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Towards Indigenous Women's Meaningful Participation: Their Voices, Their Spaces

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TOWARDS INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION: THEIR VOICES, THEIR SPACES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Philippines constitute between 14 to 17 million of the country's total population. Despite the guarantee provided by the 1997 Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) or Republic Act (RA) 8371, IPs have remained marginalized and vulnerable to violence in their own lands.

This situation persisted because most of the IP lands are conflict-affected areas. In fact, decades old-communist insurgency all over the country, as well as secessionist struggles in Mindanao have been mostly fought on IP lands. Additionally, the militarization of vast areas —whether in connection with the protection of State or private-led mining and logging interests or with counter-insurgency initiatives— worsened the plight of the IPs. According to Tebtebba:

> The presence of military personnel and investment defense forces in mining areas has limited Indigenous people's freedom to work in their lands and caused Indigenous children to drop out of school. Indigenous human rights defenders are being harassed and killed–there have been 76 documented cases of killings of Indigenous human rights defenders from 2010 to 2016[1].

In the case of *lumad* in Mindanao, most state-run mining and logging activities as well as huge corporate plantations are in their ancestral domain. *Lumad* resistance to these extractive industries was somehow seen not as

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[1] http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/383-situation-of-indigenous-peoples-in-the-philippines-submission-to-the-59th-session-of-cescr

advancing their human rights but as justification to join militant or insurgent groups. In fact, to counter such tendencies, there have been efforts to push them to arm themselves so that they could fight the communist rebels themselves[2]. In other words, IPs are pitted against each other.

> Militarization also leads to family and community disintegration. In the Philippines where it is a major issue for Indigenous women, part of the government's militarization strategy is to recruit paramilitary or private army/security groups from local residents and Indigenous peoples as a form of employment. This is possible through the government's counter-insurgency program under the National Internal Security Plan Application on the Indigenous Peoples Sector (NISP-IP), which arms *lumad* civilians for combat and military operations seen as targeting their fellow Indigenous peoples. (Tebtebba Foundation, 2013, p. 17)

As in the past, continuous militarization in IP lands led to perpetuating the culture of displacement. It is within the backdrop of conflict, violence, and displacement that one should ask about Indigenous women (IW)[3]. Where are they? What are their narratives?

More often than not, they are not seen, and their stories are not heard. And even when they are seen and heard, the predominant narrative is that of vulnerability and victimization.

Specific to guaranteeing and advancing the rights of IW, very few legal instruments mention them explicitly. For example, both the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) did not implicitly mention IW. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), on the other hand, had nothing specific on IW except for a mention in CEDAW General Recommendations (GRs) 24 (health) and 27 (old women). In other words, these instruments —international legal frames and global standards— merely subsumed 'Indigenous women' under 'Indigenous peoples' (for UNDRIP) and 'women' (for CEDAW). But more problematic is the fact that these instruments somehow undermine

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2   The term used by an interview respondent pertaining to this initiative was 'armed development.' Researcher's Field Notes, Kilometer 9.5, Barangay Simumaw, Lianga, Surigao del Sur. March 2012.

3   The use of IW for 'indigenous women' and not 'IP women' or 'indigenous peoples women' is purposive in a way that it seeks to correct the acronym, literally, and rectify the IW being subsumed under a bigger category, symbolically.

the unique situation of IW and limit the very conception of their collective under vulnerable groups[4].

In December 2014, a handful of IW's groups from Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Nepal drafted "Recommendations to the CEDAW Committee to Guarantee the Respect, Enjoyment and Implementation of the Individual and Collective Rights of Indigenous Women" (CEDAW Committee, 2014). As of this writing, it is unclear where this initiative went.

Unfortunately, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) in the Philippines suffers the same conceptual limitation embedded in UNDRIP and CEDAW. The four (4) bundle of rights —namely, rights to the ancestral domain, right to self-governance and empowerment, social justice and human rights, and cultural integrity— did not nuance the implications considering IW's identity. In as far as the discourse of IPRA is concerned, there is no such thing as 'Indigenous women,' only 'Indigenous peoples.' To a considerable extent, this is because IPs themselves do not really distinguish based on gender— theirs are lives as collectives in a communal setting[5].

In contrast, two (2) national instruments have implicit references to IW—the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) and the three (3) generations of the Philippine National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP WPS). The MCW, did not define IW but had implicit references in Chapter IV, Sec 9(b); Chapter V, Sec 20(b)(3), (b)(11), and (b)(14), Sec 28, Sec 29(e), Sec 32(c) and (e). In the case of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the nearest reference is that of 'women' and 'ethnic minorities' but not IW (Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, n. d.).

In this regard, this study attempts to unravel IW's own construction of their conflict context, their understanding of political, economic, socio-cultural rights and the relevant laws, their vulnerabilities and agency, and their views on meaningful participation as applied to peace, governance, and human rights. To a significant extent, the purpose was to surface how they defined these themselves in their respective spaces. In doing so, the research intended to:

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4   See, for example, the articulations by Yakin Ertürk in the 2007 Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences. Mission to Sweden and Cathrine Iorns Catherine's "The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" in Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law.

5   According to a source at the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), gender is not an issue among IPs although indigenous women and indigenous men have their roles to play in their communities. Researcher's Field Notes. Strategic Planning on the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP WPS). 2014.

- Understand the varying contexts of Indigenous women;
- Document views connection with their lived experiences in the political, economic, and socio-cultural facets of their lives;
- Identify contributing factors to their vulnerabilities as well as enablers to their agency; and
- Craft recommendations for advancing the rights of IW as they relate to the implementation of IPRA, CARHRIHL, MCW, and NAP WPS.

2.   RESEARCH METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The study dove-tailed with Sulong CARHRIHL Network's (SCN) Leadership Program on Human Rights, Peacebuilding, and Governance participated in by Indigenous women and men from partner organisations such as *Kamalitanan Te Matigsalog, Manobo Kulamanen Ne Migsabeka* (KMMKM) from Kitatao, Bukidnon, PASAKK Women's Committee from Bunawan, Agusan del Sur, NALKATI from Arakan Valley, North Cotabato, and Grupo ng *Kababaihang Umuugnay sa Pamayanan ng mga Agta/Dumagat na nagtatanggol sa Lupaing Ninuno* (GUPAD-LN) from General Nakar, Quezon.

A survey was then conducted on IW who participated in the Leadership Program. The survey questionnaire intended to document IW's conflict context, political/economic/socio-cultural rights, vulnerability and victimisation, and agency from their own perspectives (refer to Annex 1 for survey instrument).

After analysing the survey results, several focused group discussions (FGD) were conducted with IW, who served as respondents to the survey questionnaire. The FGD was meant to clarify/validate data results from the survey and listen more deeply to the narratives and insights of the respondents.

A final stage of data triangulation was conducted where the indicative findings and analysis of the research were shared with several respondents for validation purposes.

Methodologically, word clustering was employed and juxtaposed with the respective contexts. In this light, it must be reiterated that this study aims to unravel how IW themselves view certain concepts or what meaning they attach to issues and situations. These insights are highly contextual and specific only to the respondents themselves—they are not meant to generalise realties nor identities. In this regard, the process of research also acknowledged the respondents' agency as co-creators of knowledge.

From a constructivist perspective, the IW have spaces they move in and within which they perform not only in accordance with their gender but also based on certain knowledge and competencies they developed. This is their own agency—an act that advances their own understanding of who

they should be as IW in their respective communities. From this process, we infer into their 'meaningful participation' meaning-creation.

3.   RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. Nagkaihusang Lumadnong Kababayen-an sa Tinanan (NALKATI)

The Nagkaihusang Lumadnong Kababayen-an sa Tinanan (NALKATI) was established in October 2016 and now has 72 IW members from Sitio Tinana, Katindo of Brgy. Malibatuan and Sitio Valencia of Brgy. Sto. Nino of Arakan municipality, North Cotabato.

The organisation has the following objectives[6]:

- To unite IP women in uplifting the living condition and life of the Indigenous women's families in Arakan, Cotabato, according to the culturally and gender-sensitive development plans;
- Enhance Indigenous women's leadership to defend their interests, provide mutual aid among members, and protection;
- Design and undertake activities for the welfare of the members that would include livelihood income-generating activities, health services, and other projects not contrary to laws;
- Coordinate and collaborate with the Barangay, Municipal and Provincial Government Units, and other proper government agencies and non-government organisations for certain lawful undertakings; and
- Establish a network to provide technical and financial support in their engagement for economic or entrepreneurial ventures to benefit the members and the association.

NALKATI also has five (5) programs, namely, cultural peace promotion, environment/agriculture, economic enterprise/livelihood, institutional development, and networking.

Conflict Context

Many respondents believe that there is prevailing peace in their respective communities, while the rest believe peace exists but not as a prevalent situation. Of those who believe in the situation of prevalent peace, over half think this was primarily because of three factors: the absence of armed

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6   Lifted from the organisational profile provided by Sulong CARHRIHL Network, Partnership and Networks (PAN).

groups in their areas, the condition of having a prosperous livelihood, and the existence of a 'peace pact' as contributing to the situation of peace.

On the one hand, for the respondents, conflict is understood as a social/relational matter, and it develops when there is a lack or absence of communication, lack of understanding, distrust, disagreements, and differences in beliefs and principles. On the other hand, others also think that conflict is connected to the absence of certain things in life, such as livelihood. As connected to vertical armed conflict —that is, a type of conflict between state forces and armed insurgents— the respondents noted that the presence of armed groups in neighboring communities affects their sense of security. Thus, despite the general view on prevalent peace in their communities, they know that armed conflict in other areas may also spill over to theirs.

Almost half of the respondents perceive that conflict actors usually involve soldiers/police/CAFGU and rebels, while about 20 % said IPs had been involved in a tribe-to-tribe conflict.

To address or mitigate conflict situations, 34 % believe in using a dialogic approach, the need to respect the community as a 'peace zone'; some added the reality of joining armed groups to solve the conflict.

Rights and Laws

Based on the responses, the following concepts were linked to political rights. The most prominent of which was political participation as it related to the opportunity to establish or join organisations, be included, and contribute to governance and nation-building. The right to peace was also identified as a political right, and for the respondents, it meant living quietly, with no chaos around, a peaceful community, and quiet surroundings[7].

Regarding economic rights, the right to work was the predominantly recurring concept and, relatedly, the quality of life, income, and land. The statements on these were quite aspirational—not just being sufficient but also appropriate and fair[8]. For socio-cultural rights, Indigenous culture, education, and religion were at the forefront. The right to culture as expressed in light of *respetuhin ang kultura*, ('respect of culture'), *pagtanggap sa tribu at kultura*, ('accepting the tribe and their culture'), *malayang gamitin ang kultura*, ('use or practice culture'), including *katutubong pamamahala* ('Indigenous governance'). Education was framed along the lines of access, while religion was linked to the right to practice it[9].

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7   Survey data (various respondents). Arakan-NALKATI.
8   Ibid.
9   Ibid.

There were several responses regarding political and economic rights that IW aspire to experience more concretely. Quite notably, access to government services figured prominently undesired political and economic rights. Additionally, recurring messages in both had to do with the idea of receiving support, assistance, protection, and care from the government. In light of economic rights, the prominent concept was income, specifically pertaining to adequate compensation for work rendered[10].

But when it came to articulating their desired socio-economic rights, the most recurrent idea —similar to the expression of socio-cultural rights— was that of the right to practice and respect for culture.

For the respondents, to ensure that these political, economic, and socio-cultural rights are guaranteed for and experienced by IWs, the respondents enumerated the following enabling factors: (1) awareness-raising on rights; (2) building capacities through additional training; (3) unity among IW; (4) standing by IW's principled beliefs; and (5) women helping other women[11].

Indigenous Women's Agency: NALKATI

Respondents believe that the paramount leadership traits of IW are 'care capital' and distinct interpersonal relationship. 'Care capital' is manifested in showing love and compassion to others, being kind, helpful, and thoughtful. In the same vein, IW knows how to relate with many distinct kinds of people and, more importantly, relates with others[12]. Leadership traits may be harnessed to strengthen women's potential for leadership. According to the respondents, knowledge, and capacity building are still integral enablers of women's leadership. And they believe that women can be part of local government, tribal, and non-government leadership.

In this regard, for the respondents, meaningful participation meant involvement and inclusion in various structures and processes[13]. Meaningful participation in attaining peace pertains to communication, building relations, forging unity, and helping each other; achieving good governance points to the sense of duty, ensuring inclusion, practicing consultative politics, and experiencing human rights. The key is helping others.

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10   Ibid.
11   Ibid.
12   Survey data (various respondents). NALKATI Arakan.
13   Lifted from the organisational profile provided by Sulong CARHRIHL Network, Partnership and Networks (PAN).

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

The PASAKK Women's Committee was established in 1998 and currently has 656 IW membership from the Municipality of Bunawan (Brgy. San Marcos, Bunawan Brooks, Brgy. Consuelo, Brgy. San Teodoro, Brgy. Poblacion, and Brgy. Mambalili) and the Municipality of Loreto (Brgy. Violanta), Agusan del Sur.

The key goal of the organisation is "to support Indigenous women because they deserve to be treated equally." This shall be done through awareness-raising, empowerment, and capacitation, assisting them in sustaining their income sources. Programs and initiatives of PASAKK consist of the following[14]:

- Peace Building Program/Awareness Raising on Human Rights, Women's and Childrens' Rights, Local & International Laws, especially protection laws.
- Culture of Peace: organizing the organization's work not only for women but all their beneficiaries including the youth, farmers, and fisherfolks.
- Temporary Shelter for Women & Children (VAWC cases): While the VAWC cases of their clients are being processed, they offer temporary shelter for victims that lasts for a week to 10 days.
- Training on IGPs on Sustainability, Livelihood Projects (Nipa Hut, Bulad making), Consumer Store, Financial Management & Bookkeeping.
- Sustainable Agriculture Program: relevant for IP women since many works in the fields. This program consists of learning organic farming to reinstate the sustainability of the land and the use of traditional seeds.
- Linking with other agencies and referral systems: they get the opportunity to sit and participate in local government bodies (e.g., LGU councils, GAD, etc.) to maximize any assistance or benefits they can get for the women.
- Literacy program- IP education in 2 schools, one in Dinagat and 1 in Batohon.
- DRR/Health- community facilitators as BHW in their respective barangay.

Conflict Context

An interesting narrative was the alleged recruitment by armed groups from other areas. For example, it was claimed that ISIS/Maute came to various communities and recruited to be 'warriors' for their cause.

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14   Lifted from the organisational profile provided by Sulong CARHRIHL Network, Partnership and Networks (PAN).

Despite these narratives, 58 % of the survey respondents still believe there is prevailing peace in their communities. Conflicts still occur, but 31 % of respondents believe this is mostly tribal, while 15 % said it was because of the presence of soldiers/police and communist insurgents.

However, 42 % said that the nature of conflict in their community has to do with the actions and personal interests of politicians and tribal leaders, mostly as they relate to ancestral domain issues. Survey data validates this observation with more respondents saying that conflict issues are tied to the land. And for this reason, the respondents believe that there is a necessity to implement law and order measures to ensure peace in the community.

Rights and Laws

According to the respondents, political rights are about leadership and participation, while economic rights revolve around income, livelihood, and work. On the other hand, socio-cultural rights are mainly about the right to practice culture and tradition.

In terms of political rights that they aspire to experience, most of the responses pointed to that of leadership—that of having the opportunity to become a tribal leader as well as the chance to serve as a leader in local government (such as an IPMR, barangay captain, municipal counsellor) and be part of law enforcement (i.e., police). Also, be a leader of civil society groups, especially those working for peace. Their aspirations reflected what they wanted to happen.

As regards economic rights, the recurring aspiration was that of work—to experience having one themselves: I want to work even if the salary is small; work for a high or fair salary; experience work with an appropriate salary[15].

Furthermore, work was tied to the aspiration to have access to and control of the land to guarantee their own economic security: experience farming to avoid poverty; experience agricultural work for the Indigenous people to get out of poverty[16].

As for socio-cultural rights, the predominant idea was women's leadership in socio-cultural spaces such as tribal gatherings, rituals, and churches (see Picture 6). Similar to the leadership aspiration in the political context, the respondents wanted the opportunity to lead in organising groups, conversations, religious and traditional practices. Accordingly, aspiring to lead in sharing and preserving Indigenous songs, dance, and other practices were linked to the use of culture to advocate for their rights.

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15   Survey data (various respondents). Bunawan-PASAKK.
16   Ibid.

For IW to secure their political, economic, and socio-cultural rights, the respondents believe that they should actively and genuinely participate in organisations, conversations, and capability development activities that are available for them. These spaces and opportunities are believed to contribute not only to raising their awareness but also to enhance their capacities and skills on various fronts: relate, participate, intervene in all activities to articulate the rights of Indigenous peoples so that there will be no discrimination)[17].

In terms of relevant laws, data results show that there is more knowledge, understanding, and referring about IPRA than others. For example, regarding MCW, 52 % said they understand the law, but only 26 % replied that they refer to it when talking about IW rights. The NAP WPS was also lesser known, understood and referred to (about 16 %). The CARHRIHL fared better, with 63 % saying they know about it, but only 47 % understand and 42 % referring to it.

IPRA may enjoy a higher percentage, but a note of concern is in order based on the following data: 73 %, know; 52 %, understand; 78 %, refer to/use. Could this mean that IPRA is used/referred to despite not fully being understood? Should this be the case, it is data to support the need to have IW understand IPRA more substantively.

Indigenous Women's Agency: PASAKK

In articulating what they thought were distinctive leadership traits of women, the respondents listed quite a number, and these are: brave, respectful, principled, knowledgeable, a role model, humble, responsible, engaging, God-fearing, kind, participative, thoughtful, narrator, loving, open-minded, patient, and intelligent. Of these perceived traits, more who believed that bravery to stand for others, respect others, have strong principles, and be knowledgeable of things are markers of women leaders.

However, even as women are perceived as capable of being leaders, the respondents believe that they should be further enabled to do so. In this regard, they believed that progressive and sustained capacity development programmes should be available for women to deepen their knowledge and sharpen their skills. Integral to this is always women's participation in various spaces:

For the respondents, the idea of meaningful participation pertains not only to attending training but contributing to them so that they can improve themselves and eventually do the same for others. It also means being part of substantive processes in the community that impact people's lives of people and advocating for things that would be for the benefit of many.

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17   Survey data (Bu-05). Bunawan-PASAKK.

Additionally, meaningful participation is an act that highlights one's leadership in tribal and local governance matters.

Additionally, meaningful participation in peace for them meant awareness of lived realities of women in conflict contexts, seeking the formulation of policies and their implementation, and creating spaces where they can continue to articulate for peace (e.g., consultation, meetings, etc.).

For these women, meaningful participation in governance entails unity, good interpersonal relations, and ensuring the rule of law. In the same vein, they also believe that meaningful participation in advancing human rights pertains to working for awareness, equality, and unity.

3.3. Kamalitanan Te Matigsalog, Manobo Kulamanen Ne Migsabeka (Unified Women of Matisalog, Manobo and Kulamanen Tribes)

The *Kamalitanan Te Matigsalog, Manobo Kulamanen Ne Migsabeka* (KMMKM) was established in 2015. Currently, it has 790 members from eight (8) barangays of Kitaotao, Bukidnon, namely, Barangays Tawas, Sinuda, Sagundanon, Kipilas, Gutalib, Lorega, West Dalurong.

KMMKM aims to advance IW's participation in socio-economic programs, cultural activities, peace talks, gender, and sustainable livelihood programme. They also seek to have women represented in all possible agencies so that they can preserve and exercise their rights. Furthermore, they believe that higher education is key to upgrading the lives of IW[18].

Activities they have engaged in were livelihood programs, educational assistance programmes, and training and seminar.

Conflict Context

Kitaotao is an active conflict area because of communist insurgency on the one hand, and tribal wars ('*pangayaw*'), on the other. Most recently, armed confrontations between the NPA and the AFP in Sitio Ngaran, Kipilas, Kitaotao "affected 330 families or 1650"[19].

According to the research respondents during the FGD, KMMKM was established because of conflict prevalence in the area.

Sixty-eight percent (68 %) of the respondents claimed that peace has not really been prevalent in their communities. Of this number, 46 % said that this was because of the presence of armed groups. Additionally, according to 36 % of the respondents, armed confrontations were between soldiers/

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18   Lifted from the organisational profile provided by Sulong CARHRIHL Network, Partnership and Networks (PAN).

19   19 Ibid.

police vs. communist rebels, CAFGU vs. communist rebels, and communist rebels vs. tribes. Interestingly, 31 % also said armed violence occurs in their areas because of tribe-to-tribe conflict. Considering the latter, the respondents believe it is largely because of a lack of understanding between those involved. Accordingly, 54 % believe that dialogue is a strategy for peace.

Rights and Laws

In listing down what they perceived as political rights, the recurrent response was that of leadership pertaining to being allowed to lead in the community, local government, or a woman's organisation: the political right of Indigenous women is the right to run to become a leader)[20]. Relatedly, the right to choose and the right to suffrage were other rights that were repeatedly mentioned. As leaders, IW bridges people and navigates/facilitates processes.

As regards economic rights, the respondents gravitated towards the term participation as it connected with the desire to contribute to economic growth for the family and community: it is the right of Indigenous women to be part of and intervene in financial issues for them to know what needs to be done for the improvement of the economy[21]. Joining seminars and training are likewise seen as integral to understanding economics. Other terms were evenly distributed in the list of responses.

Similar to their understanding of economic rights, socio-political rights were also predominantly seen as a right to participate as it relates to practices, beliefs, and culture and how they can contribute to Indigenous traditions, its sharing and preservation: right of women to articulate about culture; right to sustain traditions; and right to fight for culture). Inclusion and engagement were thus related ideas in the discussion of socio-cultural rights[22].

The responses were evenly distributed in terms of political, economic, and socio-cultural rights they aspire to experience. The respondents mentioned leadership, equality, participation, inclusion, recognition, and respect for political rights. As regards economic rights, they listed participation, inclusion, freedom, equality, respect, livelihood, access to government services, and helping others. And for desired socio-cultural rights, the responses were equality, access to government services, freedom of expression, contribution, right to assembly, awareness, and knowledge.

As with the other IW organisations, the law that is most known (86 %), understood (77 %), and used/referred to is IPRA. It is followed by the CARHRIHL, with 86 % claiming they know about it, 77 % understanding it,

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20   Survey data (KT-12). Kitaotao-KMMKM.
21   Survey data (KT-11). Kitaotao-KMMKM.
22   Survey data (various responses). Kitaotao-KMMKM.

and 72 % using/referring to it. Interestingly, compared to respondents from other groups, the KMMKM respondents have a higher percentage of knowing about NAP WPS (36 %), understanding it (36 %), and using/referring to it. The least known (22 %), understood (5 %), and used/referred to is the MCW (13 %). The latter data is quite concerning for the simple reason that the MCW is supposed to be the Filipino women's bill of rights.

Indigenous Women's Agency: KMMKM

Many leadership traits were listed by the respondents. However, the most recurrent one pertained to being principled: "*may paninindigan*" or "*may matatag na prinsipyo*" were commonly mentioned[23]. Respect for others was also seen as a distinctive leadership trait of IW, an indicator on how women leaders use the approach of building interpersonal relations with others. Furthermore, women leaders were also said to be creative thinkers that enhance their problem-solving skills:

> "*malikhain na kaisipan at malawak na pag-iisip sa mga paraan upang malutas ang ano mang problema at mga paraan upang magkaroon ng maganda at matiwasay na pamumuhay;*" "*ang pagiging malikhain at mapasaliksik na nagtataglay ng maandag pamumuno*" (creative and open mind on ways in order to solve whatever kind of problems and processes in order to have a good life; being creative and curious that bears good leadership)[24].

Other traits mentioned were: ability, respect for others, knowledge, determination, love for service, activity, capacitated, diligence, calmness, humility, and firmness.

For the respondents, progressive capacity development for women is a key enabler for women to develop themselves and become leaders. Various opportunities to unravel their capacities must be maximised since these are not usually provided to women. In fact, when identifying the existing structures and mechanisms that IW can join, most respondents pointed to what may be understood as the "politics of inclusion."

> *Sa loob ng tribo, ang mga kababaehan ay na-*recognize *na ng Matigsalug tribe. Ang babae ay pwedeng mag-*stand in behalf *sa lalaki kung wala ito. Ito ay tawag nating* 'proxy leader'. *Kung namamatay*

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23   Survey data (various respondents). Kitaotao-KMMKM.
24   Ibid.

ang lalaki siya ang pumapalit sa mga gawain ng tribal leader *kung kaya niya. Kung ayaw naman, isasalin sa mga anak (lalaki o babae) matapos tingnan ang ugali ng bata* (The women are recognised in the Matigsalog tribe. Women can stand-in behalf of men when they are not present. This is what we call the 'proxy leader'. If the man dies, a woman can take over if she is capable. If she doesn't want to become one, then the leadership gets transferred to children (boy or girl) based on their attitude)[25].

*Sa Manobo at Kulamanen Manobo ganoon na na-*recognized *na rin. May mga IPMR na rin na mga babae sa ibat-ibang barangay ng Kitaotao. Ang iba ay kabahagi ng* tribal council. *Sa Tawas marami ang mga babae na sakop ng* tribal council. *Kaya ang tawag ay 'Bae', tribal leader ng Matigsalug na babae* (In the Manobo and Kulamanen Manobo, recognition is also there. There are women IPMR in different barangays. In Tawas, many women are part of the tribal council. That's why they call her 'Bae', recognised woman tribal leader)[26].

For these women, at the heart of meaningful participation is sharing knowledge and skills with others to be included in various spaces at different levels. It also means being active and engaged and always keeping in mind other women that need help and guidance. The message then is that of empowering other women through them.

When applied to the concepts of peace, good governance, and human rights, meaningful participation for the KMMKM women reflect their own lived narratives in the midst of conflict: that meaningful participation in peacebuilding meant IW taking it upon themselves to share and propagate the value of peace for the community through awareness-raising, involvement in setting up an agenda and processes, and standing unified to advance peace. That meaningful participation as related to good governance is linked to unity, the importance of inclusive Indigenous governance, and that meaningful participation as linked to human rights simply means basic respect.

3.4. Grupo ng Kababaihang Umuugnay sa Pamayanan ng mga Agta/ Dumagat na nagtatanggol sa Lupaing Ninuno (GUPAD-LN)

The *Grupo ng Kababaihang Umuugnay sa Pamayanan ng mga Agta/ Dumagat na nagtatanggol sa Lupaing Ninuno* (GUPAD-LN) (Group of Women Linking with the Agta/Dumagat Community in Defending the

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25   FGD. Kitaotao-KMMKM.
26   Ibid.

Ancestral Domain) was established in 2015. Currently, it has 150 members from the Municipality of General Nakar, Quezon Province, specifically, from Brgy. Magsikap (SO. Kagusisan), Sablang (SO. Malatunglan, Masla), Brgy Maligaya (SO Banbanan), Brgy Canuay (SO. Masanga), Brgy. Pagsangahan (SO. Baykuran, Yok-yok), Brgy. Lumutan (Makinnabo, Malibay).

GUPAD-LN's activities/initiatives consist of the following[27]:

- Capacity Building – consists of pieces of training on Gender construction, Gender/Cultural sensitivity, and gender equality, Violence Against Women (VAW), orientation on the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), seminars on Leadership, and Sustainable Agriculture. At present, leaders of the organization are still the ones who benefit from these capabilities.
- Linking – connecting with Local Government Units, other agencies, Non-Government Organizations – to maintain their engagement to access to available projects, especially livelihood projects. This is done to access pieces of training and income generation for the women.
- Organizing – continuous organizing work for IP women through disseminating information and deepening awareness of their rights.
- Livelihood – imparting knowledge on Sustainable agriculture, handicrafts, weaving, and spring development, in some communities. The problem with marketing persists.

Conflict Context

General Nakar Municipality was once a site of active armed confrontation between state forces and communist rebels. In fact, some respondents recalled the presence of soldiers in their community — a few even had family members who were victims of physical violence, while others were brought in in connection with suspected communist affiliation.

According to survey data, 54 % of the respondents believe that peace is not prevalent in their community, while 46 % believe the opposite. On the one hand, those who believe in the former explained that there are still many armed groups in the area, people's condition is still generally poor, and there is no peace pact between concerned parties. Relatedly, the fear is that of state forces and communist insurgents coming face-to-face & subsequently engaging in a firefight, with civilians being caught in between. But

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27   Lifted from the organisational profile provided by Sulong CARHRIHL Network, Partnership and Networks (PAN).

often, the mere presence of armed actors was sufficient to create insecurity among the people.

On the other hand, the latter claim that there are fewer armed groups in their area and unity in the community. But apart from the vertical conflict, there was also a claim that social conflict occurs in communities because of disunity, lack of understanding, and access to/control of lands.

Considering these forms of conflict, the respondent believes that relative peace can be secured if there is recognition that communities are 'peace zones' (50 %) and if parties involved are willing to dialogue (27 %).

Rights and Laws

From the respondents' perspective, political rights are about participation, or the right to participate in various activities, including community gatherings and consultations, discussions, decision-making, and capacity development programs. Participation in political spaces —whether in tribal or local government— is essential for IW to surface their concerns:

> *Ang karapatan ng mga kababaihan sa pampubliko at pampulitikang buhay ay labanan ang buhay na mapang-abuso, isulong ang karapatang pangkabuhayan sa gitna ng armaduhang labanan at krisis laban sa sekswal o* gender-based violence (The right of women in politics and political life is to fight abuse, advance the right to livelihood amidst armed conflict and fights against the crisis of sexual and gender-based violence)[28].

Participation then was intended to help others who have been affected and disadvantaged by prevailing conditions.

When it came to economic rights, respondents focused (once again) on participation and livelihood. This essentially meant that they recognised their potential to contribute to the development of their families and communities—they wanted to be part of decision-making and eventually be given the opportunity to lead. Other responses were about equality, right to work, right to health, and education; some further believed that part of sustaining any development effort in the community must be related to social justice and peace.

Participation was also the common response to the respondents' views about socio-cultural rights. In this light, the idea was more akin to women being 'cultural bearers,' active participants in the practice and dissemination

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28   Survey data (NK-18). General Nakar - GUPAD-LN.

of culture and tradition. Relatedly, they believe that women should have the right to transfer knowledge and skills to the next generation and have the space to share their culture with others to advocate for non-discrimination.

In the same vein, the theme of participation cuts across the respondents' ideas on the political, economic, and socio-cultural rights they aspire to experience. In the case of political rights, participation was linked to the right to be chosen as leaders or be voted into public office. Regarding economic rights, they connected it with their desire to be engaged in sustainable livelihood and have the chance for her and her family to experience a more dignified and comfortable life. For socio-cultural rights, the aspiration is to be cultural bearers recognised by their community and those outside of it.

To enable them to secure these desired rights, the respondents said they need to develop their capacities further, be united as women believing in the exact cause, be aware, broaden their knowledge, advocate for their concerns, and internalise what they have learned.

Regarding relevant laws, the respondents know (77 %), understand (59 %), and use/refer to IPRA (59 %) in comparison with others mentioned. For them, MCW comes close to IPRA, with 54 % claiming they know about it, 50 % understanding it, (but only) 27 % said that they used or referred to it. CARHRIHL comes in at third—36 % knowing about it, 32 % saying they understand it, and 31 % mentioned they used or referred to it. The NAP WPS is the least known (14 %), understood (14 %), and used/referred to (23 %).

Indigenous Women's Agency: GUPAD-LN

As with respondents from other IP groups, principled was the most recurrent trait identified with women's leadership. This trait was related to how women leaders value others: care and heart for others and heart in service of fellow Indigenous may be understood as something emanating from a leader who stands by her constituency.

For IW to be able to vie for the opportunity to lead, their knowledge and skills should be further enhanced through various context-based and progressive capacity development programs. There are many spaces in which they can be included and thus participate but are not limited to women's organisations, Indigenous governance, local government units, and dialogue opportunities.

Indigenous women's organisations —whether political, economic, or socio-cultural— should be established by IW themselves and aim to help the women and their communities. On the other hand, Indigenous governance should also evolve to open the space for women's inclusion in the Council of Elders and become traditional tribal leaders or tribal chiefs. At the local government level, holding positions at the barangay level may also be a possibility for women leaders to be part of.

For the respondents, IW having the opportunity to become leaders in one thing; having other IW be part of structures and processes of peace, governance, and human rights is another thing.

According to the respondents, IW's meaningful participation involves active and progressive engagement with people and institutions. However, whichever space and interaction this would be, the end goal should always be helping others. Thus, meaningful participation in peace points to the desire to internalise peace and to make their new normal; good governance also links with the kind of leadership for the people and the desire to contribute for the good of others; and in human rights, the imperative to advocate and communicate about rights that they understand and live by.

4. SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Meaning, to a large extent, is socially constructed. In this regard, whatever is seen, felt, and experienced undergoes a process within which the actors involved make sense of them. IPs have been understood as a vulnerable group within which IW are part. In such discursive configuration, IW are constructed as the most vulnerable of the vulnerable—vulnerabilities as a total of gender and ethnicity. Of course, this construction is external to the IW, an image representing outsiders' world views rather than of themselves.

However, as this study has shown, vulnerability is not the only aspect of IW's lives. They are actors in their own lived narratives, making sense of their contexts, thoughts, and actions. Without undermining the reality of victimisation of IW, there is the imperative to see them as how they see themselves.

5. CONFLICT: CONTEXT AND RESOLUTION

For the IW of NALKATI, conflict is a social/relational matter stirred toward aggression because of innate inequality—some fight for what they believe in while others defend against it. In the case of PASAKK, their understanding of conflict is tied to the political economy of mining, the institutionalisation of transactional land grabbing involving the monopolistic hold of a politician, propped up by the complicity of self-interested IPs. For both KMMKM and GUPAD-LN, conflict in their community is a reality brought about by armed groups. State forces (military/police/CAFGU), communist insurgents, and tribes are common denominators; PAGs, usually composed of IP themselves, is a unique feature of the conflict context of PASAKK. As

a conflict resolution strategy, dialogue is also commonly held by all four (4) groups of IW organisations.

6. RIGHTS: INSIGHTS AND ASPIRATIONS

It can be inferred from the responses that rights are inherent but must still be ensured and claimed for all groups. In perceiving political rights, all four IW groups associated them with the right to participate. NALKATI operationalised this by linking it to the right to peace, PASAKK and KMMK with the right to become leaders as well as the right to choose, and GUPAD-LN with engaging in various spaces.

There seems to be a sense of agency in how they explained political rights. When compared with political rights they aspire to experience, PAS-AKK, KMMKM, and GUPAD-LN IW were consistent in the way that they expressed their aspiration to experience opportunities to become leaders in tribal spaces, local government units, and civil society organisations. NALKATI IW diverged in this aspect as they identified access to government services and assistance as the most recurrent theme in political rights aspire to experience.

Regarding economic rights, both NALKATI and PASAKK IW related them to the right to work and income, with the former also equating them with quality of life and the right to land. PASAKK and GUPAD-LN IW also linked economic rights with livelihood. KMMK IW, for their part, believes that economic rights should be about the right to participate and contribute to the economy.

Interestingly, these are the same economic rights PASAKK, KMMKM, and GUPAD-LN aspire to experience, while NALKATI IW held on to access government services and assistance instead.

When it came to unravelling their thoughts on socio-cultural rights, all four groups commonly held the right to culture. KMMKM and GUPAD-LN further operationalised the right to culture in terms of IW performing 'culture bearer' roles and participating in preserving their customs and tradition. NALKATI, PASAKK, and GUPAD-LN IW pushed IW to be culture bearers as a socio-cultural right they aspire to experience, while KMMKM seeks access to government services and assistance.

In securing political, economic, and socio-cultural rights, all four IW groups expressed the imperative for capacity development—programmatic, progressive, and sustainable in a way that they would raise the IW's level of awareness and foster unity. NALKATI added that IW must also help other IW expand their capacities.

7.   LAWS

To a large extent, it is no surprise that IPRA is the law that all four IW groups know about, understand, and refer to. CARHRIHL comes second in terms of knowledge, understanding, and reference for NALKATI, PASAKK, and KMMKM; for GUPAD-LN, MCW comes in second. In fact, except for GUPAD-LN, MCW was rated either second lowest or lowest in terms of knowledge, understanding, and utility. For example, in the case of NALKATI, around half of the respondents claimed they know about MCW, but they do not really understand it and, accordingly, rarely refer to it. KMMKM data reveal that the least understood of the identified relevant laws was that of the MCW. Regarding the NAP WPS, it comes the lowest in terms of knowledge, understanding, and use of NALKATI, PASAKK, and GUPAD-LN; KMMKM was the only one that claimed they know about, understand, and refer to the NAP WPS better than the three other IW groups.

8.   INDIGENOUS WOMEN AS LEADERS

Women are said to lead differently than men, and thus, their propensity for transformative leadership is more likely for them. When asked about the distinctive leadership traits of IW, responses from NALKATI revolved around the notion of care capital and building interpersonal relations. However, such traits must also be combined with deepening knowledge and strengthening capacities, if only to advance IW's leadership further.

In the case of PASAKK IW, bravery, being principled, and being respectful for others are key traits of women leaders. Like NALKATI IW, the PASAKK IW believe that women should benefit from progressive and sustained capacity development programs that build on one another without being redundant but instead aim to be valuable and practical to build their leadership skills.

For the KMMKM IW, being principled and respectful of others are the key traits of women leaders as operationalised by the notion of being principled. Similar to NALKATI and PASAKK IW, they likewise believe that IW should be given a chance to participate in progressive capacity development programs. In the same vein, GUPAD-LN IW believes that being principled, caring, and standing by their constituency are distinct leadership traits of women: women leaders serving with heart was their defining line. For GUPAD-LN IW, such traits must also intersect with the deepening knowledge and skills.

To a considerable extent, the leadership opportunity is central to these IW, and they want those spaces for them open in the tribal, local government, and civil society.

9. CONSTRUCTING MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION: LINK TO PEACE, GOOD GOVERNANCE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

For NALKATI IW, critical themes of meaningful participation are involvement and inclusion. As applied to peace, they see meaningful participation when one can substantively communicate, build relations, forge unity, and desire to help others. To do the same for governance unravels the sense of duty, ensuring inclusion, and practicing consultative political processes. Moreover, for human rights, meaningful participation simply means helping others.

Self-improvement and the improvement of others are the defining elements of meaningful participation for PASAKK IW. In connection with peace, they seek awareness of the lived realities of IW, call for policy formulation and implementation to sustain peace in their community, and create spaces for them to participate in formal peacebuilding themselves. For governance, they call for unity, good interpersonal relations, and guaranteeing the rule of law. And as regards human rights, meaningful participation means awareness, equality, and unity.

For KMMKM, key theme of meaningful participation is that of IW empowering other IW. This means sharing knowledge and skills with others and being included in different spaces at various levels. Applying this to peace means sharing the value of peace, which is more important to the lives and future of their people. In connection with good governance, they relate to unity and the design and process of Indigenous governance. And for human rights, the central concept is that of respect.

Active and progressive engagement with people and institutions is the key goal of meaningful participation for GUPAD-LN IW. Peace must be internalised and be made the new normal; good governance is a space to be the people's leader and be the platform for IW to help others. And as for human rights, they believe in the imperative of advocacy.

Taken together, these IW see themselves as agents of their own community, of their own identity—in their own voices, in their own spaces.

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