

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz

UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Languages: English

Philippines

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz is the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and is an indigenous leader from the Kankana-ey Igorot people of the Cordillera Region in the Philippines. She is a social development consultant, indigenous activist, civic leader, human rights expert, public servant, and advocate for indigenous women's rights.

As a youth activist in the 1970s, she helped organize Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines to stop the Chico River Hydroelectric Dam and the Cellophil Resources Corporation. As an indigenous leader, she was actively engaged in the drafting and adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. She served as the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2005 to 2010.

In 2009, she received the Gabriela Silang Award from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in recognition of the work she has done at the forefront of the struggle for Indigenous Peoples' rights. She is also the founder of Tebtebba, the Indigenous People's International Centre for Policy Research and Education.

Dr. Myrna Cunningham

President of the Association for Women's Rights in Development's (AWID) Board of Directors

Languages: English, Spanish

Nicaragua

Myrna Cunningham, a Miskita feminist and indigenous rights activist from Nicaragua. She served as the Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues until 2012. She is also the president of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Board of Directors.

Dr. Myrna Cunningham of Nicaragua is a Miskito Indian and an important political leader of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas. Dr. Cunningham has worked over 30 years as a teacher and doctor in hospitals and health clinics throughout Nicaragua. She has worked at the local, national, and International levels to advocate for human rights, the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, and women's health. For her activism, she has received several international awards. She is vice president and founding member of the Indigenous Initiative for Peace with Nobel Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchu, and member of the Board of Directors of the World Women's Fund.

Dr. Cunningham served as the Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues until 2012, and she is currently the president of the Association for Women's Rights in Development's (AWID) Board of Directors. She is also currently a member of the Board of The Hunger Project, and a Trust Fund for Indigenous People, Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF). She is also First Vice President of the Board of the Fund for the Development of Indigenous People of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Cécile Ndjebet

President, African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF)

Languages: English, French

Cameroon / Central Africa

Cécile Ndjebet is the President of the African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF). She is the Executive Director of Cameroon Ecology, a national NGO based in Edéa, Cameroon, and the National Coordinator of Cameroon's civil society platform on REDD+ and Climate Change. For the past 18 years, Ms. Ndjebet has been devoted to women's rights issues. She holds a Master's in social forestry and is a gender specialist, providing training and advice in women's leadership. She is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Forests Dialogue, a focal point of the Women's Major Group of the United Nations Forest Forum (UNFF), and a representative of the Women of the Global South Group in the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).

Madhu Sarin

Gender and Forest Tenure Expert

Languages: English

India

Madhu Sarin has been working on forest tenure reform in India for the last 15 years. Combining grassroots work with policy analysis and advocacy, her primary focus for over 3.5 decades has been on gender- and equity- sensitive community empowerment and the democratization of natural resource governance. Sarin was a member of the Technical Support Group constituted by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs which drafted the Indian Forest Rights Act passed by Parliament in 2006. Since then, together with Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) and other movements, she has been involved in pushing for proper implementation of the law. She has also an honorary Fellow of the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) based in Washington DC.

Rukka Sombolinggi

Secretary General, Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN)

Languages: English, Bahasa Indonesia

Indonesia

Rukka Sombolinggi is the first women Secretary General of Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (or [AMAN](#)), an organization of indigenous peoples in Indonesia which as of today has 1,025 indigenous communities and more than 30 indigenous organizations as members. She belongs to the Toraya People in central part of Sulawesi Island.

She produced "Standing Strong on the Tsunami Ruins" in April 2005, a film documentary about Indigenous communities affected by Tsunami in Aceh. The film was funded and presented by AMAN and Assembly of First Nations (AFN Canada) before a side event during the 4th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 16-27 of May 2005 at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA.

Before joining AMAN in 1999, she worked for JAPHAMA (Jaringan Pembelaan Hak-hak Masyarakat Adat), a network of indigenous peoples' defenders — one of the main groups that convened the first congress of indigenous peoples in Indonesia in March 1999 during which AMAN was established.

Julie T.B. Weah

Executive Director, Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI)

Languages: English

Liberia

Julie T. B. Weah currently serves as Executive Director of the Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI). For the past seven years, her work has focused on securing the rights of women to land and forest tenure. Julie is a civil society representative on various platforms, including the working group on the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), REDD+, and Climate Change. She also serves as the Vice President of the African Women's Network on Community Management of Forest (REFACOF). She is actively engaged in the activities of the NGO Coalition of Liberia, a network of civil society institutions working on human rights and natural resource issues.

Omaira Bolaños

Director, Latin America Program, Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)

Languages: English, Spanish

Omaira manages the Latin America Program, providing strategic support and knowledge on the socio-political context of the region in order to envision opportunities for RRI engagement. She holds a PhD in anthropology and a master's degree in Latin American studies with a concentration in tropical conservation and development both from the University of Florida. Prior to joining RRI, Omaira worked extensively in development and community-based conservation, watershed management, gender equity, and Indigenous Peoples' tenure rights throughout Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, and her native Colombia. In addition to Spanish, she speaks fluent English and Portuguese.

Solange Bandiaky-Badji

Director, Africa Program, and gender justice program lead, Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)

Languages: English, French

Solange Bandiaky-Badji is the Africa Program Director for the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) as well as RRI's gender justice program lead. She leads the development of RRI's strategy for engagement in Africa with a focus on tenure rights, building more synergies around new strategic analyses, and giving actors a more strategic understanding of trends, issues, options, and gender in Africa. She holds a PhD in women's and gender studies from Clark University in Massachusetts, and master's degrees in environmental sciences and in philosophy from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Senegal. She previously worked as the Regional Expert on gender and climate change for the Africa Adaptation Programme (AAP) and the UNDP/ BDP Gender Team in New York. Solange has published work on gender in relation to natural resource management, decentralization/local governance, forest and land reforms. She speaks English, French, and Wolof, one of the local languages of Senegal.

Stephanie Keene***Tenure Analyst, Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)*****Languages: English**

Stephanie Keene is an attorney with a background in land tenure security, women's rights, and corporate social responsibility, particularly in Africa. She is the primary author of RRI's [Power and Potential](#) report. She has worked on issues of women's land rights, gender-based violence, and social protection at the World Bank, and was previously an Associate with Covington & Burling LLP's Anti-Corruption, Africa, and International Trade Controls practices. Stephanie has worked to protect the land rights of women-victims of illegal property seizure in Northern Uganda, and has served as a Princeton Fellow with the West African Regional Bureau of the UN World Food Program. Her field research and related reports include an environmental and human rights assessment of Indigenous People's land rights within the context of a large-scale agricultural development project in Papua, Indonesia, and an assessment of Sierra Leone's legal prohibition against child marriage. Stephanie received her Juris Doctor from Yale Law School, and her undergraduate degree from Princeton University.