the stress of evacuation. Talaingod is being targeted for a mining, hydropower and oil palm plantation investment. Furthermore, of the 43 documented cases of extrajudicial killings the indigenous peoples in Southern Philippines, since 2010, five (5) were women and six (6) children. All these are related to the struggle of indigenous peoples against extractive industries. In the Philippines, military deployment is almost corollary to mining investment interest covering 957,530.86 hectares or almost 1/30 of the country's total land area. Over half of these are found in

the territories and lands of indigenous peoples some of which are also classified as Key Biodiversity Areas.

A glimpse of the situation of indigenous women in Asia reveals that prevailing aggressive development models particularly of extractive industries, mega-hydropower plants, monoculture plantations, etc. in collaboration with armed forces and entrenched by the gaps in implementing policies and programmes has eroded on the dignity and identities of indigenous women in the region. Violence against indigenous women is as intricately related to their collective and individual rights to their land, resources and territories as their wellbeing, cultures and identities are. The aggressive development models has been ravaging not only our lands and resources but also on our persons where mainstream patriarchal culture has been influencing unequal gender, marriage and family relations resulting to domestic violence.

THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF DEVELOPMENT WE WANT!

Our wellbeing spring from the security we derive from the trust and confidence we have on each other as indigenous peoples and communities, our collective lifeways that respect individual differences and from our lands and resources which provides for our and our children's needs. All these are being undermined by the mere lack of political will to genuinely respect, protect and fulfill the rights of indigenous peoples in the region which is fomenting conflict within and among us.

We call on states :

- 1) For an immediate demilitarization of indigenous territories. States should instead put their attention to bringing justice to the historical discrimination and violence against indigenous peoples through repeal of policies and programmes that are not coherent with the UNDRIP; States should institute independent and impartial inquiries into human rights violations against indigenous peoples and violence against indigenous women and girls, prosecute and punish the perpetrators and ensure reparations for both victims and survivors of violence.
- 2) Stop intrusion of private/corporate investments into indigenous territories including landgrabbing through social - engineering and resettlement programmes
- 3) We call on concerned international agencies to ensure that international standards are exercised and that their specific policies on indigenous peoples are strictly followed in the implementation of their mandates. This includes providing spaces and resources to empower or support capacity building for indigenous women and girls to be able to address their situations of marginalization and discrimination, ensuring full and effective participation of indigenous women in all levels, processes and matters that affect them including the Post 2015 development

agenda and the upcoming World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

4. We recommend that the UN Permanent Forum closely work with UN Country Teams and the State governments to address domestic violence in the context of each state's colonial history, political and economic structures and ethnic and cultural diversity towards strategically eliminating all forms of violence against indigenous women. Such strategy should include provision and support for access to justice and culture sensitive reintegration of survivors of violence and families of victims.

5. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to investigate the unabated violence against indigenous women and human rights violations related to their particular struggles as indigenous peoples.

6. We call on our own peoples and communities to recognize and address gender discrimination and violence in the name of tradition.

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