



**ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT (AIPP) SUBMISSION
TO SBSTA ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS AND
ASSESSMENT OF RISK AND VULNERABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS**

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Indigenous peoples' territories are home to the world's remaining forests and these comprise 80% of the planet's biodiversity. More than 100 million indigenous peoples in Asia depend on forests and other natural resources for their subsistence, livelihoods, cultural practices and overall wellbeing. The indigenous peoples live in remote areas, which are geographically vulnerable to disasters, thereby increasing the risk that they face. The high level of risk to disasters is further compounded by the indigenous peoples' lack of access to basic facilities and infrastructures, their economic marginalization and social discrimination, and further imposition and incursion of development projects. Projects being implemented in indigenous territories include large-scale mining, dams, mono-crop plantations, commercial agriculture and logging, among others. As a result, the natural buffers against storms, flooding, coastal and soil erosion, strong waves and other forms of disaster are severely being destroyed, further exposing indigenous peoples to face the brunt of such disasters. Furthermore, these projects deal adverse socio-cultural and economic impacts on the indigenous peoples.

Out of the 226-recorded global natural disasters in 2014, more than 50% occurred in the Asia-Pacific region. According to the recent report of the UN Economic and Social Commission (ESCAP) for Asia and the Pacific, floods affected 28.6 million peoples, droughts affected 31.5 million peoples, landslides affected 0.18 million, extreme temperature affected 1 million and storms affected 16.3 million peoples in 2014. Many of them are indigenous peoples in the different countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, Malaysia and the Pacific islands, among others. The frequency and intensity of such disasters are now posing direct and serious threats to the collective survival of millions of indigenous peoples who are not equipped with early warning systems and disaster-management skills. The climate change impacts are exacerbating the resilient capacity of indigenous communities including their social cohesion, adaptation capacity and overall wellbeing.

INTEGRATION OF INDIGENOUS AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN EARLY WARNING SYTEMS AND INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO OTHER APROPPRIATE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

The development of early warning systems is pertinent and appropriate for early preparations and to avoid or at least reduce the risks to lives, health, property, culture and the collective wellbeing of indigenous peoples induced by climate change disasters. The development of early warning systems shall include the traditional knowledge as well as appropriate modern techniques, tools and innovations that will take into consideration the indigenous peoples' specific circumstances and conditions, as well as their cultural integrity. Through generations, indigenous peoples have cultivated and transferred their weather forecasting practices and predictions of disasters based on traditional knowledge linked with nature and behaviors of animals such as birds, animals, insects, as well as the condition of natural elements such as wind, clouds, and

moon, among others. The integration of traditional knowledge with the development of early warning system increases the community members' ownership of this and reduces their risk to disasters. Further, there is a need for widespread awareness raising about climate change among indigenous peoples, their risks and vulnerability to the adverse impacts including on agricultural systems. It is equally important to build the capacity of indigenous peoples to understand and use appropriate modern technology and tools relating to early warning systems. For example, indigenous peoples are now increasingly using radio and other forms of media tools such as mobile phones as early warning device. The facilities and access to these technologies shall then be provided to them especially those living in remote and high risk- areas. **Finally, in order for early warning systems to be successfully implemented and sustained, concerted efforts of all stakeholders and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples including indigenous women are key in the design.**

Article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) sets a framework for the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge. Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Cancun Safeguards and the recent report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have acknowledged the importance of traditional knowledge in biodiversity conservation, REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradations) and climate change adaptations, respectively. The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 which explicitly acknowledges the importance of traditional knowledge in early warning system as:

“Indigenous peoples through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning.”

These international instruments and agreements shall thereby serve as part of the framework in the development of early warning systems and the assessment of risk and vulnerability of indigenous peoples' agricultural systems.

ASSESSMENT OF RISK AND VULNERABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS TO CLIMATE CHANGE SHALL INCLUDE SHIFTING CULTIVATION/ROTATIONAL AGRICULTURE

The traditional land use system of shifting cultivation or rotational agriculture is one of the main agricultural systems practiced by indigenous peoples in Asia. The traditional knowledge, cultural, spiritual and nutritional values attached to this livelihood system demonstrate that this is not merely a technique of land use but the indigenous peoples' way of life. The recent case studies conducted by AIPP, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and Food and Agriculture Organization-Regional Office for

Asia and Pacific on *“Shifting Cultivation, Food Security and Livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples”* in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Thailand have provided solid evidence and reaffirmed what indigenous peoples have been advocating for many years-- that shifting cultivation is providing livelihoods and food security to indigenous communities and enhancing biodiversity instead of causing forest degradation and deforestation.

However, shifting cultivation/rotational agriculture is legally prohibited or restricted in many countries in Asia as this is considered by states as a major cause and factor of deforestation and forest degradation, inspite of the solid evidence proving otherwise. These persistent approaches by states and some of their partners such as conservation organizations are resulting to food insecurity, malnutrition, loss of biodiversity and traditional knowledge. It is also causing the violation of civil and political rights of indigenous peoples as cases of arrest, detention, killing, sexual abuse and rape of indigenous women among others are taking place when they go to their shifting cultivation areas that are declared part of conservation areas and national parks. **This condition requires the immediate review and reform of state policy relating to the practice of shifting cultivation and the declaration of national parks that are in violation of the rights of indigenous peoples, including the practice of their sustainable agricultural system.**

In addition to this, climate change is causing further challenges to the continuing practice of shifting cultivation. The occurrence of drought and erratic weather patterns is adversely affecting the production of food items in the shifting cultivation areas. For example in Thailand, the rice production period is now longer compared to the past, and they cannot combine the variety of seeds due to either prolonged rainy season and/or dry season. This demonstrates the effect of climate change on the agricultural system of indigenous peoples including the roles and contributions of women.

Further, the continuing conversion of indigenous peoples’ forest and agricultural lands into mono-cropping plantations such as biofuels, mining, logging and large dams is also posing serious threats to food security, biodiversity, and carbon emission, among others. These should also be considered as risks and vulnerable factors to the agricultural systems of indigenous peoples.

The food systems, food security, nutritional and cultural values of plants and food items, seed varieties and traditional crops, biodiversity, resource management systems and cultural practices of indigenous peoples relating to their agricultural system shall be part of the assessment of the risk and vulnerability of agricultural systems. It is therefore essential that indigenous peoples including women have full and effective participation in the conduct of assessment of the risk and vulnerability of agricultural systems from the local to the global levels.

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The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) is a regional alliance consisting of 47 members from 14 Asian countries with seven (7) indigenous peoples' national alliance/network and 35 local and sub-national organizations including 16 ethnic-based organizations, five (5) indigenous women and four (4) indigenous youth organizations.

AIPP has been actively working on awareness-raising, capacity building, policy advocacy and networking on climate change and REDD+ in partnership with the following organizations:

- 1. Alliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), Indonesia*
 - 2. Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA) and Non-Timber Forest Product-Exchange Programme in South and South East Asia, (NTFP-EP), Cambodia*
 - 3. Center for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas (CSDM), Vietnam*
 - 4. Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF)*
 - 5. International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Denmark*
 - 6. Nepal Federation for Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Nepal*
 - 7. Promoting Indigenous and Nature Together (POINT)- Myanmar*
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References:

AIPP Press Release *“Upscale the recognition of land rights of indigenous peoples as key to forest-based solutions to climate change”*, 21 March 2015

UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific report on *“Disasters in Asia and the Pacific: 2014 year in review”*

Study by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on *“Promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in disaster risk reduction, prevention and preparedness initiatives”*, July 2014

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) Briefing Paper on *Shifting Cultivation, Livelihood and Food Security: New and Old Challenges for Indigenous Peoples in Asia*, 2014

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
