



Fostering Women-led Natural Resource Management Reform Amidst Conflict

Brief #2 of 4

The Challenges of Securing Women's Tenure and Leadership for Forest Management: The Asian Experience

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1. Gender and Forest Tenure: Pre-requisite for Sustainable Forest Management in Nepal
2. **Fostering Women-led Natural Resource Management Reform Amidst Conflict**
3. Gender Justice: Forest Tenure and Forest Governance in Indonesia
4. Re-envisioning REDD+: Gender, Forest Governance and REDD+ in Asia

Women are equal stakeholders in accessing and managing the natural resources of the Philippines. The remaining natural resources are located in rural, upland landscapes holding the remaining biodiverse ecosystems, and are crucial for economic empowerment of the poor. But most of these resources are also located in the corridors of extractive industries which creates potential conflicts. Almost 50 percent of the Philippine population are women; and 51 percent of the total population are living in rural and upland communities. Women have distinct roles from men in these economically valuable, biodiverse landscapes. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that women differ from men in terms of access to and control of their resources, and thus they also differ in knowledge, skills and decision-making with regard to their resources.

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Rural and indigenous women's relationships to their natural resources are intimately linked to their traditionally assigned social roles. While men utilize the natural resources to earn cash income for the other needs of the family, women look to natural resources primarily for their source of food, drinking water, fuel, and medicine, among others. Access to land and water means the ability to provide food for the family and children. While prevailing gender biases may confine women to the private sphere inside the home, women also take on multiple important roles in economic activities, in community life, in indigenous traditional governance structures and in managing natural resources.

Gender mainstreaming in the environment and management of natural resources in the Philippines has been given attention through the Engendering Program of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 1989. The adoption of Gender and Development (GAD) principles has led to the development of policies to recognize women in awarding of tenurial stewardship, the incorporation of gender parity in the Community Resources Management Framework, the inclusion of women in protective area management boards, the inclusion of gender concerns in environmental impact assessments, and the development of tools to mainstream gender in community-based forest management. However, there are still a very wide range of issues that remain untouched in recognizing women's key contributions in natural resource management (NRM). Discussions on sustainability and on the

issues besetting the use and management of the country's rich natural resources will be made more complete by taking a closer look at the value of the role and contribution of women in natural resource management. This paper is a snapshot of the experiences and insights of rural and indigenous women leaders of the Philippines, and captures the lessons learned from women engaging in the context of land and armed conflict on the island of Mindanao.

I. THE PHILIPPINES' NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REFORM ISSUES

The Philippines natural resources potential is huge, but is not currently allocated to serve the needs of the poor. Conservation International ranks the country as the world's 17th most "mega diverse" country with its tropical forests, waters, and rich biodiversity. However, these resources are rapidly decreasing and degrading at an alarming speed, a cause of concern for food and water for the poorest upland and resource-dependent dwellers, especially women. Diminishing resources bring about new forms of conflict and competition, especially between men and women.²

1.1 Rich ecosystems, poor people, burdened women

The rich biodiversity and resources in the Philippines, unfortunately, does not translate into the improvement of human living conditions in the country. This is especially true in the areas where we find the remaining forest ecosystems intact, especially in Indigenous Peoples ancestral territories.

Forest cover in the Philippines shows that the majority of the rural provinces in these regions also have a high poverty incidence³ where subsistence incidence is very high.⁴ World Bank figures in 2004 show that 31 million poor Filipinos were found in the rural areas, including sugarcane farm workers, small farmers in coconut/rice/corn, fishermen and forest dependent households. Current government figures show this to be true even to date. Indigenous Peoples comprised around 10-12 percent of the population in 2002. They remain the most disadvantaged because of the high incidence of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty, and live far from basic services resulting in high morbidity, mortality and malnutrition rates. These poor sectors stand to be more severely affected by the depletion of the natural resources resulting from over utilization of the resources or the effects of climate change.

Agriculture is the main livelihood of the majority of the Filipino population, and yet there is a high concentration of land in the hands of less than 20 percent of the national population. Land redistribution under the various programs, and most recently RA6657 Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) has so far distributed a total of 2.56 million hectares to small farmers,⁵ to a cumulative total of 6.4 million hectares distributed until 2005.⁶ Almost all CARP beneficiaries are male, as they are recognized to be the regular land tillers, while women are only relegated to the second rate status of seasonal farm labourers. Only 27 percent of women had been awarded emancipation patents and Certificate of Land Ownership Agreements percent in 2004.⁷ By 2010, government figures showed that only 32 percent of the CLOA-holders are women.

Rural poor and indigenous women's access to resources and income remain low. Studies show that indigenous women's contribution to productive and care work are often overlooked in resource management activities, despite the implication such projects may have on increasing reproductive risk on women.⁸ The study cites the priority given to men participants in World Bank-funded environmental programs such as Village Forest Joint Management, Community Forestry Groups, and Forest User

Groups, while women participated in the marginal economic activities. The study characterizes women's participation in local resource management organizations to be "nominal and passive."

II. CHALLENGES AROUND THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The survival of rich biodiversity is threatened by mounting pressures from the utilization of the natural resources. Government policies bear inherent contradictions in the exploitation of natural resources and their conservation. In its report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Philippine government recognizes that the rich biodiversity areas are in critical state.⁹ Not all key biodiversity areas are considered as legally protected, and the effort of many communities is directed towards applying some form of tenure security through various instruments, such as the Protected Area Community Based Resource Management Agreements (PACBRMA), or integrating the sustainable development and protection in the applications for Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADT) (p.25-28, 2009).

Mining is the most significant threat to the remaining forest ecosystems and access of the poor to natural resources. It has excluded women and men by effectively taking the land out of agricultural and protected area functions. The displacement of communities, the conversion of productive agricultural land, the reversal of reforestation and forest protection efforts, and the pollution of watersheds, ground and surface water are astounding. The government's CBD report states that the "government's decision to pursue mining as a revenue-generating industry clashes with bio-diversity related concerns," because "mining applications are mostly located in forest areas, threatening the integrity of biodiversity in this ecosystem."¹⁰ The 23 flagship mining projects identified by the Arroyo government currently sit in the key biodiversity areas in the Sierra Madre, Palawan, Mindoro and Mindanao.

Mining takes a heavy toll on the community, socially and economically. Gross human rights violations are documented in many communities, especially where there is resistance to the mining operations. A report in the Asia Study Session on Women and Mining¹¹ shows that mining has grave social costs for women. Contamination of toxic chemicals in food and water sources, and pollution result in health hazards such as

"...mining has serious negative impacts on women's lives, livelihoods, social and cultural status, physical and sexual rights, ecological spaces, access to and control over natural resources, legal and customary rights and traditional knowledge systems. Mining has also generated serious development myths, which we challenge from the gender perspective. We reassert our respect for the earth, our natural resources, our uniqueness, diversity and commonality. We want to lead healthy, peaceful and productive lives that will promote human well being and ecological richness. We want the participation of women in positive economic activities and sustainable livelihoods."¹³

asthma, gastrointestinal diseases, and even cancer. Women's reproductive health suffers from spontaneous abortion and malformed babies. Carreon's study further cites that the increase in the number of domestic violence cases against women, and incidents of alcohol and drug addiction, gambling, incest, and even wife swapping and infidelity have also been reported. Women in mining communities suffer trauma from loss of their homes and lands, loss of subsistence food sources and displacement and economic disempowerment. The disintegration and social disorders, as a result, destroy traditional values and customs, and even family unity is attacked by coercive measures of mining companies. The loss of land results in the difficulty to live on subsistence resources and in more deprivation. Women engaged in resistance campaigns against mining are especially vulnerable to violence and threats to their lives. Reports of extrajudicial killings and sexual harassment, rape, physical and psychological torture of women result from militarization. Cases of prostitution, for example in Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Sur have been linked to mining.¹²

The intensive use of water in hydraulic mining and in mineral processing negatively impacts the access of women on available water resources. Riverine and coastal communities are affected by the heavy metal effluents coming from mine operations, found in the river and flowing into the coast.

2.1 Monopoly plantations: Competing against food for the children

Mono-cropping tree plantations are one of the tracks endorsed by the government to address the need for reforestation. However, this curtails the actual regeneration of indigenous forests because of the introduction of invasive and alien tree species, increased of pests and diseases, and eradication of other species. While social natural resource management is identified as a key strategy, large scale commercial investments are not limited.

The introduction of forest plantation systems also affects the perpetuation of traditional forest knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. The Cordillera Peoples' Alliance notes that the "forest production sharing agreements are generally directed towards the protection, development and rehabilitation of forestlands to ensure their continuity in productive conditions, (mostly) for profit, rather than recognizing and protecting indigenous knowledge systems' that conserve and promote biodiversity and cultural resources."¹⁴

The *pinugo* or *muyong* system of the Ifugao people has long been internationally recognized by the FAO as an ideal forest management system. The *pinugo/muyong* are clan-owned and clan-managed woodlots within the ancestral domain of the tribe. Each clan takes care of their *pinugo/muyong* as this is their "source of food, fuel, lumber for housing and woodcarving, medicinal plants, botanical pesticides, irrigation, domestic water and cash."¹⁵ The *muyong* protects the lower farmlands from erosion during the rainy months, and becomes the source of water into the *payok* (rice terraces) during the dry months. The *muyong* system allows for both human activity and biodiversity to co-exist. However, this system, and perhaps other systems used by other indigenous tribes, is not necessarily promoted under the forest management system of government. The *muyong* system basically answers the household needs, while commercial tree plantations seek to satisfy market demand.

2.2 Hydropower resource conflict

The privatization and commercial exploitation of water resources through large scale energy projects have also fuelled conflicts and increased threats to forest ecosystems and food security of resource dependent communities. Large scale energy projects are mostly found in ancestral domains of Indigenous Peoples (IPs).

Efforts to pursue the construction of large dams were resisted by Indigenous Peoples with significant participation of women, like the Kalinga and Bontoc who fought against the Chico River Dam Project. Around 600 Ibaloi families were displaced by the construction of the Ambuklao and Binga dams.¹⁶ Despite the tradition of non-acceptability by the communities and the possible effects on food security, the government continued to pursue large-scale energy projects along the Agno river. The San Roque Dam located in the lower Agno River of Pangasinan Province forcibly displaced 160 families in 1998, but will displace another 402 families in Pangasinan, and around 2,000 Ibaloi families from Itogon, Benguet.

In Mindanao, the plan to build the Pulangi V hydropower plant in Pulangi River in Bukidnon, for example, will flood at least 23 villages of the Manobo tribe.¹⁷ The Manobos genuinely feel that this will result in their ethnocide from the possible starvation resulting from flooding of their farms. The dam will also destroy sacred burial grounds.

2.3 Social natural resources policies and programs

The Philippine government puts a premium on community managed resources. This shift stemmed from the demand to look at the redistributive potential of natural resources management in addressing poverty. Amidst the conflict ridden resource management environment, the shift since the early 1980s has been towards local participation. It introduced social, environmental policies like the promulgation of the 1987 Philippine Constitution upholding the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains and the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992 and others.

However, the actual impact of the aforementioned policies in curbing poverty and addressing conservation issues may be less than the touted objectives. These socialized natural resource management policies fall short of recognizing the traditional role of indigenous women in resource managers. It does not necessarily reflect the differentiated role of women in the community stewardship of resources, neither has it necessarily resulted in strengthening the women's roles. It is important to look into the differentiated roles of women and men in the management of the natural resources, and the differentiated impact of natural resource related conflicts on women and men if a sustainable approach to finding solutions is to develop.

III. RURAL AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE IN COMMUNITY NRM

The social discrimination against women are rooted in gender and poverty. Women continue to be doubly burdened with their domestic responsibilities and their public role. It is a double 'minoritization' for the Indigenous women because they belong to a 'cultural minority' which reinforces their marginalization. Household-based work, although recognized to be the crucial support system of the family, is not given economic recognition or financial valuation. Feminization of natural resource management takes place when most of the male population migrate to the urban centers for work. When political conflicts arise, they are left to tend to landscapes that sustain culture and biodiversity.

In rural communities, majority of the women work in the agricultural sector¹⁸ as farmers in their own lands or as laborers in big plantations. Many rural women also work in the fisheries sector. The State of the Women of Mindanao report shows that women earn significantly lower than male counterparts. Anthropological studies of the uplands state the importance of women in agriculture, such as root-crop

production and rice cultivation. Women contribute important labor demand in production and in the household. The gathering of non-timber forest products is shared by both men and women as a main livelihood activity.¹⁹ Women process these products, like cleaning of the vines and other materials, weaving handicrafts, and packaging. They are also responsible for financial management and marketing. Ella's study reported that productivity by women and children in processing of NTFPS, is generally stable, thus resulting to dependable income. The Center for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD) report states that up to 90 percent of fishing activities are done by rural women. They earn income by gathering fish, seashells and seaweed farming and processing. Mangroves are also important resources for firewood.²⁰

Water is especially significant for women, as it accompanies most of their home duties, such as care for the babies and children, preparation of food, laundry, cleaning of the house, their personal hygiene, and even in the rearing of animals for food. Rural women spend a lot of time and effort in fetching water. Thus they have local knowledge of where water is available; they have the ability to manage water budgeting for the various household needs and systems in storing the water.

Women are the first to feel the challenges that their communities face in managing their declining or degrading resources. They have to answer their family and community's demands for food and water. The government livelihood programs on cottage industries, crafts, food processing and animal rearing have at best, alleviated the living conditions of women and their families, in terms of providing a few hundred pesos of additional income; and at worst, have encouraged the 'domestication' of the women's role in society. A study on integration of gender and participatory governance in poverty reduction programs in the Philippines and Vietnam concludes that for genuine poverty reduction, programs need to build social capital, and that includes building women capacities and opening platforms for women to have equal power and decision-making within their homes and in their communities.²¹

3.1 Keepers of culture, indigenous knowledge and practices

Traditional management of natural resources are embedded in the cultural and spiritual values, and knowledge of the indigenous peoples. In Bukidnon, rituals remain a part of their way of doing in their day to day life, reinforcing their sacred regard for the land and its produce. In the Daraghuyan community, they regulate the season for hunting deer and wild pigs, refraining from hunting during the animals' mating season, when they expect the mother animals to become pregnant.

Indigenous Women transmit cultural practices to the next generation. They keep oral customs and traditions alive by instilling in their children the virtues of respect for the land and for their resources, and respect for the people. They are the teachers for their Schools of Living Tradition. As mothers, they grapple with the changing social contexts that affect their communities and families, as well as the changing attitudes and goals of the younger generations. Traditional knowledge and practices are being lost in the face of external pressures on their resources; yet at the same time, there is a need to establish a level of regulation and protection to conserve what available resources are left.

3.2 Land tenure and security

There is significantly lower percentage of land ownership among women, as compared to men in the Philippines. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) institutionalized the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) and Certificate of Ancestral Land Title (CLT) and provides for their land ownership, the waters and resources within, considered as community property rights and governed by

their traditional by-laws. However, it comes into conflict or overlaps with other laws, such as the NIPAS, the Fisheries Code, the Forestry Code and the Mining Act of 1995.²² There is urgent demand to review these gaps and conflicts, especially as IPs face grave threat and competition for the resources within their domain. As mentioned earlier, many land reform and tenure programs prioritize male beneficiaries. Ownership by women is attached through recognizance of conjugal property in married couples. Previous studies point to the need to have disaggregated data so that land distribution and control of access to property can be monitored and can influence appropriate programs which can help small producers, such as the women.

Less or no access at all and control of their resources results to the feminization of poverty. There is inability to meet their household needs, especially for female-headed household. This is also caused by dependency on the male member of the household who has the access to the resources, such as land ownership. Deprivation leads to food insecurity and extreme powerlessness among women.

3.3 Caught in the crossfire of natural resource conflicts

Existing conflicts from the management and conservation of natural resources significantly and differently affect women, albeit this is oftentimes undocumented and remains obscure.

In Bukidnon, crop plantations are encroaching in ancestral domains, such as the rapid expansion of sugarcane. Not only does it intrude into indigenous territories, but it competes as well with production of food. Small farmers of corn or rice, who cannot sustain their production because of the expensive cost of seeds and chemical inputs, have either converted to planting sugarcane or have rented out their lands for sugarcane. This situation greatly diminishes the family's capacity to provide for their food needs.

Whereas, previously they were small land holders, they become mere farm hands in the lands they once owned and tilled. Both men and women employ as helpers in sugarcane plantations. Even children assist their parents in this work, since the labor system is through pakyaw or by package deal per hectare.

The Country Study on the Oil Palm Industry²³ reveals that oil palm expansion seriously encroaches on forest and food production areas and ancestral domains of indigenous communities. Small farmers, including women, lose access to and control of their lands and close their options for growing food or going into other land-based economic activity. The projected rise in domestic demand for biofuels and other oil-based products have prompted more speculation for land and have opened up ancestral domains to oil palm. The DENR Memorandum Circular No. 2004-12 identified forest areas under existing tenorial instruments which can be utilized for oil palm. Oil palm plantations employ mostly men. In the case of the Kenram Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multi-Purpose Cooperative (KARBEMPCO), in Sultan Kudarat, the Certificate of Landownership Award (CLOA) in the oil palm plantation set-up did not redound to more access and control for women on their land resource. They were not employed in the plantation and continued to earn marginal income. There are only two women out of the 413 members in the cooperative and they did not have representation in the coop. They earn income by gathering fallen fruits from the plantation which they sell at P30-40/kilo. There were no projects that were designed for the women in the post-agrarian reform (AR) support. Issues that were surfaced include conflicts with existing tenorial arrangements. Arrangements with private oil palm corporations are always in the interest of the corporation, as communities are not able to negotiate with the companies on equal terms. In cases where deforestation is related to crop expansion, women lose their sources for fuelwood, for subsistence gathering, and for medicine. A more demanding process of food production results, which also has implications on personal health and the health of children and family.

Though there are women leaders in IP communities, most communities are still led by men or the Datu, as they are traditionally addressed. In one of our conversations with a *Timuay* (leader/elder) in North Cotabato, “in most cases where ancestral domains are affected by mining and plantation, the decision is made by the leadership, and mostly, women cannot have significant involvement in the decision-making.”

3.4 Leadership and managing conflict

In indigenous communities in Northern Mindanao, the women sit in positions in their traditional governance structure. Usually, this is tied to being the wife of the supreme and sectoral datu's. But *Bae's* (women tribal elders) also sit as members of the tribal council, in the council of elders or as officers in the community's organization. Indigenous women, especially leaders, play a crucial role in mediation of conflicts. They preliminarily investigate cases and mediate between aggrieved persons to create a calm atmosphere, and to bring conflicting parties to the table for dialogue. Wives of the tribal chieftain, serve as advisers to the Datus and act as a bridge between constituents and their leaders. The Bae willingly takes on the responsibilities of attending to the community, as an extension of her husband's leadership. The Council of Elders are composed of men and women (*Ininay* and *Inamay*). The decision is arrived at through a community process and clear discussion by the members of the Council, and this is considered as a decision made equally by both women and men.

The mediatory role of women is also crucial in the community's position before external groups or forces. In the case of the Bae's in Bukidnon, they stand up to armed groups, either to the military or to rebel groups, to appeal on behalf of their community and to negotiate for an agreement. There is still a prevailing culture of respect for women recognizing them to be more vulnerable, and not regarded as an opponent to be attacked or killed. This experience is particular to inter-tribal confrontations and to migrant groups, but does not necessarily reflect other conflict and mediation approaches to other external groups such as corporations.

3.5 Support system in conflict situation

Conflict situation gives rise to a different set of challenges for women. Although cases of women soldiers in the frontline may be rare, but they suffer more in terms of emotional trauma, disrupted lives, loss of loved ones, displacement and poverty.

From our interviews, we learned that Moro women play a significant role in the present conflict situation. Wives of members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) provide an important support system to their husbands who are in the war-front. When the men go to war, the women are left alone with the responsibility of providing for and nurturing the children and family. During outbursts of encounter or attacks, the women have to ensure that they and their children have a safe place to run away to and hide. The women also provide organizational service to the MILF, by taking charge of certain tasks, like going to the city for various transactions and maintaining communications. Displacement literally removes the ground from where women are able to make a stand for themselves and their families, loss of control on their resources, and loss of control on their lives. This is not to mention women as casualties of war or victims of war-related violence.

In Lanao del Norte area, one common thread that ties together the stakeholders in the land and political conflict is poverty. In the recent years of sustaining the movement of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front,

many recruits to the battalion are Moro and IP men who have families living in dire poverty. There is admittance that the men resort to the armed movement because they do not have other viable source of income, either in farming or employment. Some pin their hopes that when the liberation movement is successful, they will be given jobs or a means of living.

This great gap stems from the lack of access to land, inability to source out a means of living or subsistence from their immediate natural resources. They do with subsistence farming, and usually these are rootcrops and occasional hunting of big animals from the forest, like wild pig and deer. Thus the territorial conflict is underscored with the needs of men and women who are unable to utilize their natural resources within because of the lack of ownership and lack of equitable access to it.

Families also remain poor because they do not have the proper support system to utilize their resources. When it comes to agriculture for indigenous communities in the hinterlands of Lanao del Norte, families have to contend with harvesting corn and rootcrops which is just enough for consumption. They are not able to afford high-quality seeds or fertilizers for a good cropping. There is no excess production to earn cash for other needs such as education, healthcare, decent clothing and adequate shelter. Because these villages are too far, there are no access roads that will enable farmers to bring crops from the mountains to viable markets in town. The only means of transportation is through a single motorcycle called *habal-habal*, which is around US\$8 per person and practically wishful thinking for them to spend on transporting goods. This reflects on the neglect of local governments to extend assistance to communities that are in the most need.

One of the women's daily ordeal is in getting water. In the case of hinterland Indigenous communities in Lanao, their water source is located very far from the village site. Women and children need to trek a good two hours before reaching their water source. They are only able to bear the weight of about eight to ten liters of water to take back to their homes. This spells their difficulty to provide drinking water, in cooking, cleaning and caring for their children. With the phenomenon of bodies of water drying up, the women's source gets farther and farther from their reach. Women have no means to access government support so that water utilities can be built closer to home.

Many times there is non-recognition of the women's abilities to mediate and negotiate due to stereotyping that women are only good in performing roles within the home and the public sphere is a man's domain. In the hinterland Higaonon communities that are still in the middle of ideological war, women remain unrecognized and unheard. In Gingoog City, where the NPA movement has taken refuge in the mountain ranges in the area, women are generally not regarded in the discussion of the community's security and position. As one Bae said that, their explanations are not accepted by the military, and that the latter would rather speak to the Datu than to her.

Cases of family feuds or *rido*, both in indigenous and Muslim communities have led to displacement for entire families. *Rido*, usually carried through generations, have been found to come from land disputes, among others.²⁴ For Muslim culture, this has also become an accepted way of seeking justice in lieu of a reliable and fair justice system. For indigenous cultures, their belief in *sala* or payment for grievances committed against others take sway. This includes if one has violated the other's properties, including family-owned resources. Women of the clans bear the emotional trauma and the responsibility of having to re-establish the family in new places, away from her usual support system. In the provinces of ARMM, a total of 16,099 families have been displaced by *rido* in the past years. Although women leaders account for only two percent of the mediators who stepped in to resolve *rido* cases, it is also recognized that efforts to resolve *rido* are usually multi-actors that include women, such as in the case of NGOs.²⁵

10

Challenges that emerge from threats such as competition for land use and water resources and conflict exacerbate women's difficult position caused by inequitable access to natural resources, lack of tenure security and conventionally imposed roles.

IV. RESPONSE TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION: FROM BEING VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCE TO ACTORS LEADING THE CHANGE

Indigenous and rural poor women have risen above these challenges and created spaces for participation and asserted rights to these resources, in a significantly proactive way. Many grassroots movements and documented cases have shown that indigenous and rural women have had their share of successes in defending their rights to natural resources and in resolving conflicts rooted in contesting natural resources.

Example 1: Women at the forefront in the defense of their precious water resource against mining: The ABAKATAF experience

The village of Anislagan, located in the municipality of Placer, Surigao del Norte, Philippines was mined for gold and copper in the 1980s. After a disastrous collapse of the tailings dam of the Manila Mining Corporation (MMC) in 1995, the residents of Anislagan have since protested and strongly protected their community against the re-entry of mining operations in their community. The strongest argument that they hold against mining, and its promises of prosperity and development, is the preservation of their water source and watersheds. It services drinking water not only for Anislagan, but the whole of the municipality of Placer; as well as irrigation for their farms. Women have led the multi-sectoral campaign of the community through the Anislagan Bantay Kalikasan Task Force (ABAKATAF).²⁶ The women are passionate in saying that their environment provides for them, and they have sufficient agricultural production for their food needs. The village of Anislagan, blessed with lakes, rivers and springs, has an abundance of clean water for their homes as well as their farm irrigation. They foresee though, that in 25 years' time, when all the minerals have been excavated from their lands, there will be nothing left for their children to inherit, but the wasteland, and worse, the loss of valuable water source. In the last ten years of their struggle, ABAKATAF has gone through many community mobilizations, including the filing of legislative cases locally and internationally against the mining companies, and even the government. The women leaders of the task force have been a strong pillar in the campaign and the continuous pressure that the community is under from mining companies and pro-mining state actors. The simple recognition and valuing of their natural resource, that comes from the women's needs and from their long-term perspective, have helped to solidify the community's position against mining. Their experience shows that certain policies need to be reformed in order to lessen the disruptive effects of resource extractive and resource utilization projects.

Example 2: Enhancing food security and climate change-preparedness of small islands: LUMOT-Dev

One of the gravest impacts that climate change will bring about to the country is the increase in sea level, and its implication on the many small island communities. One place particularly in jeopardy is Hinatuan Island in Surigao del Sur, due to its close proximity to the Pacific Ocean. To ensure the sustainable management of their coastal resources, seven fish sanctuaries were established in Hinatuan

Bay. One of these is the 19-hectare sanctuary in Mahaba Island, which is managed and led by the Ladies United Movement Onward to Development (LUMOT-Dev).²⁷ Their activities include providing security to the area, planting of mangroves to prevent coastal erosion and provide breeding grounds for the fishes and other marine life. The sanctuary helps to improve sources of income, since it provides the community with fish fry and mangroves increase other shellfish and seafoods that can be gathered. Support systems like electrification, potable water projects, and a transportation for children studying across the island help to buffer the women in managing the sanctuary. This initiative was initiated and assisted by the Center for Empowerment and Resources Development (CERD). This experience calls attention to the need to provide alternative livelihood to the women and men in coastal communities who are highly dependent on fishing for livelihood. There is a need to work on mitigation and adoption to be fully prepared for climate change, and not act on emergency-response mode, as is the present status quo. They also state that there is a need to look at how climate change affects men and women differently, so that in addressing the impact can be done with a gender perspective, and women's full potential can be harnessed to make a difference.

Example 3: Mothers for Peace²⁸

Carrying the simple message that “Women should not continue to live with war and in displacement. Women should be able to live in peace, to bring up their family and children in peace,” the Mothers for Peace (M4P) promote the value of peace and the principle of peace-building. Convened by the Mindanao Commission on Women (MCW),²⁹ the M4P is a national movement that creates platforms for women's development and peace in Mindanao and seeks to bring the women's agenda in the peace processes.

With around 200 members, the Mothers for Peace are both Moro and indigenous women from selected communities of Lanao del Norte and in Iligan City. Those who have joined are perceived to be more open-minded and ready to accept the relatively new concepts of peace and peace-building. Women from other communities have remained closed or aloof to the idea. They are already burdened with their domestic obligations and grappling with providing for the family's daily needs. Areas that are bulwarks of armed groups cannot be easily penetrated. In other areas, male leaders do not recognize women's rights, which is why there is a need to bring women's rights on the table during the peace talks. M4P aims to channel the issues on gender equality and women development through the formal process. Many of the members do voluntary organizing work and there are limited funds. Women who show potential, and have the mind and guts to speak out about their situation and for their rights, those that can extend the energy and time for organizational activities and campaigns are trained to become organizers. Because of the accepted fact that the Mothers for Peace would have to compete with their members' main obligations to their homes, M4P has widened their campaign with the Maranao and indigenous youths to re-orient them on the values of peace and positive change, countering the common culture of war to which they have grown apathetic.

The M4P partners with other service-delivery organizations to provide livelihood options for the members of the community affected by conflict. They see the importance of addressing poverty as a way of deterring from joining or supporting the war. As they said, “if the people have enough to eat, if they could send their children to school and provide medicine for the sick, why should they volunteer themselves to die in the war?” Instead of carrying guns and arms, the community should be carrying shovels and seedlings for their livelihood. Patigbabaw Mindanao helped in establishing the abaca

livelihood in 2005. They already have affirmed cases wherein the youth, instead of joining the war, have opted to join the abaca farming. It is still the men who are the identified main beneficiaries, while the women assist in this initiative. Aside from livelihood, the Mothers for Peace are able to build constituencies for campaigns in environmental conservation. Recently, they engaged in advocacy to stop the privatization of the Pulangui and Agus hydro-electric power supplies. MCW and M4P are able to articulate how critical environmental concerns impact on the peace processes, and on the peace in Mindanao itself. At present, MCW is leading the multisectoral effort to push gender-sensitive provisions in the peace talks that are about to resume between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Example 4: The Circles of Peace is a reversal of a ‘broad network’ approach to forge forward

They envision it as “a place for sharing talents, blessings and works so that our communities may be places of healing and peace.” The Circle of Peace can be anchored on a woman’s community, or within existing organizations, thus creating small local nodes of leaders and community actors to come together. The key support system that enabled these women to respond to these challenges where space for dialogue and funds for to put these small solutions into action. The Circles build support systems for emerging self confidence and leadership. Peace Circles are encouraged to conduct and celebrate a core program of activities aimed at peace-building, making it local and community led. Small in scope, and yet, the magnitude they reach grows quite wide when put together.

The efforts of these women allowed for their communities to enjoy a brief reprieve from fire fighting, at the very minimum, and to chart ways forward towards more sustainable and productive activities.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

When spaces are opened for women to contribute to development and peace processes they are able to negotiate and mediate in conflict situation that leads to resolution – not only informally but formally, as in the peace process panels as well. This happens when there is recognition of women’s contribution, especially when their day to day engagement is represented collectively and through an organization that genuinely represents women’s interests, as with MCW’s own initiative in coming together and standing for their rights and beliefs. The agenda that MCW is pushing forward in the peace process is grounded in the works and communities of their members, thus this brings with it the weight of the voices and representation of many women and communities.

Women’s small, yet collective action helps to address food security as shown in cases of LUMOT-Dev, ABATAKAF and Mothers for Peace. Women provide a valuable support system for male income-earners and in the rearing and training of the young, but this is not yet fully valued by society. It is important to harness Indigenous women as key players in leading environmental protection and conservation efforts. Women can fulfil multiple roles of conscientious producers for food security, teachers and advocates for sound environmental practices while providing the balance between cashing in on their natural resources and the sustainability of their ecosystem and way of life. To achieve this, women need to have consistent recognition from within their community members, such that their voices are heard during consensus decision-making processes in the community, and thus equally represented in a community’s decision

engaging with external actors. As expressed by the Indigenous women leaders, they also need a kind of a moral support system, where they are able to discuss together with other women leaders the various challenges that they are facing and those that are cropping up, so that they are able to gain advice, inspiration and strength from one another. Even with the progress in the recognition of women's rights and gender sensitivity, there is still a lot of work in engendering programs and support for women for them to be truly empowering and to enable women to secure their access to their resources, to the water, to raw materials that will provide them stability.

Seed funds can enable women to establish livelihoods at a manageable scale, while the right mentoring and guidance can enhance their skills and capacity to grow their livelihood and strengthen their organization.³⁰ Trainings and skills development need to be anchored on the women's aptitude and develop their potential. Indigenous women leaders have spoken that there is a need to deepen the understanding of women rights and empowerment, so that they are able to stand and uphold their culture and their environment. It is important to equip Indigenous women to be on equal and level grounding when it comes to negotiations with corporate investments like in mining and plantations.

Still present is the need to pressure local government units to provide basic services to the communities. For women, this is especially true for their need for good access roads and a potable water system. Steps to integrate indigenous community development plans and ADSDPP to LGU development plans are a positive development in recognizing and prioritizing the needs of Indigenous communities. Another aspect in the natural resources management is ability to cope with the impacts of climate change, risk reduction and disaster preparedness.

National legal frameworks for women participation should be brought to ground implementation, translating into policies and guidelines that ensure equal recognition and enabling mechanism for women, such as in defining beneficiaries in land tenure programs, or providing credit access and agricultural support and skills training.

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