

MUGAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN UPLIFTMENT INSTITUTE (MIWUI)**Toma Lama, NEPAL****ITEM 8****Thank you Mr. chairperson,****Country representatives, indigenous experts, indigenous leaders and ladies and gentlemen,**

I am Toma Lama, representing marginalized and vulnerable Mugal indigenous women of Nepal who are living in the remotest parts of Nepal. I would like to shed lights on the some of the very pertinent questions related to United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and national indigenous movements. Let me go one step further and share with you my experiences, feelings and the reality of Nepali indigenous peoples in general and Mugal indigenous women in particular.

(1) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Nepal government has already ratified United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but there is a lack of implementation of the motto of UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples in recognition to right to self-determination, implementation of customary laws etc. Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture as mentioned in the declaration. But the most important thing is the type of political representation of the indigenous peoples in Constituent Assembly (CA) in which so-called indigenous members of CA are chosen based on party line ignoring the authentic institutions of indigenous peoples. Out of 601 CA members, 192 CA members are indigenous leaders along with 63 CA members are indigenous women. Nepal government has also ratified ILO169, but the implementation part is very weak because of lack of the representation of indigenous people in the bureaucracy of the country.

(2) Indigenous peoples in Nepal

According to the 2011 census, the indigenous nationalities (Adivasi Janajati) of Nepal comprise 36% of the total population of 26.5 million, although indigenous peoples' organizations claim a larger figure of more than 50%.

Even though they constitute a significant proportion of the population, throughout the history of Nepal indigenous peoples have been marginalized in terms of language, culture, and

political and economic opportunities. The 2011 census listed the population as belonging to 125 caste and ethnic groups (including 63 indigenous peoples), 59 castes (including 15 Dalit castes), and three religious groups (Muslim, Sikh and Bangali).

(a) Legislation (law) concerning indigenous peoples:

Only 59 indigenous nationalities have so far been legally recognized under the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities, **NFDIN, Act of 2002**. However, controversial recommendations for a revision of the list have recently been made.

(b) Indigenous Women of Nepal:

There are around fifteen millions of indigenous people or it is 36% of the total population of Nepal. In the indigenous population, there are women who cover more than half percent (51.5 %) of its own total population. Major issues are given below,

Key Issues:

- ❑ Indigenous women face ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural discrimination as being indigenous peoples and also face discrimination as being woman
- ❑ The traditional knowledge and skills of indigenous women based on livelihood are not protected and developed. Also, failed to develop it as income generating therefore Young indigenous women are unemployment.
- ❑ Indigenous women have lower access to all kinds of decision making, education, health, employment, training and skill development opportunities
- ❑ The conflict has also displaced a large number of indigenous women.
- ❑ No effective implementation of international commitments made by state such as; ILO Convention 169, UNDRIP, CERD, CEDAW, Beijing Work Plan etc.

Overview of Mugal indigenous women:

Mugal are the indigenous people of Mugu district – one of the remotest and least developed districts of Nepal. There is no road, no electricity in Mugu district. State has to define indigenous groups covering all the aspects that will be helpful in empowering and ensuring their access to various sectors and levels of nation building. Especially, remote area's indigenous peoples are totally neglected by Nation as well as other concerned sectors. Mugal indigenous peoples are not represented in bureaucracy, political party and civil society organizations. A very few men and women are educated, we can count in fingers. Mostly people are illiterate. Mugal people have their own culture, own language, own custom and tradition. They are involved in small business and farming. Mugal people are not involved in other sectors because of not getting opportunity in other areas. Nepalese women who are the most marginalised and vulnerable are facing the problems as Mugal women in Nepal.

5. Conclusion and recommendation:

Even though there are so many international indigenous peoples' conferences held, national laws related to indigenous peoples are passed, but grassroots indigenous peoples do not know what is happening at national and international levels for them. Now we need massive awareness programs and pressure on the respective governments to implement national and

international instruments related to indigenous peoples. . Now, it is the time to prioritize the demands of marginalized indigenous peoples and raise their voices strongly and launch national and international debates on it.

There are different categories of indigenous women in Nepal. The living condition of the marginalized indigenous people living in the very remote and backward regions of Nepal are really deplorable, they are wholly neglected and socially excluded by history and the state. As Mugali indigenous women, we are not represented at any level of government bodies and parties. For such things, we should have capacity building programs, education, health etc, specially targeting the marginalized indigenous peoples, only then; we can at least fulfill the aspirations of the indigenous people in fact.

In conclusion the government of Nepal has to promote the traditional skills and knowledge of the indigenous women by giving a sustainable programs or plans for their livelihood only then, they might feel strong economically having their rights preserved legally.

Thank You Mr. chairperson !