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Indigenous women's voices in Ifugao and Kalinga

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KALI is an Indigenous term among the Bontok and Kankanaey Indigenous Peoples of the Cordillera, Philippines. It means to speak, to talk, to discuss or discourse. It also means to speak the dialect or language of the people.

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Editorial

In this issue of Kali: Voices of Indigenous Women, we intend to update advocates of Indigenous women's rights and the general public on specific domains of the women's situation in the Cordillera. We hope to regularize and expand this content in the upcoming issues of Kali starting this year, to cover other aspects of women's issues in the socio-economic, political, and cultural spheres, and to include the other provinces and Baguio City.

The information shared in this issue come from Indigenous women in the provinces of Ifugao (specifically, barangays Tupaya and Dulao in the municipality of Lagawe, Banga in the municipality of Lamut) and Kalinga (specifically, barangays Apatan and Limos in the municipality of Pinukpuk). We gathered the data in 2024 and 2025. Our outputs included (1) a policy brief exploring the links between gender-based violence and environmental issues in Apatan and Limos, and (2) a gender analysis report on Tupaya and Dulao. We now share these outputs in this issue of Kali which is a collaboration with Innabuyog.

The five barangays cited above are affected by large-scale energy applications, including the project to develop the Alimit Hydropower Complex in Ifugao and the projects to dam the Saltan river in Kalinga. The implementation of the said projects has been stalled because of the resistance of the affected Indigenous communities. In the FPIC processes for both the Alimit and Saltan projects, the women participated actively and registered their opposition, outrightly denying the projects their consent.

The women of Apatan and Limos belong to the Limos tribe of the Kalinga Indigenous group. The women of Tupaya and Dulao largely belong to the Ayangan Indigenous group.

We found positive aspects of local custom that enabled Indigenous women's empowerment – for example, in regard to the ownership of land and other resources.

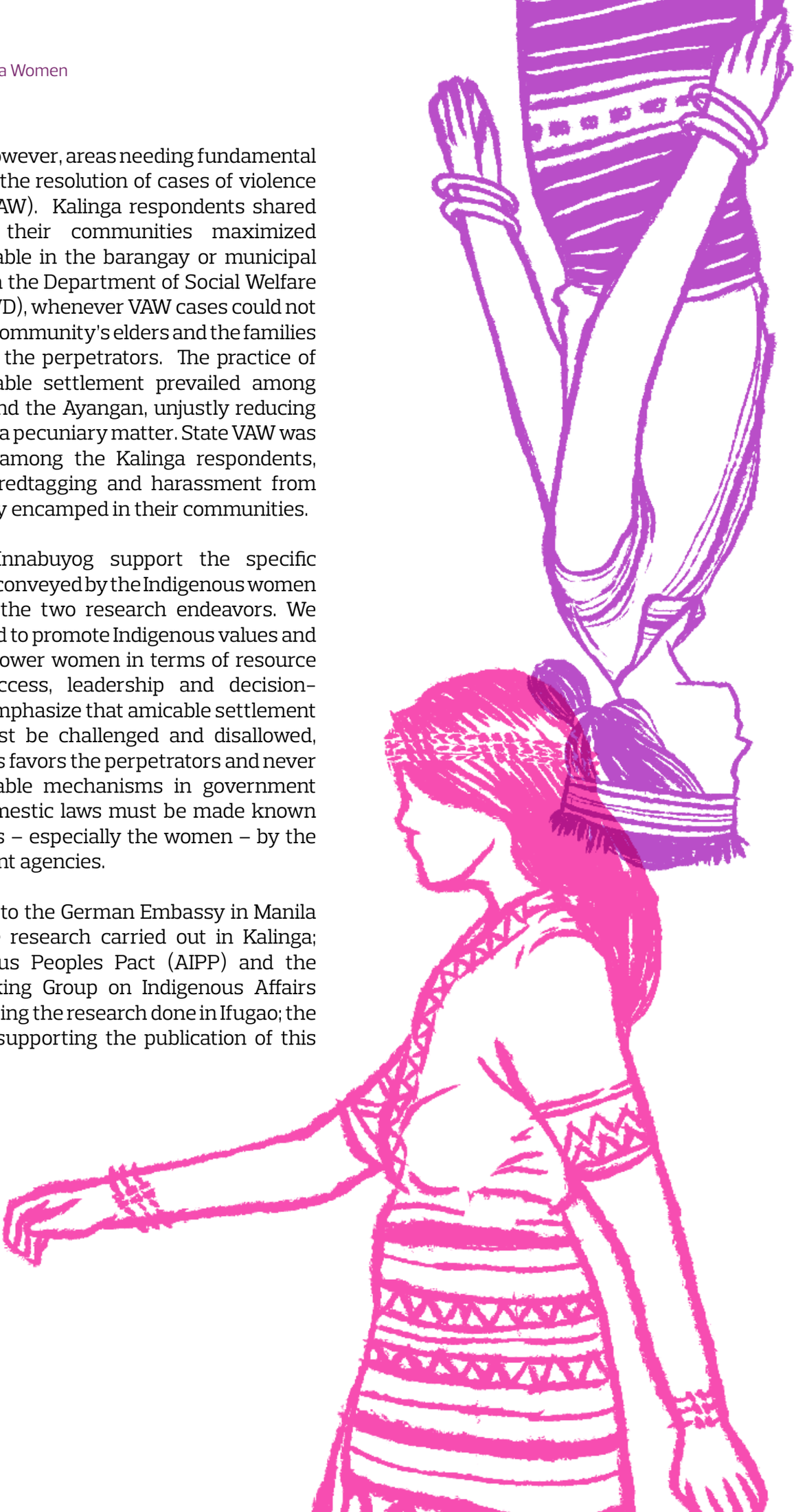
In our data gathering, we looked into access and control of assets and resources, power, representation and decision-making, environmental pressures and threats, and vulnerabilities. The women of Apatan and Limos articulated needs and aspirations as well as actionable recommendations.

We found positive aspects of local custom that enabled Indigenous women's empowerment – for example, in regard to the ownership of land and other resources. We found that there was no gender bias in inheritance rights; rather, inheritance among the Ayangan was determined by order of birth, and among the Kalinga, by the contribution of each offspring to working the land.

We also found, however, areas needing fundamental change, such as in the resolution of cases of violence against women (VAW). Kalinga respondents shared that women in their communities maximized mechanisms available in the barangay or municipal government, and in the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD), whenever VAW cases could not be resolved by the community's elders and the families of the victims and the perpetrators. The practice of resorting to amicable settlement prevailed among both the Kalinga and the Ayangan, unjustly reducing the issue of VAW to a pecuniary matter. State VAW was also documented among the Kalinga respondents, who experienced redtagging and harassment from the Philippine Army encamped in their communities.

CWEARC and Innabuyog support the specific recommendations conveyed by the Indigenous women who took part in the two research endeavors. We emphasize the need to promote Indigenous values and practices that empower women in terms of resource ownership and access, leadership and decision-making. We also emphasize that amicable settlement of VAW cases must be challenged and disallowed, because this always favors the perpetrators and never the victims. Available mechanisms in government structures and domestic laws must be made known to the communities – especially the women – by the relevant government agencies.

We are indebted to the German Embassy in Manila for supporting the research carried out in Kalinga; the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and the International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) for supporting the research done in Ifugao; the Equality Fund for supporting the publication of this issue of Kali.



Gender Analysis Report:

Barangays Tupaya and Dulao in Lagawe Municipality, Ifugao Province, Cordillera, Philippines

By Innabuyog – Alliance of Grassroots Indigenous Women in the Cordillera
With support from the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Executive Summary

This Gender Analysis Report forms part of the project Empowering Indigenous Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders of Asia. This report aims to inform the empowerment of Indigenous women human rights defenders, and Indigenous women in general, in communities confronted with environmental issues. The project sites are Barangays Tupaya and Dulao in Lagawe, Ifugao.

The data were analyzed based on the following domains: (a) Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Practices, (b) Gender Roles, Responsibilities, (c) Access to and Control over Assets and Resources, (d) Power, Decision-making, and Representation, and (e) Environmental Stressors and Vulnerability. Thirty-five respondents were engaged in the data gathering process. Ninety percent of them are women, and most of them belonged to the Ayangan Indigenous group.

The environmental issues affecting women, men and their communities are the project to build the Alimit Hydropower Complex and the climate crisis.

The Alimit hydro project will divert and dam water sources, and create reservoirs in which hundreds of hectares of land will be submerged. It will thus impact adversely on the life and livelihood of the communities. People opposed to it have experienced threat and harassment.

The current climate crisis affects the livelihood and food security of the communities. Exacerbating the situation is government negligence in providing relief aid to farmers, who receive the assistance two to three years after a typhoon.

Gender roles and responsibilities are reciprocal, rather than divided, as both women and men are involved in productive, reproductive, and

Exacerbating the situation is government negligence in providing relief aid to farmers, who receive the assistance two to three years after a typhoon.

community work. There are avenues for participation, decision-making, and representation for both women and men.

Power, decision making and representation are exercised in the different formal and informal structures and avenues available to both women and men. These include their farmers' and women's organizations, the inter-municipal alliance against the Alimit hydro complex and the barangay councils where women make up 50% of the current leadership in Tupaya and Dulao.

Both women and men can inherit land from their families of origin, but this is subject to order of birth as preference is given to eldest children. Not all inherit land.

It is in the treatment of cases of violence against women (VAW) where unjust practices are most pronounced. These practices include the non-documentation of VAW cases at the barangay level and the resolution of rape via amicable settlement, which are to the advantage of the perpetrator, never the victim. These practices deny justice and support for the victim.

The recommendations are drawn from the lived experiences of the respondents.

Introduction

Land and people

Ifugao is one of the six provinces of the Cordillera region. Its capital town is Lagawe.

The dominant ethno-linguistic group in the province are the Tuwali, who comprise the majority in five municipalities: Banaue, Hingyon, Hungduan, Kiangan, and Lagawe. The Ayangan are dominant in two municipalities, Aguinaldo and Mayoyao. They are also the majority in some parts of Asipulo, and have communities in Alfonso Lista, Banaue, Kiangan, Lagawe, and Lamut. The Kalanguya are the majority in other parts of Asipulo and are dominant in the municipality of Tinoc. (De Vera and Gimenez 2020: 9-10).

Tupaya's population consists of 687 individuals. Tupaya is inhabited by the Ayangan and Ibunne Indigenous peoples. Barangay Tupaya is located along the southwestern part of the Alimit River, and is bounded on the west by Barangay Dulao, on the northwest by Barangay Olilicon, on the southwest by the Ibulao River. (Barangay Tupaya - AIP, 2025-2028).

Prior to the creation of Barangay Tupaya, different groups came to hunt and eventually settled. The hilly and mountainous Tupaya was then called Baliwon or Muyyadna. In 1932, a group of Ayangan from Jucbong, Abinuan, and Montabiong came, followed by another group from Banaue. They stayed on and did swidden farming for a living, planting papaya trees which grew in abundance. Tupaya is an Ifugao term for the papaya fruit. In 1942, the Ihapuan group from Burnay and Boliwong came. Swidden farms, rice and corn fields were developed, and intermarriages took place between the different groups. (Barangay Tupaya - AIP, 2025-2028).

Barangay Dulao has a population of 551, with majority of the population belonging to the Ayangan group. It is situated between two major rivers: the Magat River on the east and the Alimit River on the



northeast. Majority of the barangay's income comes from corn farming and fishing. (Barangay Dulao – Nutrition Action Plan, 2024).

In the old days, Dulao was the hunting grounds of the Ayangan people. Hunters frequented the place without knowing its name. One hunter who reached the place saw a yellow bird. The Ayangan word for yellow is chulao. The place then came to be called Dulao. (Barangay Dulao – AIP, 2025-2028).

Methodology

A total of 35 respondents participated in the four Focused Group Discussions and 3 key informant interviews held in October 2024 and January 2025. The interviews were conducted in Barangays Dulao, Tupaya, Banga, and Bimpal (specifically Sitio Nammog). Ninety percent of the respondents are women, and they belonged to the Ayangan and Tuwali Indigenous groups. Majority of respondents belonged to the 31-65 years-old age group. Except for three youth, almost all the interviewees were farmers. Interviews were

Both women and men can inherit land from their families of origin, but this is subject to order of birth as preference is given to eldest children.





conducted in the Ayangan language, followed by translations to Ilocano and English.

Before each interview and each FGD, the researchers introduced themselves, their purpose, and the utilization of the research. Consent to take photos, to record audio proceedings, and to include or omit their names in reports was also asked before the start of the interviews. The data gathering was undertaken by Innabuyog with support from the Cordillera Women's Education, Action Research Center (CWEARC) and the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA).

In general, women comprised the majority of the FGD participants. In Dulao, however, there were more men. We believe this affected the participation of the women who were present, especially considering that many of the participants were articulate male elders.

Secondary data were obtained from the barangay local government units of Dulao and Tupaya, and the Municipal Social Welfare Development Office of Lagawe. Published works were also referred to.

Inclusion criteria of respondents

1. Indigenous women and men aged 18 years old and above;
2. From Barangays Dulao and Tupaya;
3. Consented to be interviewed for the research.

Scope and limitations

The main limitation in producing this report was the compressed timeframe. With this consideration, the data gathering team decided to forego the suggested survey as part of the data collection method, and instead focused on conducting FGDs and interviews. Also, in reviewing related literature, we found out in our limited time that not a lot of research, particularly on gender, has been done in Ifugao.

Research questions

1. What are your roles in the community?
2. Do you own any property or have access to property, such as agricultural land and residential land? If yes, what kind of property? If no, why?
3. To what extent is decision-making and representation of women practiced in your community? Do women participate in discussing community issues? Are your voices/opinions heard?
4. What are the key environmental issues affecting your community?
5. Are there cases of violence against women in your community?
6. What are your needs and/or aspirations for your community?

Findings and Observations

Laws, policies, regulations, and practices

1. There are no disaggregated data for women and men in the recorded demographics in both Barangays Tupaya and Dulao. This information would be useful in determining the particular situation and needs of men and women, to inform appropriate programs.



2. There are 22 ordinances for women, youth, and children in Lagawe. However, due to the lack of time and personnel, we could not collect the data needed for assessing the utilization of these ordinances in Tupaya and Dulao.

3. Cases of violence against women are not documented in both barangays. This presents a problem with the actual data on VAW, the corresponding services of the barangay for VAW, and enforcement of relevant domestic laws on VAW like Republic Act 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Law).

4. Rape cases are settled amicably in Dulao. The barriers identified in pursuing court cases are the expensiveness and long period of resolution. Also, the elder-respondent deemed it enough that a fine was paid. There is no justice or support for the victim.

5. We received two conflicting responses in Tupaya regarding resolution of rape cases. One official said these were settled amicably, while another said that rape cases cannot be settled amicably. Two recent rape cases were unresolved because the families were not cooperative, according to the interviewed officials, and this was attributed to socio-cultural reasons, such as taboo and embarrassment. In both cases, the families' remedy was to relocate the victims out of the barangay. The perpetrators (father and stepfather) are roaming freely in the barangay.

This data presents a challenge in pursuing justice and support for victims of VAW, rape in particular, and enforcing the Anti-Rape Law (RA 8353) in both communities. The practice of amicable settlement does not criminalize the offense and therefore works in the favor of the perpetrator.

6. Both barangays have VAWC Desks and Committees on Women that are headed by women barangays officials. The limitation of this report is the absence of data correlating function and services of the structures in the barangay council if VAW cases are not documented. If it is also true in other barangays of Lagawe that VAW cases are amicably settled and undocumented, this presents a problem in determining the presence and extent of VAW.

> Exacerbating the situation is government negligence in providing relief aid to farmers, who receive the assistance two to three years after a typhoon.

A research commissioned by the Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation revealed that Ifugao recorded the highest incidence of rape in the Cordillera from March to May 2020 (during the Covid 19 pandemic), second to Baguio City. The research also stated that when cases of incest rape were filed in court, preservation of relationship prevailed, leading to the dismissal of the cases. The same report stated that the victim's economic dependence on the perpetrator often led to amicable settlement. Participants in the same research also believed that most cases related to abuse were not reported because perpetrators were usually family members, and reporting might disrupt the dynamics and relationships within the clan.

Gender Roles and Responsibilities

1. Both men and women do productive work, or the labor that involves production of goods and services for consumption.

Mothers are responsible for the household and do as much agricultural activity as fathers in producing crops and raising animals. Fishing is done both by men and women. Collecting mollusks in rice paddies is done by the women. Plowing the fields is clearly a task of the men. Preparing the rice seedlings and weeding are the tasks of the women. Decision-making on which crops will be planted is done mainly by the one who will do more work, but it can also be jointly discussed by husband and wife. Men are more involved in selling corn, but the women can step in to do it at any time.

A respondent shared her daily routine:

I feed the chickens and ducks each morning. After cooking the lunch meal, I rest then resume farm work between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. When I am really tired, I watch the children and grandchildren, and that is still work. For me, I can plow and gather firewood. Men are in the fields all day, and if you're the one left at home, you're forced to gather firewood anyway because you're the one left to do the cooking.

She joked that she had no time to make herself pretty.

Both men and women leave their communities in search of income. Some women have gone to the town center of Lagawe to work as housekeepers, while others work in poultry businesses outside of Dulao or Tupaya. Men usually work in the mines or in construction.

2. In terms of reproductive work, or the labor that involves care and maintenance of the household, including care of the children and the elderly, and collecting water and fuel for cooking, women take on the majority of the work. Respondents said, however, that household chores and raising the children are a shared responsibility of women and their husbands.

3. In terms of community work, the women of Tupaya and Dulao have civic duties as officers and





members of their local women's organizations and farmers' organizations. Some of them are members of the barangay council.

Access to and Control over Assets and Resources

Women can inherit property in Ifugao. According to Barton (1919), there are inherited properties brought into a marriage and property settlements in case of divorce. Spouses share the right over properties acquired during marriage, as a fruit of shared labor. In the case of divorce, there are specific conditions if the union has children or none.

In the transfer of property to children, no distinction is made on the basis of sex. The law of primogeniture applies, giving older children a larger portion of inheritance than the younger ones. The size of the inheritance corresponds with the rank in birth. If there is only one ricefield, the eldest takes it. It is the same if the number of children exceeds the number of rice fields (Barton 1919: 51). Clearly, there is partiality for the eldest children in the assignment of inheritance, putting younger children, male or female, at risk of landlessness.

One respondent shared that she sold her inherited property (a swidden lot) to her brother since she moved to Tupaya upon marriage. Customary law forbids property to be sold outside the family or clan.

Lands are either privately owned by individuals or clans in Tupaya. There is no communal land. The Ibulao River is the only resource that is shared and communally owned. Respondents know of only one clan that had their property of three hectares documented in their name through a tax declaration.

Respondents from Barangay Banga, meanwhile, say that many residents have had their properties tax-declared so that these would be recognized by government.

According to respondents, there was once a 41-hectare pastureland in Dulao, and it was communally owned. Through the years, however, individuals asked to divide the land so they could sell their portion. Only five people now share what remains of the communal pastureland of about 20 hectares. The reason for selling was need for cash.

Respondents from Sitio Nammog of Barangay

> Both men and women leave their communities in search of income. Some women have gone to the town center of Lagawe to work as housekeepers, while others work in poultry businesses outside of Dulao or Tupaya.



Bimpal, meanwhile, say that some individuals have opted to apply for land title.

In situations where men or women do not have their own land to till, they work the farmlands of other persons, with a share of the harvest for their payment. Respondents in Banga and Bimpal say that the practice in their communities can be any of the following, depending on the agreement between the land owner and the tiller: 70-30 (70% of the rice harvest goes to the tiller, 30% to the land owner); ikatlo (2/3 or 67% goes to the tiller, 1/3 or 33% to the land owner); 50-50 (the tiller and the land owner get 50% each). The most common is the 70-30 arrangement. A respondent from Banga deems this arrangement fair. We have, however, found out that whatever the arrangement, the tiller is responsible for all the farm inputs. This puts the tiller in a disadvantaged position.

Power, Decision-Making and Representation

There are local women's organizations in Tupaya and Dulao. The women are also members of the local farmers' organizations. These organizations are avenues for the active participation of the women. The barangay council is also such an avenue, given that there are women barangay officials in Tupaya and Dulao.

The community meetings held are the barangay general assemblies and, specifically for concerns regarding the Alimit Hydropower Complex, the meetings called by Hapiyo (meaning shield). In these community-wide meetings, women have different experiences as to the levels of their participation. Some attend but do not necessarily speak, while some are really vocal, especially one woman who participated in a learning exchange on dams. All women respondents agree that they can speak out in meetings as much as the men if they want to, but it is mostly the men who do the speaking.

In Tupaya, women elders and men elders both participate in conflict resolution involving land dispute. The resolution of such cases is guided by traditional boundaries. There is no local term for a council of elders or a physical space where the elders can regularly convene, and this seems to be the case for the whole of Ifugao.

The Tupaya BLGU budgets Php 15,000 annually for women's projects in the community. The amount is small compared to the needs of the women and the organization.

Environmental Stressors and Vulnerability

Major environmental issues identified by respondents are climate change and the plan of SN Aboitiz Power and the National Irrigation Administration to build the Alimit Hydropower Complex.

An elderly respondent recounted that there were already two mini-dams built on the Ibulao River, and everytime the floodgates have been opened, Hapid and Tupaya were flooded. She feared worse if the construction of the large Alimit dams would push through.













In Dulao, the elders recalled their experience with the Magat Dam and worried that they would undergo this experience all over again if the Alimit hydro complex was built. The Magat Dam is located on the Magat River at the boundary between the provinces of Ifugao and Isabela.

When the Magat Dam was built, some residents of Dulao were relocated (to Quirino province), so their lands were taken over by people who moved in. Some returned, and they had to buy back their lands. Aquatic animals disappeared except for the janitor fish. In the 1980s, there were still crocodiles in the Magat River, but these eventually disappeared.

There was no opposition to the Magat Dam during its construction because it was Martial Law then. You would be dead if you opposed. There were many soldiers in Dulao.

Before they release water, the Magat Dam (operators) issue a warning via radio or TV, so we (residents of Dulao) are informed only if we happen to hear the announcement. Sometimes, they announce a day before, but sometimes not at all. This results in the death of animals.

Respondents shared the following when asked of the significance of the Alimit River to their survival:

The river augments our water needs in the summertime. We go to the river to bathe, to wash, and to fish. We pump water from the river to irrigate crops by the riverside. So if they (the builders) will divert the river, what will be our alternative water source?.

We catch fish in the river for our viand as we don't have enough money to buy food in the market. Men do spear fishing at night, and they trap fish using traditional fishing methods, in the summer.

In the summertime, families gather by the river, especially during Holy Week. It is our resort, our rest and recreation as a community.

Tupaya will lose it source of drinking water and irrigation. We will lose our water if the tunneling pushes though. Are we going to buy water to

> In these community-wide meetings, women have different experiences as to the levels of their participation. Some attend but do not necessarily speak, while some are really vocal, especially one woman who participated in a learning exchange on dams.



wash our clothes? The river is also our source of food. Fishing as a source of income has also helped some families send their children to school. Traditional fishing involves catching the fish under the water lilies at night, using a net, although some fishers use electricity. Certain fish are used in rituals. For example, the husband will catch a lot of gadiw (small freshwater fish that swim together in their numbers, as in a school) upon the birth of a child – so that a son might have many blessings in his lifetime, or so that a daughter might always have a bountiful harvest of ginga (mollusks) from her ricefields.

Respondents who are barangay officials expressed as well that the Alimit hydro complex will affect peace and order, as there will be an influx of people and, eventually, garbage.

A respondent who was a daycare teacher expressed anxiety that if the Alimit hydro complex would be built, roads would improve and more strangers and vehicles would gain access to the area. She was worried because there were already cases of kidnapping in Ifugao.

Climate Crisis

All respondents have observed changes in weather patterns, prolonged periods of drought or rainfall, and more frequent typhoons. These affect their harvest, directly impacting on their food security, livelihood, and income, and lead to changes in land use and roles.

Frequent typhoons have resulted in the loss of

> Government negligence is evident in deferred delivery of relief aid during disasters. Relief aid should reach the communities on time, considering that the amount is not even sufficient to help them recover from their losses.



land and the drowning of animals. The series of four typhoons from September to November 2024 resulted in heavy losses for the farmers and their families. Water rose and overflowed, washing away gardens close to the riverbank, and destroying rice, corn, and vegetable crops. Some lost around 20 to 50 sacks of irik (whole rice grains).

Government response, particularly relief aid during disasters like the typhoons or drought, is poor. Barangay officials of Tupaya shared that relief aid during a 2020 typhoon was only released in 2023. In Sitio Nammog, Barangay Bimpal, respondents said the cash assistance from the Department of Agriculture (DA) expected in 2023 was only released on 22 January 2025.

Families cope with the climate crisis by looking for other sources of cash outside the community.

Community support systems of cooperation and mutual aid (baddang) operate in times of crisis, such as the massive flooding in October 2024 during Typhoon Pepito. In times of flood, families head to higher areas for safety, especially when there is no evacuation center designated by government.

Conclusions

Laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practices

There are practices that can be corrected towards achieving justice for victims of VAW and providing support for the survivor. VAW cases should be documented and referred to the proper government or non-government bodies for action. Rape cases should not be amicably settled, as this denies justice to the victim and does not criminalize the offense nor punish the perpetrator.

Capacity development for the women's organizations can include education in women's rights and in laws for the protection of women, also appropriate trainings related to the main livelihood source – farming.

Government negligence is evident in deferred delivery of relief aid during disasters. Relief aid should reach the communities on time, considering that the amount is not even sufficient to help them recover from their losses.

Gender roles and responsibilities

Gender roles and responsibilities are not very separate, as both women and men participate in productive, reproductive, and community work. Rather, the roles are reciprocal and complementary.

Access to and control over assets and resources

Land can be inherited by both men and women, but the allocation of property is partial to the first-born or eldest children regardless of gender. The said partiality leaves younger children at risk of landlessness.

Those without inheritance work the lands of others, with a share in the harvest that is substantial but not entirely just, considering that the tillers shoulder the responsibility for all labor, seeds, and other inputs.

Power, decision-making, and representation

The avenues for power, decision-making, and representation are the sectoral organizations of the farmers and women, and the inter-municipality alliance against the Alimit Hydropower Complex. Men and women participate in community-wide assemblies. Women have good representation in the barangay councils of Dulao and Tupaya.

Environmental stressors and vulnerability

The main environmental stressors are the looming construction of the Alimit Hydropower Complex and the climate crisis. The hydro complex poses a serious threat to the environment, water sources, and livelihood of the people of the area.

The climate crisis has resulted in loss of land and decreased harvests. This affects farmers' livelihood and income.





Those who oppose the Alimit hydro complex have experienced threats and division within their own families.

Recommendations

1. For barangays to institutionalize the generation and maintenance of Gender and Development (GAD) databases, pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 9710: The Magna Carta of Women. The GAD database is supposed to contain gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data that are systematically gathered, regularly updated, and subjected to gender analysis for planning, programming, and policy formulation.

2. For local councils to pass ordinances on the enforcement or implementation of laws for the protection of women, such as RA 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women, RA 8353 or Anti-Rape Law of 1997, RA 9208 or Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, RA 8505 or Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act, RA 9775 or Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009, RA 7877 or Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, and RA 11313 or Safe Spaces Act.

3. Capacitate VAW Desks, women in the community, and women barangay officials on laws for the protection of women. The Cordillera Women's Education, Action Research Center (CWEARC) may be approached for this as it provides community education on VAW and Laws for the Protection of Women and Children.

4. Continuing community education on the impact of constructing large hydros. The communities can continue to reach out to the different NGOs and people's organizations they have linked up with in relation to the Alimit Hydropower Complex. However, more learning opportunities are recommended for women and men in relation to the issue of large hydros, such as learning exchanges with communities facing the same issue.

5. Build the capacity of community women and their organizations for economic empowerment.

6. For concerned government agencies like the DA to provide relief aid on time, to meaningfully address the needs of affected communities. Special attention must be given to the needs of women and children in times of climate disasters.

7. Strengthen traditional systems of cooperation and mutual support in times of disaster, and at the same time build community capacity to lobby for greater and timely support of local government units and national government agencies during climate disasters.

8. For the communities to sustain their assertion of self-determination in opposing the Alimit Hydropower Complex, on the basis of their lived experiences and the reasons they have articulated.

Policy Brief

Exploring links between gender-based violence and environmental issues in Pinukpuk, Kalinga: Experiences of Limos and Apatan communities

Context

Kalinga Province is blanketed with plans for the installation of large energy generation facilities. Nineteen hydroelectric power projects have been awarded by the Department of Energy to ten private corporations. Four large dam projects – Saltan D (49 MW), Saltan E (45 MW), Buaya (40 MW), and Mabaca (45 MW) – threaten the Saltan river and its tributary, the Cal-oan (officially named the Mabaca) river, which course through the municipalities of Balbalan and Pinukpuk. Potential environmental and economic impact includes the submergence of forest and agricultural lands belonging to the Salegseg, Mabaka, Buaya, Poswoy, Dao-angan, and Limos tribes. The tribes will be dismembered as many families belonging to them are forced to leave. The women who support their families by working the said lands face dispossession, disemployment, and disempowerment.

Philippine law provides that the proponents of large-scale, extractive, or intrusive projects seek the free and prior informed consent (FPIC) of the affected Indigenous peoples. But in the ongoing FPIC processes for the Saltan hydropower complex, the project proponent has not been providing adequate information on hydrological and environmental impact, risk, and risk mitigation. Complicating the situation is heavy military presence, terrorist labelling, and various forms of threat, disallowing support CSOs. Our project areas – the villages of Limos and Apatan in Pinukpuk – will host one dam, along with its reservoir and spillway, plus a race tunnel and a powerhouse. The people of Apatan have registered rejection of these. Although their kindred in the village of Limos originally filed petitions against the same with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the favorable stance of Limos barangay officials eventually prevailed, and the NCIP reported that the Limos community consented to the Saltan hydropower facilities that would be installed in their village.

Our project areas – the villages of Limos and Apatan in Pinukpuk – will host one dam, along with its reservoir and spillway, plus a race tunnel and a powerhouse.

With the consent of the participants in our project, we gathered data through focused group discussions (FGDs) involving 97 individuals belonging to the Limos tribe in the villages of Limos and Apatan. Of the 97,

76 were women. Except for six youth, all respondents were farmers. We conducted the FGDs outside their villages in order to ensure their safety and that of volunteers and staff, considering the militarized situation in the area.

In exploring linkages, we looked into access and control of assets and resources, power and decision-making, and environmental pressures and threats. Actionable recommendations were articulated by the respondents, as well as needs and apirations.

There are no comprehensive studies yet in the Cordillera linking environmental issues to gender-based violence. We hope that the information gathered through the activities in our project will help to generate interest in conducting such studies.

Introduction

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN 2020) stresses that gender-based violence (GBV) is "rooted in structural gender inequality and power imbalances"; that it is "both caused and exacerbated by exploiting societal gender norms and roles"; and that it is a human rights violation with long-term impacts on survivors and whole communities, destabilising social and economic systems, and reducing household resilience.

Discrimination in terms of access to land and other natural resources can be more pronounced for Indigenous communities whose legal rights of ownership are largely unrecognized and who are thus more vulnerable to dispossession and poverty. Indigenous women, in particular, experience a spectrum of human rights violations arising from intersecting vulnerabilities linked to their gender, social status, and ethnicity. In many countries, laws prevent women from owning, managing, and inheriting landed property (Tauli-Corpuz, 2015).

A 2018 World Bank study of 189 countries has shown that 40 per cent of these countries have at least one legal constraint limiting women's rights to property. Of the 189 countries, 36 do not grant widows the same inheritance rights as widowers, and 39 countries prevent daughters from inheriting the same proportion of assets as sons. These inequalities actually exist in spite of international mechanisms that states are party to, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Indigenous women, in particular, experience a spectrum of human rights violations arising from intersecting vulnerabilities linked to their gender, social status, and ethnicity. In many countries, laws prevent women from owning, managing, and inheriting landed property.



General Recommendation on the Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls.

In the Cordillera region, however, research indicates that there is gender equality in natural resource access, utilization, and management. This is clearly shown in a 2016 study conducted jointly by the Cordillera Peoples Alliance and the Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera within the Agno and Abra river landscapes. Knowledge of minerals, water, and forest resources, as well as expertise in their utilization, are gender-neutral and differentiated more by age and practice. Likewise, knowledge of forest fauna and flora, including medicinal herbs, is not gender-based. It cannot be said that natural resource management is the domain of either women or men, as both women and men have their own expertise.

These findings will be compared to the data generated from the Indigenous communities of Limos and Apatan in Pinukpuk, Kalinga, to gauge the extent to which Indigenous women's land-resource rights are still being championed here, and to explore the environmental issues that have been exerting pressure on the women and may lead or be linked to GBV. This is important considering that secure access to land and other natural resources assures a source of basic needs and social identity, and reduces vulnerability to hunger and poverty, especially in rural areas.

The findings will also allow us to gauge the extent to which the Indigenous women of Limos and Apatan participate in traditional governance systems, which are usually the domain of men.

Findings

Access and control of assets and resources

1. Indigenous custom gives the women of Limos and Apatan access to land – including residential lots, wet-rice paddies, swidden cultivation sites, pastures, and portions of forest. Women, as well as men, either receive land as inheritance from their forebears or obtain their rights to agricultural land by clearing or improving and working these, and by filing tax declarations with the municipal government.

2. Ownership of land is handed over from parent to offspring upon the offspring's marriage. In the old, more prosperous days, a gift in the form of heirloom beads, porcelain ware, or even land, was given by the parents of the groom to the mother of the bride as an expression of appreciation for the mother's having borne and raised her daughter. This was called bansak.

3. Inherited land does not become conjugal property – although it is conjugally managed. Couples who separate can thus easily withdraw the inherited property that they had brought into their marriage. Property acquired by a married couple through



Images from Lyneth Baggay (CORDIS)





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mutual investment of their labor and through tax declaration is, however, regarded as conjugal property. In any case, all landed property is only held in stewardship for the next generation.

4. Indigenous custom provides for equal inheritance rights among the children, regardless of their gender. Some adjustments may, however, be made if the children have not contributed equally to the cultivation and development of land.

Power and decision-making

1. The women are the keepers of important property documents, such as tax declarations – and, in rare cases, titles.

2. Although they have properties that they each own separately, husband and wife manage their land and labor, inputs and produce, jointly, as resources crucial to the survival and wellbeing of their family.

3. It is in community-level decision-making processes where men are somewhat more active than women. In these processes, the opinions of men and women who have higher economic status or are barangay officials tend to dominate.

4. Apatan women say that they do not have a strong voice in barangay assemblies.

5. Women's participation has grown significantly, though, in the meetings of the Limos tribe. There is currently no woman in the tribe who functions as a holder of bodong (commonly translated as peacepact). But there have been a number of women bodong holders in the Limos tribe's history.

6. Women participated in the FPIC processes regarding the Saltan hydropower facilities by discussing the foreseeable impact of these facilities and by signing the petition of No Consent.

Environmental pressures and threats

1. The issue of the Saltan dam projects has affected governance and disrupted community unity. The respondents claim that the FPIC process for the hydropower facilities has not been conducted in accordance with law. They point out that if construction of the dam and other facilities pushes through, this will require the felling of trees and result in the inundation of ricefields, the destruction of property, and the loss of livelihood.

2. Private ownership of resources that used to be shared – e.g., forests and pastures – is a recent development that has reduced access to land and water.

3. Also recent is the increased utilization of land for the production of corn for the hog feeds market. Much of this land used to be segregated for use as pasture, forest, or swidden cultivation sites.





Prolonged drought and rising temperatures have markedly reduced work hours in the field and caused a significant decline in harvests. Many community members, most of them women, now intermittently leave their villages to work for wages and augment the family income.

4. The climate crisis, manifesting here as prolonged droughts and series of typhoons, has made farming increasingly difficult. Prolonged drought and rising temperatures have markedly reduced work hours in the field and caused a significant decline in harvests. Many community members, most of them women, now intermittently leave their villages to work for wages and augment the family income. Aside from livelihood problems, scarcity of potable water is another result of the droughts. Because of it, women and children must now walk very long distances to access drinking water.

5. Women are particularly stressed by the challenges of securing food for the family. The lack of food on the table has become a source of tension between husband and wife.

6. Some farmers have experienced discrimination in terms of access to aid. Members of one local farmers' association were excluded from the food relief distributed by the Municipal Social Welfare Development Office (MSWDO) of Pinukpuk in June and July 2024.

Peace and security

1. The Indigenous bodong system of peacekeeping between tribes continues to protect women and children from tribal conflict.

2. The Philippine Army has encamped in both the villages of Apatan and Limos, and subjects the famers and their organizations, the Apatan Farmers Kumboy Association (AFKA) and the Mannalon ti Limos para iti Urnos, Dur-as ken Alluyon (MALUDA), to constant threat, harassment, and intimidation. It was AFKA members who were excluded from the distribution of food relief in June and July 2024, and this was because of the Philippine Army's allegations that the AFKA supported insurgents.

3. MALUDA and AFKA are red-tagged by the Philippine Army as associations supposedly organized by the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

4. Women cite experiences of harassment and intimidation by the Philippine Army. Members of their family are red-tagged, and they have been made to sign documents to "clear" their names.



Recommendations, needs, and aspirations

Recommendations to government:

a. Services

· Improve and develop irrigation systems so that these become accessible to all farmers. Ensure equitable access to water resources as well as fair water distribution in Apatan.

· Rehabilitate the footbridge in Lagyaban, Apatan, for the community's benefit.

· Invest in renewable power sources that are more environment friendly than large dams so that energy needs are met without displacing communities or harming their lands and livelihood.

· Provide timely and inclusive aid/relief so that farmers can cope with the effects of the climate crisis.

· Conduct community trainings in sustainable agriculture.

· Provide financial aid and scholarships to students and out-of-school-youth.

· Provide opportunities for student employment through local government units and schools.

b. Peace and security

· Stop military encampment inside the villages, especially near the schools.

Needs and aspirations:

a. Community-based education on: the long-term impact of building large dams, including social and environemental consequences; human rights and legal processes; violence against women (VAW) and laws for the protection of women;

b. Stronger community participation in decision-making processes, especially women's participation;

c. Stronger Indigenous practices of cooperation;

d. Petition against military encampment in the villages, for submission to the barangay and municipal local government units, Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and NCIP.

Policy Recommendations

In light of applicable provisions of CEDAW GR 39 on Indigenous women and girls

Recognition of Indigenous Women's Rights

Indigenous women (IW) have the right to enjoy all human rights, including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, without discrimination

· Respect and uphold the majority position of No Consent to the Saltan dam projects in view of their adverse environmental and social effects, such as the inundation of agricultural lands and the destruction of property in general, the loss of livelihood, and the disruptive effect of the projects on community unity. Dissenting opinions of community members, including Indigenous women, must be heard over the opinion of persons in authority, such as barangay officials. Invest in small renewable power projects that meet the energy needs of the communities, instead of large dams.



· Provide timely and inclusive aid, such as food relief, to Indigenous women and their communities, without prejudice to their organizational affiliations, as in the case of the farmers' organizations AFKA and MALUDA.

· Respect and uphold the communities' petition of No Military Encampment inside villages. Cease the red-tagging of the farmers' organizations MALUDA and AFKA, including their officers and members. Stop the harassment of Indigenous women and their family members.

· Develop and improve small infrastructure for the benefit of Indigenous women and their communities. Develop the communities' irrigation systems and ensure their accessibility to all farmers. Ensure equitable access to water, and fair water distribution. Involve the farmers in the planning and construction of infrastructure. Rehabilitate the footbridge in Lagyaban, Apatan.

Participation and Inclusion

IW have the right to participate fully and effectively in decisoin-making processes at all levels, including those related to their communities, and to land and resources.

· Safe spaces must be ensured for Indigenous women to voice their views on urgent issues affecting their lands, livelihood, safety, and general welfare.

· Indigenous women's participation in FPIC processes must be ensured and encouraged in all projects and programs that affect their land-resource rights, and that have implications on self-governance in general. At the same time, Indigenous women and their communities' right to deny consent to programs and projects in their villages must be respected and upheld.

Indigenous women's participation in FPIC processes must be ensured and encouraged in all projects and programs that affect their land-resource rights, and that have implications on self-governance in general.

· Measures to strengthen women's participation in decision-making must be instituted, so that the women's voices are heard on issues affecting their rights and wellbeing. Support should be given to Indigenous practices of cooperation with women in the lead.

Land-Resource Rights

IW have equal rights with men to own, use, and control land and natural resources.

· Indigenous practices that allow Indigenous women equal rights to the ownership, utilization, and management of land and other natural resources must be strengthened and protected.

· Indigenous practices that recognize the inheritance rights of children, regardless of gender and order of birth, must be strengthened and protected. These include the right to own land based on actual contributions to the cultivation and development of the land.

Violence against Women and Access to Justice

States are required to take measures to prevent and address violence against IW, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and trafficking. This includes providing access to support services and justice.

· Raise the awareness of Indigenous women on VAW and on laws for the protection of women and children.

· Capacitate and make functional the VAW Desks in local government.

Cultural rights

IW have the right to maintain and practice their cultural traditions, languages, and customs. States should support and protect these rights.

· Indigenous practices that allow IW to inherit, own, and manage land and other resources should be strengthened and protected.

· Indigenous institutions that protect women and children from tribal war, such as the bodong system, should be allowed to persist alongside local government structures and services for women and children, such as functional VAWC Desks in barangays.

Access to Education and Healthcare

IW have the right to equal access to quality education and healthcare services. States must eliminate barriers that prevent access to these services.

· Indigenous women and their communities should have access to community-based education that faciliates informed decision-making in relation to land-resource rights, the environment, and human rights.

· Community-based training in sustainable agriculture should be made available, to complement and improve the farming techniques of Indigenous women and their communities.

Economic Empowerment

IW should have access to economic opportunities, including employment, entrepreneurship and financial services. States should eliminate barriers to economic empowerment

· Institute economic measures to help Indigenous women cope with the climate crisis, such as providing training and opportunities in sustainable entrepreneurship, cooperative enterprise, and the like.

· Institute measures to financially assist out-of-school youth and students.

· Set up programs for student employment in LGUs and schools.

Reproductive and Sexual Health Rights

IW should have access to comprehensive reproductive and sexual health services, including family planning, maternal health care, and information about sexual and reproductive health.

· Education in sexual and reproductive health, including maternal and child care, should be provided to young women in the communities, to address the rise of cases of early pregnancy. Corresponding and accessible services must also be ensured for mothers and children.

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