

13th session/ Regional meetings of
the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
The impact of COVID-19 on the rights of indigenous peoples
under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Virtual regional meetings

Tuesday 1 December 2020

(9:00 to 11:00, Geneva time)

Joint Statement by: Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP), Indigenous Peoples Nepal Trust, Community Law Firm Study and Research Dabu, Kathmandu Valley Road Expansions affected Community Struggle Committee and Peoples Concern Committee

Delivered by:.....

Distinguished Chair,

Expert Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Costmary and traditional Indigenous Nationalities' practice to cope Pandemic such as
COVID 19 in Nepal**

The customary institutions of indigenous peoples proved to be effective to defend pandemic (i.e. COVID 19) in Nepal. Despite imposition of "national" laws and policies various customary institution of many indigenous peoples are still working effectively in Nepal. Such as Baragung (Baragaule), Thakali (*TAMAHANG*), Tharu, Magar Nations hold traditional knowledge and customary practices to cope with pandemic such as COVID19. *Ghumpa* customary system (*Terah Mukhia*) of Naurikot in Mustang, made a collective decision to declare territorial restraint to people's movement. No outsider is allowed to enter and no member from the community is allowed to go out as well as bringing goods from outside in the community. It is a traditional practice of Thakali nation to keep the area safe and continue the way of life in a normal way. The rule was voluntary and strictly followed in

the community, without any coercive action. In order to stop spreading the COVID-19, the government imposed a lockdown with the deployment of security forces and used violent means against people. Rampant human rights violation i.e. tortures, harassments, and many people compelled to live without foods. Ultimately, the lockdown turned failed strategy against COVID. In contrast, normal life in the Thakali community was not jeopardized as it happened in the urban area of the country.

Baragung (Baragaule) community managed their own quarantine house to keep in isolation if someone gets affected. Customary manage foods and necessary stuff for needy people in accordance with their customary practice. The customary practice of Baragaule focuses on collective social responsibility that is different than the notion of social distancing, which may create a situation to leave a sick person without care. Even though, there is no western scientific experiment done, Indigenous Peoples are using traditional medicinal practices to cope with the pandemic. The community initiative is more effective and provides support to community members in a timely and responsible manner.

Apart from that Guthi of Newa:, Majehadam of Santhal, Majhesaba of Majhi, Bhejga of Magar, Barghar of Tharu and other customary institutions of indigenous peoples are still in existence and playing effective role at the community level.

Aforementioned instances apparently demonstrate, Indigenous Peoples customary practices, institutions need recognition and ensure their participation in activities fighting against pandemic such as COVID 19.