

Item 8: Panel discussion on the impact of development projects on indigenous women

Joint Statement by:

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Thank you Chair for giving me the floor.

The aggressive development projects on land and natural resource-based economy lead to the displacement of indigenous peoples from their land and forest.

There are many such development projects in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh, which are destructive to the national existence of the indigenous Jumma peoples. Particularly, the indigenous Jumma women are the worst victims of such projects.

One of such projects is the establishment of a tourist center by the army in the CHT. The Bangladesh army has occupied huge hilly lands belonging to the impoverished and backward Jumma people by setting up resorts, restaurants, and shopping centers.

Another example was recently in April 2022, the outsider land grabbers set on fire 350 acres of Jum farming land, plantation, and village common forests in three villages of Lama with an aim to occupy the land and resulting livelihood, food and drinking water crisis of 200 men and women from 39 Indigenous families.

All of this has a direct impact on the food security of displaced women. Wiping out the indigenous women from the land and forest is pushing them into the prevalent gender inequality and economic suffering. Hence, indigenous women have been losing their sources of livelihood in the CHT as well as plain lands.

A distinguished panel, I ask you what kind of global actions could we formulate together that will have a positive impact on proper development in the Indigenous regions without harming the indigenous communities, esp the women and children.

And lastly, my other question is what can individuals such as my Bangladeshi sisters who live in this climate do when they are the most vulnerable communities to sexual, physical and mental harassment that may not have access to adequate resources?