

Women's Rights Through Challenging Times



**How the Indigenous Women
in Luzon and Mindanao Navigated
their Political, Economic, and Socio-
Cultural Rights in the Midst of Issues
and Situations Affecting Them**

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Times*

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Definition of Terms, Acronyms, and Abbreviations

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
ASF	African Swine Flu
CARHRIHL	Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law
Covid-19	Coronavirus -19
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GUPAD	Grupo ng Kababaihang Umuugnay sa Pamayanan ng mga Agta/Dumagat na Nagtatanggol sa Lupaing Ninuno
IPMR	Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative
IPRA	Indigenous Peoples Rights Act
IPS	Indigenous Political Structure
IWO	Indigenous Women Organization
KMMKM	Kamalitanan te Matigsalog, Manobo, Kulamanen ne Migsabeka
LGU	Local Government Unit

Definition of Terms, Acronyms, and Abbreviations

MCW	Magna Carta of Women
NALKATI	Nagkahiusang Lumadnong Kababayan-an sa Tinanan
NAP-WPS	National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security
NKMGKK	Nagkakaisang Kababaihang Mangyan ng Gloria para sa Kapayapaan at Kaunlaran
NTF-ELCAC	National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict
Pakikipaan	A tradition in Quezon where indigenous people go around in different communities to catch up and celebrate, usually in line with other occasions. Pakikipaan literally means to connect.
PASAKK	Panaghiusa Alang sa Kaugalingnon ug Kalingkawasan
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SKP	Samahan ng Kababaihan sa Puray
SPI	Sulong Peace, Inc.
Surot-surotan	A tradition in Quezon where indigenous people celebrate with other communities and share resources with each other
VAWC	Violence Against Women and Children

I. Introduction

Sulong Peace, Inc. (SPI), formerly known as Sulong CARHRIHL Network (SCN), has been engaging with indigenous communities for the last 16 years. The organization’s vision is a “peaceful Philippine society that is based on social justice, human rights, and genuine development.”

In 2017, the Spanish Development Cooperation (AECID) partnered with Sulong Peace to work with four indigenous women communities through the project entitled “Enabling Indigenous Women Participation for Peace and Development.” Four Indigenous Women Organizations (IWO) were part of the project, namely: Nagkahiusang Lumadnong Kababayen-an sa Tinanan (NALKATI) in Arakan, North Cotabato; Kamalitanan te Matigsalog, Manobo, Kulamanen ne Migsabeka (KMMKM) in Kitaotao, Bukidnon; Panaghiusa Alang sa Kaugalingnon ug Kalingkawasan (PASAKK) Women in Bunawan, Agusan del Sur; and Grupo ng Kababaihang Umuugnay sa Pamayanan ng mga Agta/Dumagat na Nagtatanggol sa Lupaing Ninuno (GUPAD-LN) in Gen. Nakar, Quezon. This project provided educational discussions and trainings about the Magna Carta of Women, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), peace and governance, leadership and entrepreneurship.

A research was conducted in 2019 to “illustrate Indigenous Women’s social construction of meaningful participation, as they applied to their views on human rights, peace, and governance.” The study also presented the way these women analyze their own conflict context, their political, economic, social, and cultural rights as indigenous women, and the (ir)relevance of legal frames in their lives[1].

In 2020, SPI continued the engagement with these four IWOs, with the project, “Expanding the Support to Indigenous Women for Influencing Dutybearers on Peace, Human Rights, and Development.” Additional trainings, mentorship, and coaching were done with the four IWOs, and two new areas were included, in order to duplicate the process that has been done with the first four areas. The two new areas were: Samahan ng Kababaihan sa Puray (SKP) in Rodriguez, Rizal; and Nagkakaisang Kababaihang Mangyan ng Gloria para sa Kaunlaran at Kapayapaan (NKMGGK) in Gloria, Oriental Mindoro.

[1] Sulong CARHRIHL (2019). Towards Indigenous Women’s Meaningful Participation: Their Voices, Their Spaces. Sulong CARHRIHL Network

I. Introduction

The Magna Carta of Women (R.A. 9710), according to the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), is “a comprehensive women’s human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfillment, and promotion of the rights of Filipino women, especially those belonging in the marginalized sectors of the society. It conveys a framework of rights for women based directly on international law.” It includes specific provisions providing for increased participation of women in peacebuilding processes and their protection from gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict.[2]

The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) guarantees that members of Indigenous Cultural Communities/ Indigenous Peoples (ICC/IP) regardless of sex, shall equally enjoy the full measure of human rights and freedoms without distinction or discrimination. [3]

The Local Government Code (LGC) states that “other sectors” shall be represented in the local legislative bodies. These sectors include women and indigenous people. On the other hand, the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) A.O. No. 001, s.2009 guarantees the participation of the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMR) in the local legislative bodies with equal power, mandate, and responsibilities as a municipal or barangay councilor. Women and youth have a right to be elected as IPMR. They shall represent the interests of the indigenous peoples and promote their traditions and indigenous governance systems.[4]

The women in the four IWOs that underwent the trainings during the first phase project, were able to apply their learnings from the trainings to their day-to-day lives. They initiated livelihood development projects which aim to address the economic needs of their members, specifically to increase their sources of income.

[2] Sulong Peace, Inc. (2021). Towards Indigenous Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peacebuilding: An Introduction to the Magna Carta of Women and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. Sulong Peace, Inc. Quezon City

[3] Sulong Peace, Inc. (2021). Towards Indigenous Peoples Empowerment: An Introduction to the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act. Sulong Peace, Inc. Quezon City

[4] Sulong Peace (2022). Local Government Code of 1991. Quezon City

I. Introduction

KMMKM and NALKATI, both organizations in Mindanao, started a swine production project. In July 2019, however, the African Swine Fever (ASF), a deadly and untreatable virus affecting pigs, was detected in the country and has spread throughout the different provinces, heavily affecting the hog industry in the Philippines. The Department of Agriculture has ordered culling of pigs in farms surrounding the area where the first case of ASF was detected. Eventually, the prices of pork and pork products have decreased, due to the consumers avoiding pork during the height of the ASF cases. This resulted to KMMKM and NALKATI having difficulties selling their pigs, due to the fear of the consumers. They were forced to sell their swine products at very low costs, which led to the deterioration of their funds and affected their morale in continuing the business.

The indigenous communities continue to be affected by the armed conflict as the government forces and the New Peoples' Army (NPA) continue to launch tactics against each other. The indigenous women in General Nakar, Quezon, particularly the members of GUPAD-LN were not spared from the impact of the war between the two parties. These women were swooned into being recruited as "rebel surenderrees" because of a promise to receive rice and other basic goods. They were also affected by the issue of the "Kaliwa Dam" which the government wanted to build to supply the needed water for Metro Manila but at the cost of the destruction of the natural resources within their ancestral domain. These two issues divided the members of GUPAD-LN that led to mistrust among the leaders and members.

In the early part of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic struck the world and has left most of the world paralyzed for many months. In the case of the Philippines, it took almost two years before travel restrictions were eased and social gatherings were finally allowed again. This created the hindrance as to how the project was implemented, although SPI has done its best to continue the project implementation, with the support of its local coordinators and the IWO leaders.

[5] Amnesty International (2020). Philippines: Dangerous anti-terror law yet another setback for human rights. Retrieved July 2022 from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/philippines-dangerous-antiterror-law-yet-another-setback-for-human-rights/>

I. Introduction

This study aimed to understand how the challenging times (African Swine Flu, Continuing Armed Conflict, and Covid 19 pandemic) affected the lives of the IW in the six areas, particularly when it comes to their experience in exercising their political, economic, social, and cultural rights. More importantly, how have they widened and deepened their understanding about Magna Carta of Women, Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, and the Local Government Code? How do they see the relevance of these legal frames in their day-to-day experiences?



II.

Case Study Method and Methodology

The focus of the study are the six areas being engaged by SPI in the AECID project. The four areas were previously engaged in 2017: KMMKM, NALKATI, PASAKK, and GUPAD-LN. The two new areas, however, were only engaged in the new project cycle beginning early 2020. Members from the organizations were asked to fill out a questionnaire, which was based on the 2019 research[6]. Additional questions were asked, particularly on how they navigated their recent challenges. A Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was also done to deepen the understanding on the answers of the women.

Most of the respondents have also been respondents of the previous research and are familiar with the questions, but there is an additional question on how the challenging times (ASF, ATL, and COVID 19) have affected the women’s Economic, Political, Social, and Cultural Rights. They were also asked about their perception on how they understand legal frames that are relevant to their daily lives. For the two new areas, the data are presented to establish a baseline perception among the concepts that were presented to them.

The results are presented as six case studies found below.

[6] Sulong CARHRIHL (2019). Towards Indigenous Women’s Meaningful Participation: Their Voices, Their Spaces. Sulong CARHRIHL Network



III.

Results of the Study

The following case studies present the current context of the organization, how they perceive the peace situation in their area, and the current challenges they are facing in their respective contexts.

A. Nagkahiusang Lumadnong Kababayan-an sa Tinanan (NALKATI)

The NALKATI women in Arakan Valley, North Cotabato belong to the Manobo-Tinananon tribe and was formed in 2017. Translated in English, NALKATI stands for "United Indigenous Women Group". Through the help of SPI-AECID, they registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in 2021. After a series of trainings with SPI, they have developed their own Vision, Mission, and elected their organizational leaders. Their Indigenous Political Structure (IPS) has already recognized their organization.

NALKATI has 63 members, and 35 of them have been identified and fulfilled the requirements as beneficiaries of the SPI-AECID Phase 1 Project Livelihood Assistance. They initiated Hog and Swine Raising Project in 2018, originally designed as a backyard project, where each beneficiary raised 3 pigs in their backyard. In 2019, the African Swine Fever has affected their relatively young project, threatening the sustainability due to decrease in demand and prices of selling their products. The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 further worsened their situation. Travel restrictions have prohibited them from offering their products to areas outside their residence. Delivering pigs and pork products have become close to impossible, given the numerous requirements being demanded in checkpoints at the time. Face masks, face shields, and later vaccination cards were required. For some of them, they are hesitant to get vaccinated, so this has become an extreme obstacle.

Thankfully, the SPI-AECID Phase 2 Project has allowed for a livelihood recovery fund, which encouraged the 30 member beneficiaries of the livelihood project to navigate other options in continuing their project.

There were 10 respondents from NALKATI, composed of leaders and members that are actively involved in the activities of the organization. They are women between the ages of 19-54. Half of the respondents are High School undergraduates, while the other half are Elementary undergraduate. When asked about their current peace situation, they say there used to be armed groups (communist and government forces) in their area that would bring about conflicts and armed encounters. But currently, their area is now generally peaceful, except in some occasions when there are local conflicts by community members, usually when they are under the influence of alcohol.

III. Results of the Study | NALKATI

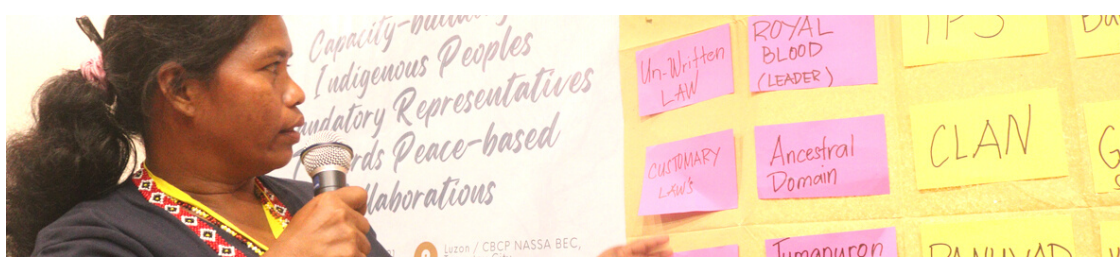
The Indigenous women leaders in their area actively seek peace and look out for the welfare of the community. When there were armed groups in their area, the leaders made sure to have a dialogue with the armed group leaders to negotiate about how the Indigenous community members should be treated with respect and shall be left out of any violent encounters.

Aside from the presence of armed groups, an existing conflict that they are experiencing is the inter-tribal conflict on their ancestral domain or boundary dispute. There are some indigenous leaders who are involved in selling portions of their ancestral domain to migrants or other investors. These leaders, who are entrusted by the community to protect the welfare of their ancestral land and their people, are the ones who are involved in selling the land for the mere purpose of earning. Most of the time, the lands are sold without even the knowledge of the owner of the said portions of land, but the owners do not have the advantage to fight for their lands as they do not have documents to prove that the land was theirs.

Political Rights

For the NALKATI women, the political rights they are enjoying includes having the opportunity to become a leader in their community, and at the same time to choose a leader that they want (such as through the voting system). Another political right is to be empowered as a member of the community and as a citizen. This could translate to being able to carry out projects that would benefit their community. In fact, NALKATI already drafted resolutions that they filed through the municipal council, regarding development in their villages. These exercises of political rights are now freely enjoyed by these women, and they are also trying to educate other women regarding this right that they can all benefit from. Before this project, they had no idea that they can enjoy these rights.

The respondents express their desire to have advanced trainings on human rights, particularly on women's rights, governance, and leadership. They want to experience having a deeper understanding of the roles they can play in leadership in their community. More trainings, seminars, exposures, and exchange visits with other areas where there are strong women leadership would inspire and encourage them to continue to grow and contribute to their community as they exercise their political rights.



III. Results of the Study | NALKATI

Economic Rights

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the NALKATI women strongly felt that their economic rights have been greatly restricted. They were no longer allowed to travel, which meant they can no longer work as hired laborers. The nationwide lockdown that lasted for months limited their ability to find sources of income for their daily survival. Their existing livelihood project, which is backyard hog-raising, had also been affected by the African Swine Flu (ASF) prior to the pandemic. The ASF caused consumers to fear buying pork products. Even though their livestock were safe, they can no longer be sold at fair prices due to the decline in the number of consumers willing to buy pork. Their province was badly hit by the ASF, so it was difficult to market their product to nearby areas. This resulted to some of them diverting their livelihood project into raising goats. This has yet to be monitored for profitability.



As to how they can further enjoy their economic rights, the respondents acknowledge that their current livelihood project became a trial and error period as they are also still learning how to navigate having an income-generating project. The spread of the African Swine Flu added to the challenges, as it diminished their capital and broke their momentum to earn from their livestock project. Their desire is to have more opportunities, more assistance if possible, and to include more beneficiaries from their community so that there can be more families that will benefit economically.

III. Results of the Study | NALKATI

Socio-Cultural Rights

When the NALKATI women attended the trainings provided by Sulong Peace, and when they were able to share their learnings to their community members, they observed that there was a decrease (if not totally eliminated) in the number of wives being physically beaten by their husbands at home. The women were able to understand their rights to defend themselves from their husbands and to protect their own welfare, as well as their children's. Being aware of their socio-cultural rights gave NALKATI women the confidence to become more productive members of the family and their community, and they became more aware in what they can contribute for the promotion of their culture and traditions.

They hope for the sustainability and more spaces and opportunities for the women to engage with their leaders (indigenous) as well as with the local government, so that they can get more support with their projects. They are also encouraged to submit proposals regularly in order to have chances of getting support from the local government unit.

The women also identified the need to have a training center for women, which needs to be accredited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Having a physical structure where they can meet, gather, and showcase their culture, traditions, and projects, will create a positive encouragement for the whole community, particularly the women, as they will be given space to express their leadership and contributions for the community.

Violations Against Women

When asked if there are any rampant violations being committed against them, the respondents mentioned that the violations are mostly threats (of killing or beating), which is done by husbands or relatives of these women. They also cited an incident of rape on a girl, which was committed by her own relative. This case was documented by a member of the All-Women Monitoring and Action Response Team which was trained by Sulong Peace.

In addressing these violations, they cited that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and other non-government organizations are the institutions that they rely on to help them and provide the needed guidance or assistance.



Indigenous Women Leadership

For the respondents, an indigenous woman should possess the following traits: strong, honest, respected, patient, kind, dependable, and someone who knows their culture and indigenous laws and practices.

To be able to have a chance in leadership, they need more trainings, mentorship, advance education on human rights, peace building, skills training, and other relevant capacity development approaches that will give them more confidence in their leadership.

They see women being involved in the current structures of the barangay council, as barangay healthcare worker, Day Care worker, School teacher, and even in the local government unit as an elected official. Their current Vice Mayor is a woman, as well as some of the municipal councilors.

Meaningful participation in women demands open-mindedness and the ability to participate in the important occasions in the community. It also includes being able to re-echo to the community what they learn from the trainings, and practice these lessons first in her own family, until the rest of the community can be influenced as well. The love and concern for the community must be shown through actions.

Some of the women are members of the monitoring team, and none of them experience any discrimination based on their gender. They monitor human rights violations and report to Sulong Peace.

III. Results of the Study | NALKATI

Overcoming Challenging Times

The African Swine Fever (ASF) entered their province and suddenly there were restrictions in the sale of pork and processed meat products. While they were navigating their relatively new business, they also had to deal with the sudden decrease in the prices of selling pork and the low demand from consumers who were threatened by the ASF. There were instances when they had to sell their pigs at a very low price just to dispose of them even though there is already no profit.

The pandemic added to their burdens and restricted them in so many ways. There are no more armed insurgencies, perhaps due to the fear that they might be caught by the government because of the increase in the presence of checkpoints and patrolling of police and military. The requirements, however, were inconveniences that they had to experience - wearing of face masks and face shields, getting vaccinated (no vaccine means they cannot be allowed to ride any mode of transportation). Some forms of socialization and entertainment are closed down, such as videoke. Even attending the church has been restricted during the height of the pandemic. Now that restrictions have been eased, they can slowly go back to normal in attending religious gatherings.

Education of the children had been a challenge to the mothers. Because they are not trained to teach, it was difficult for them to suddenly have to become the teachers of their own children. Students also lost the drive to learn, especially when they have no gadgets or access to internet (for those with online modules). Some children had to borrow gadgets from relatives or neighbors. Even with modular learning, some of the students still experience late submissions or were not able to attend online classes if they do not have the proper resources. There are chances given to make up for low marks, but they do not trust that the other children who get high marks are actually the ones answering the modules. Some parents answer for their children to receive higher marks than the rest. Another impact of the pandemic is that they no longer had an Indigenous Peoples Day celebration, which they hold annually. Social occasions such as weddings, feasts, birthday parties, reunions, and fellowships are also some of the things that they missed during the height of the pandemic. As women, they find joy in participating in social events such as these, because these are times they can relate with others, share stories, and even learn. The pandemic hampered their opportunities to engage with others in meaningful way.

Despite these challenges, they are resolved to continue taking one step forward every day, and to cling to hope that times will get better. And together, they can overcome the challenges and will encourage each other to keep fighting and moving forward.

III. Results of the Study | NALKATI

Relevant Laws

When it comes to relevant laws, all the respondents expressed their knowledge, understanding, and reference to the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). It is the law that is very relevant to their community and their identity as indigenous peoples. Although it is not a law, they expressed the same level of knowledge, understanding, and reference to the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

As for the Magna Carta of Women, they know about its existence and they are aware that it is very relevant to them as they always refer to it, however, the in-depth understanding about its content and context remains a challenge.

The National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security (NAP WPS) is also one of the legal frames that they are sure is relevant to them, but they do not have enough knowledge as to its provisions and they are not confident that they fully understand it.

They are also aware about the Local Government Code, but they need deeper studies to be able to understand the functions of the roles of local government officials and their possible roles as members of local special bodies. Their organization, however, has already registered with the local government unit and are actively seeking to become part of the Local Special Bodies in their municipality.



III. Results of the Study | KMMKM

B. Kamalitanan te Matigsalog, Manobo, Kulamanen ne Migsabeka (KMMKM)

KMMKM, in English, stands for United Women of Matigsalog, Manobo, and Kulamanen Tribes. It is an Indigenous Women organization based in Kitaotao, Bukidnon. They were formed in May 2015 and currently has 167 members. The SPI-AECID project which started in 2017 is their introduction to social entrepreneurship. They setup a group-managed indigenous women piggery project in 2018 and started selling fattened pigs and piglets. The African Swine Flu and the Covid 19 pandemic, however, has slowed down the development of their piggery project.

There were nine respondents from KMMKM, with an age range of 30-57 years old. These women have been with the organization for a long time (since 2015), and most of them participated in the series of trainings that Sulong Peace conducted. Most of them are also beneficiaries of the livelihood project. One respondent has a college degree, others are high school graduates, some are high school undergraduates, and a few are elementary graduates.

The respondents' perception in the current peace situation in the area is favorable due to less insurgencies. The barangay has a continuous monitoring process which prevents insurgents to plot incidents. The NTF-ELCAC (government) programs have a tendency to favor political allies of those in position, and not actual beneficiaries that deserve to be prioritized. There is a notion that the NTF-ELCAC funding is only for use in economic support for livelihood, whereas the KMMKM members understand that it is supposed to be used to support various programs for rebel returnees, not just mainly for livelihood projects.

Political Rights

For these women, exercising political rights mean that their choices and principles are respected. The voices of the women in the community are recognized. For the leaders, not only the "datus" (men leaders) are respected and listened to, but even the "baes" (women leaders) have an equal voice. They can now practice their right to vote, and to speak out their opinions. As respected members of the community, they are now able to select a leader that can make balanced decisions. Gender equality is important to be understood by the community. Women can also join trainings, and their increased awareness and consciousness on their rights can boost their confidence. As women who are now politically empowered, it is also their duty to educate other women as leaders of their families as well. Political rights give them the chance to become active leaders and influence in their community, contrary to the common notion that only men are revered as leaders.

III. Results of the Study | KMMKM

Economic Rights



The African Swine Fever posed threats to their piggery project. Consumers feared buying pork products, and the transport of their goods have also been made difficult. This led to them selling their pigs at lower costs, sometimes even lower than their capital expenses. This has been made worse when the Covid 19 pandemic entered the country.

During the height of the pandemic, the Women from KMMKM felt the great restrictions in their economic rights. Because of mobility restrictions, they are not able to go out and work. Vendors are not allowed to go out and sell. The assistance (ayuda) coming from the local government has some controversies. They felt that the local government officials have certain biases and are only selecting the beneficiaries for the assistance. Farmers are among the groups that are not given relief assistance. In the Social Welfare department, pensions of senior citizens are not released if the beneficiaries are not vaccinated against Covid 19. As indigenous people, most of them are hesitant to get vaccinated due to health concerns and other fears. But without vaccine, it was difficult to access basic social services, especially on food and healthcare.

In schools, vaccination is also required for parents of the children. If only one parent is vaccinated, the child will not be admitted in school. Education is greatly affected due to the increase in the gap of those who have access to resources, and those who are very limited. In the barangay level, the local health workers and police are also required to get vaccinated. Some of them fear getting a shot, so they ended up resulting to farming instead of working in the barangay. In the municipal level, employees under Job Order or Contract of Service are not renewed if they do not get vaccinated.

III. Results of the Study | KMMKM

Some people are afraid of the vaccine because of wrong information, or the lack of education about it. When travel restrictions eased out, some of them can still not cross municipal or provincial borders because vaccination card is required. These requirements interfere with their rights to continue to pursue economic opportunities elsewhere. They hamper economic growth of those who are already challenged enough have no other opportunities around them.

Socio-Cultural Rights

When it comes to socio-cultural rights, a lot of religious groups from varying denominations, felt the weight of the restrictions caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. There is a Municipal Order in Kitaotao prohibiting the religious leaders to preach in public, thus others result to hiding in the mountains where there are no authorities to stop them from social gatherings.

On the other hand, this group enjoy exercising their socio-cultural rights in terms of engaging with government agencies. Their request for a tribal hall has been granted and is now completely built for their use. This is a result of the dialogues with National Government Agencies that they joined through the initiative of Sulong Peace. Some of their school-aged indigenous youth also receive scholarship from the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

Violations Against Women

The most common form of violation against women in their community is sexual harassment and rape. They identified a case where a husband raped his wife in front of their children. They also cited that because of the pandemic, there was an increase in the number of women and even children who are being abused at home. When most people were forced to stay at home, those who do not have healthy family dynamics and with abusive family members, end up being abused and physically hurt inside their homes.

The local government is a reliable institution that they can seek when they need assistance. Aside from this, Sulong Peace, Nonviolent Peace force, and other non-government organizations are also valuable partners that can assist them when possible.

Indigenous Women Leadership



An indigenous woman leader should be brave, empowered, open-minded, competent, and knowledgeable about their customary laws. To have opportunities for leadership, women need more trainings, to engage with others and establish meaningful connections, and those who did not have formal education can join trainings and seminars that will give them more knowledge and information. It is important for them that as early as now, they should be training the youth as they are the future leaders of their organization and community.

In their community, women can have leadership roles in KMMKM, in the women's organizations, Barangay women's association, Barangay Healthcare Worker, and as Lupon or council.

Meaningful participation means having opportunities to engage, participate, and contribute in the affairs of the community in which they belong.

In peace building, women can have meaningful participation by being part of mediation efforts, or conflict resolution in the organizational and barangay level. They are aware that they still need more trainings in these areas so they could establish expertise and increase their confidence. To participate in good governance, the women should foremost be able to understand the relevant laws that protect their rights, as well as the customary laws of their own tribe.

III. Results of the Study | KMMKM

Overcoming Challenging Times

The piggery project of KMMKM gave promising opportunities for their livelihood and economic improvement. Their group management was flawless, and they established connections where they can market their pig and pork products. However, the African Swine Fever instantly challenged their business growth, as the prices of pork dropped and the consumers became afraid of buying pork products. The situation became even more challenging when the Covid 19 pandemic added transportation restrictions which prevented them from marketing their products to other locations.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented numerous threats and challenges for the KMMKM. The vaccine requirement, they say, is anti-cultural, as they are not comfortable getting a shot yet. Most of them got vaccinated, however, because it is a requirement of the government in almost every aspect of their life – traveling, schools, working, receiving assistance or aid. They are hesitant to get vaccinated because they knew some people who had adverse reactions to the vaccine. Some even lost their life after getting a shot, and attributed the death as a side effect of the vaccine.

But even through the challenging times, they make it a point to encourage their youth and inspire them to continue their traditions, to dream for better economic conditions, and to work harder to be able to overcome any challenge that may hinder them from reaching their dreams.

Relevant Laws

The Magna Carta of Women (MCW) and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) are the laws that they have knowledge of, understand, and always refer to. They know that these legal documents offer them additional protection as women, and as indigenous people. They are also familiar with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHIRHL), but not all of them understand and refer to it.

They are also very much aware of the Local Government Code and they seek to become part of the Local Special Bodies to represent women in their municipality.

The respondents express the need to have refresher discussions on these relevant laws, and for their new and younger members to also have a discussion on these laws. They need to be updated with recent information, and to further share the IEC materials that were distributed by Sulong Peace.

III. Results of the Study | PASAKK

C. Panaghiusa Alang sa Kaugalingnon ug Kalingkawasan (PASAKK) Women's Committee

In English, PASAKK stands for "Unity for Self-Determination and Liberation". They started in 1998 as organized groups of women's cooperatives under PASAKK, Inc. After going through challenges of sustaining their cooperatives, they currently have 250 active members from 10 locally organized communities in Bunawan and Loreto in the Province of Agusan del Sur. They aspire to register as a separate legal entity, which has been reinforced by the project of SPI-AECID where they were able to develop their own Vision, Mission, and organizational plans. For now, all their formal engagements are under PASAKK, Inc. and its Council of Elders.

There were ten respondents that participated in the FGD from PASAKK Women. They describe their current context in their own communities as generally peaceful, although there are still some stories of insurgencies in the hinterlands. There are many rebel returnees in their area, due to the active campaign of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).

Political Rights

For these women, exercising their political rights means that there will be no discrimination against women. They will not be unjustly removed from work due to political reasons. They should not be subject to surveillance by government forces and should not be suspected as joining rebel groups.

They feel that the ability to choose whether to get a vaccination or not is part of their political right. Some of their members chose not to get vaccinated against Covid 19, because most of them witnessed others who got vaccinated and then had a stroke, got paralyzed, or died. In some instances, there are many deaths that become reported as Covid 19 cases even though they were not actual Covid cases.



III. Results of the Study | PASAKK

Economic Rights

When it comes to economic rights, these women experience a lot of difficulties. During the height of Covid pandemic, they cannot get rice farming assistance from the Department of Agriculture if they are not vaccinated. They cannot get their benefits from the government's 4Ps program if they are not vaccinated. For senior citizens, they only receive half of the pension they are supposed to receive, if they are not vaccinated. If they choose to get vaccinated on the spot when they claim their pension, they can claim the other half.

They cited the government's incentive programs for professionals who get vaccinated. The Barangay Health workers and barangay Police received Php 10,000.00 after 3 months. Teachers received Php 2,000.00 after they get their second dose. If they tested positive for Covid 19, government employees will receive an assistance worth Php 15,000.00. Meanwhile, other people, especially those who lost their income and livelihood during the pandemic, are receiving very minimal assistance to nothing at all. Some receive assistance in the form of rice and canned goods, but they have no decent income to buy other household needs or medicines.

The pandemic has largely affected their livelihood. Many lost their income because they were no longer allowed to go out. The vendors are no longer allowed to go out and sell their products. Even those with agricultural harvests have a hard time transporting their goods because there is no more public transportation available. Some buyers go to the farms directly, but they purchase the goods at very low prices. Rice (palay) is bought from them at only Php 12.00 per kilo, while banana is bought from them at Php 32.00 per kilo. Meanwhile, the prices of basic commodities continue to increase. Even farming equipment and supplies have increased in prices. One sack of urea that they use as fertilizer has increased from Php 800 to Php 2500 per sack. Prices of seeds and seedlings also increased. They can request for free seeds from the Department of Agriculture, but only if they are registered rice farmers, and vaccination is required, together with a barangay certificate. Since many chose not to get vaccinated, their options for income opportunities have lessened as well.

The occurrence of flooding has also become common in their area whenever there is downpour of rain. These floods largely affect their harvests. In some areas, farmers even get to a point where they end up not having anything left to harvest after their crops were submerged in water for days.

III. Results of the Study | PASAKK

Socio-Cultural Rights

The respondents are mostly parents of school-aged children. They bear the heavy weight of the Covid-19 restrictions when it comes to education. The Department of Education used modular learning approach, which left the parents stuck at home with their children. These parents are mostly uneducated, or have finished only grade school. They found it very difficult to teach their children how to answer their school modules because they themselves do not know the answers. The downside of children and parents being stuck at home, however, is that children tend to not listen to their parents when they are being taught their lessons. Grade 12 students have so many modules that even the parents have a difficult time understanding.



Some students have a chance to have online lessons with their teacher, but the problem is the lack of gadgets and access to an internet connection. They later discovered that there is a phone application that they can download, where they could see the answers to the modules (cheating). They point out that due to this scenario, there are a lot of students who ended up getting higher marks even if they did not really understand the lessons. There is an unfair advantage between those who have access to gadgets, internet, and even the app.

When it comes to their freedom to choose religion and to gather, they have also been limited. Churches are only allowed to hold gatherings as long as it only has 10% capacity. If it is a bigger church building, they can gather at 30% capacity. These restrictions made them feel that their rights have become limited.

III. Results of the Study | PASAKK

Violations Against Women

The common violations against women in their community are in the forms of physical abuse, rape, and threats. The perpetrators are usually relatives, husbands, or other members of the community. There are some cases where the police, CAFGU, or even rebels are involved in violent encounters. These cases include illegal arrests, armed encounters, and occupation of a school near their area in the last two years. These cases were monitored and verified by the All Women Monitoring Team. Some of them are members of SPI's All Women Monitoring Team, and they are grateful for the trainings they received which capacitated them to monitor and report such incidents.

Whenever they need help in cases of violations against women, they find it easier to seek help from non-government organizations such as PASAKK, Sikap Foundation, Balay Mindanaw, and Balaod Mindanaw instead of the local or national government agencies.

Indigenous Women Leadership

The respondents believe that women leaders should possess strength, kindness, persuasiveness, understanding, caring, responsible, loving, and humility. To become better and improve as leaders, they recognize that they need more trainings on leadership, capacity building, women strengthening, and health. They raised the concern about women not being allowed to give birth at home anymore. The Department of Health requires giving birth only in accredited facilities. The problem, however, is that most facilities are not accessible to the women in isolated locations. There is also a lack of health kits available, as well as contraceptives that are supposed to be freely distributed in the rural health units.

Women can become active players as Barangay Healthcare Workers, Village chairperson, Barangay Nurse, Barangay Police, Barangay Sanitary Inspector, Councilor, Provincial Legislator, Mayor, and Pregnancy Tracker. There are now a lot of opportunities for women to be in a leadership role within their community.

III. Results of the Study | PASAKK



As women, meaningful participation means enhancing their capacities and contributing to the growth of their community. They can contribute to peace building by being part of their “husay” or justice committee. They can also be part of the tribal “lupon” or council which has a significant leadership role. They can also contribute in the Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) Help Desks in their barangay and municipal level.

As women, they can meaningfully contribute to good governance by being a good example as women leaders. They can contribute in development initiatives such example is their own livelihood project. As women, they are considered as the light in their community, and an equal partner of the men.

Meaningful participation in the context of human rights, would require them to actively raise awareness and educate others about what they learned from trainings given by SPI on human rights and international humanitarian law. They can also volunteer as Monitoring and Action Response (MAR) team member, and assist victims of human rights violations.

III. Results of the Study | PASAKK

Overcoming Challenging Times

Aside from the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic in the other areas of their lives, they also cited that the mandatory wearing of face masks even inside private vehicles, can become too much to bear for some of them. This is made harder by policies that would demand them to pay fines up to Php 1,000.00 if they disobey the rules. There was an instance where a student was studying inside the house and a policeman trespassed inside just to confront the student about not wearing a mask.

When it comes to people who are sick, the requirement of getting a swab test result prior to being admitted, became a burden to them. Primarily because getting a Covid test can cost a lot, another thing is the added time it will take for patients to wait. There is a scenario when a patient just died at home while waiting to be admitted to a hospital. Others do not have the resources to afford hospital admission, so they result to asking faith healers or traditional healers.

More common flooding has also occurred in their area, and they are constantly facing the threat of losing their crops to flood. In spite of all these challenges, they continue to take risks and choose to not give up in continuing what they have started.

Relevant Laws

The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) is the law that all of the respondents have knowledge of, understand, and refer to. They also know and understand the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), but currently it is not something they refer to, or their situation do not have a need to refer to this agreement. They also know and understand little about the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP WPS). They are aware that these important laws are something they enjoy as women, but they also see the need for further discussions to educate them on their provisions. They feel that if they have deeper understanding of the law, they will be able to identify how these are already being enjoyed in their day-to-day experiences.

As for the Local Government Code, they understand the need for a Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) in their municipality, but until now there has been no appointed Municipal IPMR due to political reasons. They are still advocating for a municipal IPMR and hoping that the next leaders will be favorable.

III. Results of the Study | GUPAD-LN

D. Grupo ng Kababaihang Umuugnay sa Pamayanan ng mga Agta/Dumagat na Nagtatanggol sa Lupang Ninuno (GUPAD-LN)

GUPAD-LN, when translated in English, means "Group of Women Linking with the Agta/Dumagat Community in Defending the Ancestral Domain". They are based in General Nakar, Province of Quezon. This group was formed in 2013. They aim to strengthen and raise awareness of indigenous women in asserting and defending their ancestral land. In 2018, there were 150 members from six barangays who started their "Coconut Farming, Processing, and Selling" business which was supported by the SPI-AECID First Phase Project. In 2019, 4 out of its 6 member communities are reported to have already benefitted from the Project.

There were seven survey respondents from General Nakar, Quezon. These women have been long-time partners of SPI and has been part of the project since 2017. More than half of the respondents are High School graduates, while the rest are Elementary undergraduates. Their ages range from 31 to 50 years old. They describe their area with a generally peaceful situation, but sometimes there are conflicts. Conflicts can be due to the presence of armed groups that enter their community, which is the reason they cannot continue their livelihood. A common problem is also the lack of unity among the leaders and members of their community. Leaders and members have varying opinions on issues that affect them, but there are no opportunities to dialogue and discuss it among themselves. This leads to conflict and sometimes can become violent. Common issues for them include the introduction of government-funded development projects, and the presence of government and rebel forces, which puts them in a risky situation because they can be labelled as supporter of the other group. To address these conflict issues, they reach out to the church and other organizations that fight for the indigenous peoples, and initiate dialogues.



III. Results of the Study | GUPAD-LN

Political Rights

For these women, political rights mean exercising their freedom to choose the leaders that they want to lead their community, or the country. This also means that they can have the equal rights to run for office and become a leader in any level of government if they are willing to. They can also insist their legitimate rights, such as their human rights, without the fear of being discriminated against.

Exercising their political rights mean that they also have a chance to become leaders, and to assert their rights as indigenous women in the political spaces. They have a right to choose leaders that prioritize the needs of the indigenous communities.

Economic Rights



Their economic rights mean they are entitled to have a decent means of livelihood and income, they have a right to contribute in the planning and strategizing plans for the development of their community, and the right to contribute to the economic development of their community. This also translates to their right to sell the produce that they harvest from their ancestral lands – banana, cassava, coconut, and others.

They long to experience collaborating with their local government on community development, instead of just the LGU implementing plans without their knowledge or consent. The exercise of economic rights gives them the freedom to continue to cultivate and enrich their ancestral lands. They hope to be able to trade their agricultural products to other areas so they can expand their income opportunities.

III. Results of the Study | GUPAD-LN

Socio-Cultural Rights

Socio-cultural rights mean being able to articulate their cultural identity without fear of prejudice or discrimination. This includes being able to freely exercise their traditional practices and cultural celebrations, such as the Indigenous People's Week, deep appreciation of their Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), and to travel to other areas to seek income opportunities such as fishing.

They desire to continue to learn more about their rights and how they can exercise it. They long to be able to communicate with their local government unit, where they can confidently express their desires for the benefit of their community. They also want to be able to re-echo to others what they have learned from trainings and seminars.



Violations Against Women

The women from Gupad experienced certain violations that haunt them to this day. They experienced being coerced to surrender as members of the New People's Army (NPA) - the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines - even if they are not actual members of the NPA. Some of them experienced being arrested by the military without having due process or factual basis.

The organizations that they can rely on to assist them include Gupad-LN, Tribal Center for Development (TCD), Saguibin, and Save Sierra Madre Alliance, Inc.

III. Results of the Study | GUPAD-LN

Indigenous Women Leadership

For the respondents, an indigenous woman leader should possess the qualities of being brave and courageous, has a deep understanding of the rights of women and can assert it, has no biases between her constituents, has a wide understanding and perspectives on issues affecting them, and has the initiative to implement their plans and goals.

The women leaders, who need to have 75% IP blood, need more trainings on leadership so that they can be more equipped in managing their members and dealing with issues. Some of them are already part of the leadership of Gupad-LN, while others already participate in the barangay level or village level leadership roles.

For the respondents, meaningful participation entails being part of the activities in their community and organization, that contribute to the well-being of the whole community. They can participate through actively joining activities that they are allowed to join, and by inviting other members of the community to also participate and contribute in the sharing of ideas.

With regards to their perspective on peace building, they understand that there is a need to continuously educate their members and re-echo what has been discussed in the trainings provided by Sulong Peace. They need to promote positive encouragements so people will be willing to learn. The leaders have to set a good example, in terms of honesty and integrity in serving. They have to show their strength in asserting their rights, and the competency in implementing their plans.

Overcoming Challenging Times

In 2019, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) started the construction of Kaliwa Dam, or the New Centennial Water Source Program which aims to supply 600 million litres of water per day, benefiting about 3.49 million households in Metro Manila, Rizal, and Quezon. This project has a lot of contentions [7], given that majority of the areas will affect the ancestral lands of the Dumagat communities in the provinces of Rizal and Quezon. The Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process in General Nakar, Quezon, however, was deemed "flawed" by the indigenous leaders in the community of GUPAD-LN. The negotiations were done with only "handpicked" leaders, while other leaders were not well represented. These external factors contributed to shaking the organizational trust and unity, due to some elders and leaders having opposing views.

[7] Jocson, LMJ (2022 Feb). Indigenous People seek to overturn Kaliwa Dam Deal. Business World Online. Retrieved 27 April 2022 From <https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2022/02/03/427799/indigenous-peoples-seek-to-overturn-kaliwa-dam-deal/>

III. Results of the Study | GUPAD-LN

The respondents of the study are located in very remote areas in Quezon, and the Covid pandemic in 2020 has only worsened their capacity to connect and continue their organization's plans. The travel restrictions and added requirements are too much to bear for them. The schools being closed gave them more responsibilities at home, when they have to be the ones to teach their children's school modules. They cannot easily ask for assistance from others because of the restrictions. On top of it all, it was harder to find ways to earn income.

The pandemic has also limited their chance to express their culture, such as celebrating their indigenous people's week. This leads to others, especially the younger generation, missing their chance to learn more about their culture and pass it on. They have a culture they call "Pakikipaan" or "surot-surotan" where they usually just go around and catch up with each other. These occasions strengthen their relationship with each other and their appreciation of their culture. These are also the sharing of resources with each other, where those who have more can give to those who have less. Because of the pandemic, these cultural practices have been stopped and there is a danger that it might no longer be practiced the way that they used to do. To some, the culture of going around to the other communities are also an opportunity to find ways of earning, such as fishing in other villages. The lack of these practices due to pandemic restrictions has also limited their capacity for economic sustainability.

Their livelihood project is coconut production. When the pandemic started, it became hard for them to transport their products and sell them, due to the intense requirements when traveling – permits and other documents. This led to some of their members not being able to pay their dues and loans to their livelihood fund on time. As their mobility were restricted, they were also not able to meet as a team, and slowly they had difficulties in regularly remitting the sales of their coconut products.

These external and internal challenges, however, did not diminish the spirit of those who continue to hope for a better situation for their community. Reduced to only half of the membership, the women who remain to identify themselves as GUPAD-LN members, chose to continue what they initially dreamed for their organization. In order to have a fresh start and to avoid confusions, they decided to change their name to what is now called "Katutubong Kababaihang Nagkakaisa Para sa Kaunlaran at Kapayapaan na Nagtatanggol sa Lupaing Ninuno" (KKNKK-LN). When translated in English, it means United Indigenous Women for Peace and Development Defending the Ancestral Domain. This new start gives them new hope and a renewed strength to pursue their dreams and aspirations for themselves and for their children.

III. Results of the Study | GUPAD-LN

Relevant Laws

Some of the respondents have knowledge of, understand, and use the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). Only a few of them have knowledge of, understand, and use the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS), and some know and understand the Magna Carta of Women, but are not aware that they are already using it. They are also aware of the Local Government Code and its provisions, but they expressed the need for a deeper discussion so they could understand its provisions and how their organization can become part of the Local Special Bodies.



III. Results of the Study | SKP

E. Samahan ng Kamahunaan sa Puray (SKP)

SKP, in English, translates to "Association of Women in Puray". They are based in Barangay Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal. Puray is home to the Dumagat-Remontado tribe. There are currently 30 members who are directly involved in their livelihood project "Puray-Pagotan Food Products", the livelihood project they initiated through the support of SPI and AECID. In 2018, they registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and in 2022, they are already registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Rich with beautiful natural resources and being in proximity to Metro Manila, their territory attracts tourists, both local and foreign. Part of their ancestral domain is also being disputed in the construction of the Kaliwa Dam[8] by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

Respondents are 22 women, with ages below 20 to above 60, notably more elderly are respondents. They describe their community as mostly peaceful, due to the fact that most of the community members have unity and understanding. The most common causes of conflict are livelihood issues or if there are misunderstandings between the indigenous people and the Tagalog or non-indigenous residents.

Sometimes there are also conflicts arising from family issues, such as on land territory disputes, or marriage of an offspring to someone who is not a member of the tribe. There are a few people who join the rebel forces, and sometimes conflicts may arise that cause division.

Externally, they also get affected with the armed conflicts between military and rebel forces, or indigenous people versus Tagalog (non-tribe). They seek to have a respect for their community as a zone of peace.

Political Rights

For the respondents, political rights mean being involved in what is happening in the community. They have the power to sustain the peace situation, and they can even mediate when needed between conflicting parties that are members of the community. Political rights mean being able to take part and contribute to the group's progress. Voting is also their political right. Having dialogues with their leaders and engaging with different agencies that can assist them, are also part of their political rights that they are enjoying.

[8] *Ibid*

III. Results of the Study | SKP

They desire to experience peace in their community, to be able to freely dialogue with leaders and other groups, and they hope that their community members will not sell their votes during elections. They long to exercise their political rights with dignity and principles intact. Part of their longing is to also be trusted with leadership responsibilities in the community level.

Economic Rights

Economic rights mean enjoying a comfortable life, with all their basic needs met. For the respondents, it also means being able to do what men are allowed to do, such as being part of the military, or working as sea-women. Enjoying their economic rights mean being able to continue farming or doing other things to earn a living. It means being able to have support, to live peacefully while being law-abiding citizens. Education is also part of their economic rights, because they believe that education can bring them economic progress. Having proper roads in their communities is also an economic right.

They long to experience a better life for everyone in the community. They want to learn more on how their economy can improve, how they can improve their livelihood project through having a space in the public market, and expanding their market so they could sell all their products.



III. Results of the Study | SKP

Socio-Cultural Rights

The respondents define their ability to showcase their history and culture, as part of their socio-cultural rights. It also includes being able to engage with various institutions and agencies, to have access to education, healthcare, livelihood, and for their culture and traditions to be respected, and for their ancestral land title to be granted to them.

They would need to have more access to different agencies so they can communicate to them whatever assistance they would need. They need to have the confidence and pride in their own culture, traditions, and even their attire. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) needs to be continuously taught especially to the younger generations.

To be able to fully enjoy their cultural rights, they have to be united and work together towards their common goals. Outside organizations should be able to treat them with respect and fairness, especially when it comes to their cultures and traditions.

Violations Against Women

The violations against women that occur in their area are mostly committed by members of the community, or family members. There would be threats for physical harm, and sometimes these are also committed by outsiders or Tagalog. They are aware that they can rely on the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Local Government Unit, and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) if they need assistance or help. They can also rely on non-government institutions that they partner with, such as Sulong Peace, Unbound, and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP).

III. Results of the Study | SKP

Indigenous Women Leadership

For the respondents, a woman leader has to exemplify a good character, someone that the community can look up to and respect. She has to be able to lead the community towards the common goals that they set, easily foresee problems and prevent them when she can. A woman leader can handle difficult situations with her constituents, and has the capacity to resolve conflict or mediate. Her character exemplifies strength, kindness, understanding, faith, integrity.



She needs leadership trainings to enhance her capacity as a leader, and for her to learn more skills and strategies that she can use, such as listening, mediating, and decision-making. She also needs to have more confidence in herself so she could ably direct the organization and her constituents.

The SKP is a promising organization that the women can become members of. They are also allowed to take leadership responsibilities in the health center, schools, infrastructure projects, and the barangay leadership.

III. Results of the Study | SKP



Meaningful participation means encouraging all the women members in their community to participate in activities and projects that will be beneficial to them. It is also taking an active role in achieving their goals, helping others in need, raising awareness and educating others. They have to realize the need to work together in unity and pursue peace in their community. They should know when to seek help and lobby with those in authority, in order to put forward the interests of their organization. There should be dignity in her leadership and the capacity to always prioritize the interests of the organization before the interests of a few individuals.

Good governance is important to be able to make sure that the organization's goals are reached. Some respondents mentioned that as women, they have to learn how to fight for their rights and assert, that it is not fine to just keep quiet when they are being abused. They also stress the importance of unity in their community.

III. Results of the Study | SKP

Overcoming Challenging Times

The Kaliwa Dam construction is one of the external factors that shake their organization's stability and trust due to controversies surrounding it, and the tendency for other elders to be swayed into signing agreements that have not been properly processed by the community. Meanwhile, they also have internal struggles in the dynamic between elders and younger leaders, as well as previous issues that have not been faced and resolved within the organization.

The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected the lives of the people. The travel restrictions prevented them from going to other places. Because of this, most of them cannot find work which they usually find in other areas. They felt like their lives are controlled, their rights are restricted, and there are even a lot of deaths of people that they know, fortunately they are not very much affected by the disease because they are in a remote village. Meanwhile, during the pandemic, they observed that there has been less encounters or insurgencies. It has become relatively peaceful in their community. During this time, they felt that all they had to do was to obey the government protocols, adapt in their environment, learn to produce their own food consumption, and stay at home.

Relevant Laws

Among the laws presented to them, the Magna Carta of Women is the one that is known, understood, and used by most of the respondents. Very few are familiar with the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) and Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) is also well known and understood, and most of them are aware that they are exercising their benefits from this law. They are also familiar with the Local Government Code, although there is a need for more discussions so they could understand its concepts deeper, and so they could also understand how their organization could play a role as part of the Local Special Bodies.

III. Results of the Study | NKMGKK

F. Nagkakaisang Kababaihang Mangyan ng Gloria para sa Kapayapaan at Kaunlaran (NKMGKK)

Mindoro is home to 8 Mangyan tribes [9], and four of them (Bangon, Buhid, Tao-Buid, and Tadyawan) are to be found in the Municipality of Gloria, Oriental Mindoro. SPI-AECID Phase 2 Project has largely supported the group of women to be organized. In English, their name stands for 'United Mangyan Women of Gloria for Peace and Development'.

There were 8 women who responded to the survey. The ages range from 21 to 38 years old. Interestingly, two of them are from the Hanunuo tribe, three are from the Taobuid, and three are Tadyawan. During the course of the partnership with the organization, it has been established from the very beginning that there is some tension between the Tadyawan and Taobuid due to cultural differences and other factors. This became the motivation to continue the project with them to encourage relationship building and breaking barriers between the two tribes.

They describe their community as generally peaceful, except in some instances when there are inter-tribal conflicts. The conflicts often root from differing perspectives and the lack of unity among the tribes. They unanimously believe that unity will bring peace to their community.

Political Rights

The respondents believe that their right to vote is an expression of their political right. Along with this is their right to participate in political activities, and the chance to even run for a political position. They believe that truly experiencing their political rights will lead to the members of their community having unity towards their development. They long to have equal access to information that will lead them to choose political leaders that deserve the positions they vote for.

Their desire as indigenous women are for their political rights to be continually recognized and for them to be respected in all areas and at all times.

[9] Alangan, Bangon, Buhid, Hanunoo, Iraya, Ratagnon, Tadyawan, and Tao-Buid or Batangan as called by lowlanders

III. Results of the Study | NKMGKK

Economic Rights

Economic rights include the right to do livelihood so they could earn a living for their families. It also means the right to be equally employed as other non-indigenous people. There should be systems to ensure that there is no discrimination in terms of access to economic opportunities, as well as a system of justice if there are cases of violations against their rights.

The respondents expressed their desire to learn more skills, techniques, and opportunities that will lead them to have more income and chances for economic development. Their desire for economic development is not only for their individual or family needs, but collectively as a community. They want to grow in their capacity to do business and deal with other businesses so they can have a chance to expand and increase their income opportunities.



III. Results of the Study | NKMGKK



Socio-Cultural Rights

The respondents realized that indigenous people, particularly women, have specific rights. They acknowledge they have to abide by laws and perform their responsibilities so they could continuously enjoy their rights. It is important to them because their identity and culture defines their outlook and perspective towards development. The Indigenous Knowledge systems and practices must be continuously taught to the younger generation. Respect for elders is an important culture that needs to be passed on to the next-in-line.

They expressed the desire to improve the condition of the indigenous women in their communities. There is a great need for development in order to fully appreciate and experience their socio-cultural rights and identity.

They recognize that they need to fully understand laws that protect their rights so that they can fully enjoy them and they can also assert their rights when needed. They also have to be united in the goal of understanding and enjoying these rights. They feel that they can continue to enjoy their rights through the help of influential people and those in powerful positions. They have to obey laws and not commit actions that are not allowed by law. They express the need to seek help for their economic improvement. Understanding gender roles and how they play an important role is also mentioned as a way so they could fully enjoy their rights.

III. Results of the Study | NKMGKK

Violations Against Women

The usual forms of abuse against women in their communities are threats, which are usually committed by outsiders or Tagalog. In some cases, the threats are done by policemen, CAFGU, or members of the family.

The institutions they can rely on are the police, local government unit, and some non-government organizations that have relevant projects in their area.

Indigenous Women Leadership

An indigenous woman leader is courageous, and has the capacity to fight for her constituents, and to stand for what is right. She has a helpful attitude, and is exemplary in her good deeds. She delivers what she promises, and is very reliable and dependable. It is also important that she takes her leadership role seriously, and she can be seen actively performing her duties even without anyone having to pressure her. Most of all, she needs to be completely knowledgeable and has expertise and deep understanding of the Mangyan history, cultures, and traditions.

The respondents saw the need for an indigenous woman leader to be able to have the capacity to help the most vulnerable people. She needs to have her principles and integrity intact. At the same time, a certain level of intelligence is needed so she could make informed and well-thought decisions that will be best for her community. She needs to fully understand the context of her community, and to have opportunities for leadership training and development, in order to continue to enhance her skills and boost her confidence.

Women can already be part of their community's day care, schools, local government, and other functions that can be entrusted to them at the barangay level.

III. Results of the Study | NKMGKK

Meaningful participation means the unity of all Mangyan tribes towards the benefit of their community. This can be done by participating in initiatives and activities organized by the local government unit or other non-government organizations such as Sulong Peace. This also means cooperating with whoever their leader is, in order to make sure that their group's goals are achieved. This also means including and involving the younger generation so they can continue the good work that they are doing.

Peace for them means living a quiet life within their community, having unity and cooperation to ensure a good relationship with each other. Peace could also mean performing their roles and responsibilities as dutiful citizens of the country. They can coordinate with the local government unit and actively support the initiatives of their local leaders.



Good governance means having good leadership within the organization. Good leadership can inspire members of the community to contribute their best efforts too. A good leader needs to understand the context of the constituents, and makes decisions for the welfare of the constituents and the community as a whole.

Women can contribute to human rights work if they fully understand what it means and its implications to their day to day lives. If they do not fully understand their rights and the responsibilities that these rights entail, they cannot contribute to raising awareness about it.

III. Results of the Study | NKMGGK

Overcoming Challenging Times

The members of NKMGGK has a long journey ahead in terms of embracing their newly-learned leadership skills and empowerment as women leaders. They have to face a predominantly male culture that is uncomfortable with having women as leaders and initiators.

The Covid 19 pandemic in the last two years has contributed to the increase of prices of basic commodities. Many movements are restricted, which includes their chance to travel to another place to find income opportunities. This resulted to a harder time for most of them. Financial constraints have been worsened, and even if sometimes there are relief packs from the local government, they are not regularly distributed and sometimes could last for only a few days. Wearing of face mask is one of the big things that changed for them. The women are not used to wearing anything to cover their face, but now they have to wear it all the time, especially when going to public places or traveling through public transportation system.

They have a harder time to initiate activities for livelihood development because of so many limitations. The support of the local government unit to the Mangyans is consistent encouragement that as they journey towards leadership, economic sustainability and promotion of indigenous rights, they can rely on the support of the local government.

Relevant Laws

The respondents have little knowledge and understanding on the Magna Carta of Women, but they know that they are already using it. They have become familiar with it through the trainings they received from SPI, but acknowledge that these concepts have to be discussed deeper or reviewed to them in order for them to fully grasp the concepts. Few of them know, understand, and use the NAP-WPS and CARHRIHL. Most of them know, understand, and use IPRA, although they have very little confidence in expressing how much they know about it.

Very little know about the Local Government Code and its provisions, but they are very much interested to learn how they can use this law and claim their opportunity to become part of the Local Special Bodies.

IV. IPMR Perspective

Sulong Peace had a chance to solicit the responses of Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMR) from the municipal and barangay levels where the IWOs are from. We were able to ask them the same set of questions. There were 12 IPMR respondents who are mostly men, while some are women.

For the IPMR who are mostly men, they believe that women have the rights to participate in any activities or programs of the government. They have a right to vote, and to freely choose the candidate they want to vote. Women should also be given a chance to run for a political position, and to be respected in their leadership.

They have rights to benefit from economic programs, and to receive aid or assistance from government agencies. They need to be educated on women's rights, violence against women and children, and to be offered jobs. The challenge is that most of them lack confidence because they did not have education due to poverty, and some just choose to apply for jobs overseas so they can earn more for their families.

Women can contribute to the society's economy, so they have to exercise their economic rights. They can establish income generating activities, such as a sari-sari store, apply for loan assistance, or livelihood projects.

When it comes to socio-cultural rights, they have to be encouraged to wear their traditional attire, to make decisions and participate in decision-making for the community. They can become leaders in their organizations and raise their voices to be heard. Their culture has a big influence in their day-to-day lives, and they have to embrace it.

Women's rights should be encouraged, as well as equality with men. The Women's Welfare Act needs to be improved, with additional benefits for women. Permanent income is needed for them.

Women have rights to live and make a living within their ancestral land. Their voices need to be heard, they have to be empowered and participate in efforts to protect their family from Covid 19.

IV. IPMR Perspective

Women Leaders

Leaders have to be credible, capable, and practical. They need to exhibit patience, wisdom, self-confidence, loving character, integrity and leadership skills.

Women leaders can be enhanced and encouraged through trainings and seminars, capacity building, mentoring, continuous education, and linking with other networks.

Indigenous women can be part of leadership as policy makers, IPMR chaplain, VAWC desk personnel, Barangay Health Worker, DSWD personnel, participate in gender and equality trainings. Women should be organized and SEC registered so they can avail assistance from other organizations.

For the IPMR, meaningful participation means being able to productively contribute to community activities and in leadership roles. They have equal rights and duties as men, and they are given the same amount of respect being given to men. It is being able to educate their children up to college, and go to church on Sundays. Women can also become peace keepers.

Women can also show good governance, as there have already been several women in government positions in our country. They can get more education and trainings to learn more about good governance.

When it comes to human rights, women have a big contribution. They should become models of human rights, because humans come from women, like Virgin Mary where Jesus Christ came from, all of us came from the womb of women.

IV. IPMR Perspective

Overcoming Challenging Times

Aside from the battle of the indigenous people for self-governance and for their ancestral lands, the Covid 19 pandemic has worsened the situation of IP communities. Because of the travel restrictions, they are not able to find income opportunities, which increased their hunger. Some of them are not open to receiving Covid-19 vaccines due to a lot of misinformation and negative experiences in the past regarding vaccinations. The limited social amelioration by the government has caused conflict between neighbors. Some community members receive relief, but others do not. Although they are in far-flung locations and there are little to no cases of Covid-19, they were still impacted greatly in other areas of their daily lives.

A lot of indigenous cultures were challenged by the pandemic. The economic situation of their communities, and the lack of government support for medical resources widened the gap of their needs and access to resources.

V. Positive Developments Among the IW

During the course of the study, the researcher notes positive developments of the women, as observed by them. These are observations of the women from the four areas which were part of the First Phase Project of SPI-AECID.

NALKATI

They had trainings on women's rights under the Magna Carta of Women, Women, Peace and Security and Conflict Management and Peace-building. The members of NALKATI built their self-confidence as leaders to manage their organization and are already facilitating dialogues among warring parties in the community including conflicts between husband and wife. They are also actively involved in the promotion of human rights and peace in their community. The livelihood project which they learned to diversify from piggery to goat raising, farming and store led some of them to have the buying capacity to purchase farm fertilizers and carabaos. This also gave the women the capacity to share and donate small resources in the community in times of need. Some of them were also able to send their siblings and children to school. Since the original beneficiaries of the project were also earning sustainably, the organization decided that the recovery fund given to them will be for the livelihood project of its 27 new members which will be on rice retailing and other basic products.

PASAKK

The PASAKK women leaders shared their capacity-building to other members of PASAKK in different municipalities both to women and men which led to increased awareness on human rights and women's rights among community members. It resulted to the increase of women filing cases of abuse, and eventually the decrease of abuse cases happening in their community. This also led to several awards given to PASAKK Women from the LGU and Regional Social Work and Development. PASAKK Women are also accredited in the municipality and are part of all the locally mandated bodies which assures them spaces for participation. In spite of the effects of the pandemic and natural calamities in the agricultural livelihood of the women, some of them were able to purchase additional farm lands, inputs and fertilizers. Some of them were also able to buy 2 hectares of land after 2 years and used it to plant rice and banana. The new farm land each is earning 20,000 pesos of additional income per year.

The PASAKK women were also able to share the livelihood project to other women members of PASAKK in other municipalities. The value added training given to the PASAKK women also led them to branch out to other form of livelihood which is the food processing out of the agricultural products they produced.

V. Positive Developments Among the IW

KMMKM

The capacity-building trainings given to members of KMMKM led them to also build the capacity of the members of the community especially the husbands of their members and the youth on women's rights, conflict management and peace-building. This led them to get their husbands to be more supportive in their active role in KMMKM and they were also able to organize the youth in their communities. KMMKM was also able to do other outreach programs together with the youth like tree planting, clean up drive and feeding program in remote areas of the community. Their livelihood project gave them the capacity to have their own office and processing center including the purchase of equipment and fixtures (furniture, stove, gas, freezer, etc.) out of their income. The women members are earning 10,000 each in every 5 months from the piglets. The organization KMMKM was already able to donate 10 pigs to the community so that other community members are also encouraged to venture into livelihood.

GUPAD-LN

The capacity-building given to GUPAD LN gave them the self confidence to lead actions to fight for their rights including their right to peace in the ancestral domain side by side the men leaders in the midst of the issue on the Kaliwa Dam and the ongoing armed-conflict in their communities. Although their organization was plagued with mistrust, some of them continue to be active and unceasingly participated in the activities of the project. This has led them to have their general assembly and firmed up their commitment as an organization under the Katutubong Kababaihan para sa Kapayapaan, Kaunlaran at Lupaing Ninuno (KKNKK-LN). Although their livelihood was also affected by the pandemic, their coconut products still have sure buyers. This is the reason they opt to use the recovery fund given to them by SPI-AECID for the marketing of the other agricultural products and handicrafts of the women members by putting up its own trading store in the town proper.

VI.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The plight of the indigenous peoples in the country has been difficult to navigate due to various factors that affect their conditions. For instance, most of them still struggle in securing their ancestral domains. Some of them still experience discrimination in political leadership, as well as in day-to-day experiences, from their physical appearance, to their lack of material possessions. Thankfully, there are relevant legal frames that protect them and that ensure that they can fully enjoy their rights as citizens of this country. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) is their primary legal protector to seek their rights for their ancestral domain claims. The Local Government Code also protects their Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives to ensure that they are given equal political power as their counterparts in the municipal and barangay leadership. For the women, the Magna Carta of women ensures that they can participate proactively in their community development, and that they can pursue activities to improve their economic conditions, without fear of prejudice or limitations set by culture and traditions.

The Covid-19 pandemic was known to impact the whole world as it forced nations to close borders, and the workforce to explore work from home arrangements due to travel restrictions. According to World Health Organization (WHO), “tens of millions of people are in danger of falling into extreme poverty” because of the pandemic^[10]. For the 6 Indigenous Women Organizations that Sulong Peace is working with, the impact was felt in a deeper level. Technically, most indigenous people are located in far-flung communities where there are little to no cases of Covid-19 recorded. But their lives were affected as much as everyone else in the world. Perhaps even worse, as it affected their opportunities for economic sustenance and for their cultural expressions to be passed on.

Development in the urban areas is priority of the government, but there needs to be a balance in having fair processes when it comes to the impact of development projects to the indigenous communities - to their ancestral domain, to their indigenous political dynamics, as well as the relationships within their tribe. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) has a big role in ensuring that processes are done in favor of the IPs, and not in favor of multi-national corporations that have big interests in their ancestral lands.

[10] Joint Statement of ILO, FAO, IFAD, and WHO. 13 October 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people's-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems>

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendations for the IWO

SPI's partnership with these IWOs proved to be helpful in that the women understood their rights, and they feel empowered to be more confident about themselves and to have a positive view about their capacity and ability to become leaders in their own communities. Some of the partners are already enjoying the leadership roles being entrusted to them, such as the women from KMMKM, PASAKK, and NALKATI. But others still need more trainings, mentorship and coaching to develop their confidence and their ability to express their innermost potentials to become leaders and bearers of their culture and identity.

Their exposure to legal frames that protect them such as IPRA, CARHRIHL, MCW, and NAP-WPS were very relevant, but still need much attention, as the tendency is that only those who attend the trainings are the ones who become familiar with these frameworks. There is a need to encourage re-echoing the training results to other members of the communities and even their family members, in order to make sure that the learnings are passed on as widely as possible. This is especially true for the two new areas engaged, which are SKP and NKMGGK. There is a need to continuously educate their community members and the women leaders to build their confidence and trust in their own abilities and sense of identity.

Some have expressed the tendency for indigenous communities to become victims of political tactics such as vote-buying during election period, which for a short time benefit them with the amounts they receive from politicians. But there seems to be a growing need to continue to educate the communities about the power of their vote, and the power to select the rightful leaders through the election process.

The respondents described the values that must be possessed by women leaders, but there also seems to be a need to deepen their understanding of what values must be highlighted and promoted in our society in order to have a better life.

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

For some organizations, most of their members received little to no education, and there is a great need to inform them of their capacity to lead and to be confident in their own identities.

Strikingly, one organization, Gupad-LN from Quezon, expressed the fear that their cultures and traditions will slowly be erased because of the Covid-19 pandemic. They value their “pakikipaan” and “surot-surotan” which are their ways to continue their harmonious relationship with each other, and the sharing of resources so that those who have more can share with those who have none. The very limited chance given to them to continue connecting with one another, seemed to have had a great impact in their relationships within the organization, as well as their capacity to pass on their tradition to the next generation. This created a sense of fear and de-motivation to continue to dream for a better life for their community. This is in addition to the community trauma that they experienced in 2019[11], when some of them were recruited and brought to an unknown location, where they felt forced to identify themselves as rebel returnees, while they were presented to the media with their faces covered. They completely had no idea why they were there, and there are even no evidences of them being members of the rebel group. Their organization’s president at the time was the one who recruited them, but they had no idea that they were only being manipulated. This trauma has created distrust, fear, and instability within their organization. This is also coupled with their community being affected by the Kaliwa Dam project[12] which started in 2018. It created a division among the elders of their tribe where some elders gave permission to the project, while others resisted the project in order to protect their ancestral domain. This scenario has even created pressure for a division within their organization due to differing sides. The organization has gone through so many internal and external challenges, aside from the fact that their economic recovery from the pandemic proved to be almost impossible because of the travel restrictions, and the requirements for vaccination, which of most of them already resist due to negative experiences in the past. This resulted to their livelihood project suffering the consequences and their organization being in a very unstable condition. The bright side is that some of the members chose to remain and embrace their organization, albeit with a new name and identity, to let go of the past obstacles that hindered them from pursuing their goals.

[11] MAR program documentation data

[12] Retrieved from <https://mwss.gov.ph/projects/new-centennial-water-source-kaliwa-dam-project/>

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

As for the three other IWOs which were previously engaged by SPI – NALKATI, KMMKM, and PASAKK – they are on the way to becoming more and more resilient through the difficult challenges they had to face politically and socio-culturally. The remaining challenge which is hard to overcome is their economic recovery as they slowly revive their livelihood project which faced tremendous amounts of difficulties. Continuous engagements and partnerships with other institutions such as government agencies and the local government unit is one of their strengths as they tend to receive various forms of support and encouragement.

For the two new areas – SKP and NKMGKK – they are relatively young as an organization, with distinct forms of external influence. The NKMGKK tends to be influenced by religious leaders in their community, while the SKP is still largely influenced by their tribal elders. They need to have continuous coaching and mentoring with regards to how they can navigate their new roles and responsibilities in their livelihood project, while keeping the harmony in their relationship within the organization, and with external influences.

SPI has done continuous coaching and mentoring where possible, but for some occasions, the limited connectivity due to their location is a big factor that inhibits the communication.

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendations for SPI

SPI's work in educating Indigenous women about their rights and encouraging them to initiate development projects, is very crucial for those who are directly benefitting from it. Because development projects are most of the time in the form of livelihood, which involves a substantial amount of money, it is important for SPI to secure internal controls that would prohibit the loss of values or the degradation of the organizational values when they are faced with the challenge of financial management. Aside from the mentioned relevant legal frames which are very crucial in the peace and human rights advocacy work, it will also be valuable to educate the IWOs about related legal frameworks that they can use in their respective livelihood projects.

Linking the IWOs with their local government unit to become part of the Local Special Bodies, is a great step in securing support in the local level. It will also be valuable if the IWOs are linked with local agencies or organizations that have expertise in business management or marketing. More valuably, if they can be linked with actual markets where they can directly download their products will be most beneficial.

Generally, the trainings and educational discussions provided by SPI has raised awareness (or informed for the first time) the women about relevant laws affecting them. It should be noted, however, that there remains a significant portion of their community who have not participated in trainings and there is a need to re-echo the trainings continuously, to make sure that the information they received will be passed on throughout the whole community.

