



# KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE: INDIGENOUS WOMEN RISING

*Documentation Report*

5 – 7 February 2019  
Baguio City, Philippines



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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a thorough documentation of the *Voice Knowledge Exchange: Indigenous Women Rising* workshop held from 5 to 7 February 2019 at Ating Tahanan – GSP National Program and Training Center in Baguio City, Philippines. Thirty-four (34) indigenous women leaders and male champions from Africa and Asia<sup>1</sup> gathered to examine and address five learning questions<sup>2</sup> concerning the leadership of women in the indigenous people’s struggle for social change and self-determination. The Knowledge Exchange aimed to build a body of knowledge that can be used to strengthen the work of the movement through reflective conversations with local community experts and women activists themselves. It also served as a platform for Voice members, partners, and stakeholders to come together and share learning/experiences or discuss issues/concerns observed in the light of the grant-making programme.

In the span of three days, the participants journeyed into a process of collective discovery, involving self-reflection, empathising with others, mindful listening, performances and dialogues, community visit, visioning, and group planning. They were able to surface the key issues faced by the indigenous communities they represented, as well as the inherent capacities, indigenous systems, and values that keep them going. All these were captured using Emergent Theatre, which is a form of individual and group processing utilising the performing arts. At the end of the knowledge exchange, the participants were able to identify concrete actions on how to support each other in pushing for the rights of indigenous peoples, and more specifically indigenous women.

## II. PROCEEDINGS

The following sections narrate the sessions conducted throughout the workshop. These proceedings, however, do not include the optional mindfulness movement and sitting meditation sessions, the icebreakers and energisers which were mostly in the form of songs and dances, silent transitions, and evening activities. Moreover, this report only provides a summarised documentation of the discussions—complemented with selected quotes from the participants—, which might have missed out a chunk of experiences and insights. The workshop process also allowed for flexibility in terms of discussing and addressing pressing issues and lived experiences, which means the participants answered the learning questions directly and indirectly.

### Session 1: Orientation

Voice is a grant facility from the government of Netherlands under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Dialogue and Dissent Framework. It supports indigenous communities and many other marginalised groups in the society. Simply put, Voice is about the people, their voices, their work, and their aspirations. It is the essence of the programme. Aside from being a grant facility, Voice also promotes linking and learning, which is based on the rich experiences of the different groups and individuals, as well as of the communities they are representing. Such experiences are being captured and narrated by many partner organisations, through the projects they implement. In linking and learning, the topics are

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<sup>1</sup> Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, and Thailand. Voice and Oxfam representatives from the Netherlands were also present.

<sup>2</sup> The learning questions, which were not all explicitly enumerated during the workshop proper to encourage real and open conversations, were as follows: (1) *What makes women persist in the struggle?* (2) *Is a broader change in gender roles and inequality important in this?* (3) *Is the leadership role of indigenous women being recognised by the indigenous communities themselves?* (4) *Why are there few Kenyan / Ugandan indigenous women represented at policy /high-level advocacy and encounters? What makes it different from the Asian Indigenous People’s movement? and* (5) *What are the concrete steps to support women indigenous leaders in their double fight?*



related to what everyone is doing in practice, or even questions that come up as the individuals do their work. For example, how should women behave or hold themselves in hostile environments?

In the Knowledge Exchange, Voice recognises that knowledge must come from everyone, which is contrary to the conventional practices of bringing together academic people only. For Voice, the principle was to exchange stories and experiences together at all levels, and create ideas on how to slowly build a body of knowledge that can help people to start or re-enter at different points in their movement or advocacy given the challenges they experience. It also aims to enrich everyone's perspectives, and build up a higher form of understanding among the communities. The idea behind the activity started with an observation revolving around the question: *Where is the persistence of the women in movements, more specifically in indigenous movements, coming from?* The programme wanted to look at the ecosystems and forces behind the women's and indigenous movements and bring together some fearless and strong activists to give insights on what it takes to keep fighting for the rights of indigenous women.

Through the activity, Voice hoped that each one will take something home that they can apply to their respective work. The exchange itself was a venue to support each other through networking and linking with other organisations and groups. Together, the women can amplify, stretch and share the learning with others. In other words, to bring in ideas together and also to bring them out. All the relevant outputs from the Knowledge Exchange will be disseminated through various Voice platforms.

### ***Workshop Agreements:***

As part of setting the tone and ways of working within the workshop, everyone committed to observe key agreements on the schedule of activities, participation, and processes. An optional session on mindful movement and sitting meditation was set at 8:00 AM every day, followed by the official programme at 8:30 AM. Active participation and non-judgment was encouraged, as well as the use of local language in sharing ideas. These emphasised the workshop's goal to create a safe space for everyone. Other suggestions and concerns were also acknowledged, such as restrictions in posting real-time photos and videos on online platforms, official use of voice recording and video, and proper use of mobile phones during the workshop.

### ***Overview of the Programme:***

Open discussion was used as the main approach for exchanging ideas. It allowed the participants to freely share while also encouraging the active participation of others. To complement this, most of the activities were done in the form of Emergent Theatre<sup>3</sup>—a methodology created for a deeper exploration on how participants can genuinely convey their stories and experiences. Emergent Theatre can be viewed as a form of individual and group processing utilising the performing arts. This modality strengthens the capacity for clear thinking, engaging the body and voice, and opens the heart by releasing pent-up emotions and tensions; encouraging individuals to step into the world with more confidence and courage. The core value of this theatre form is the deep interest in one self and the other, and a genuine curiosity to learn one's individuality and true purpose or destiny. The theatre space becomes a space for dialogue, between self and other, and the visible and invisible. The emergent performance is one that arises or emerges in the given moment, meditative and responsive at the same time, yet devoid of agendas or preconceived

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<sup>3</sup> This is an approach that the KE workshop facilitator, Janneke NEX Agustin, intuitively developed in 2010 and continue to evolve, as a tool for self and group discovery, healing and empowerment. This has been publicly shared since 2016 but only in very few occasions. For more information, email [consciousheartcreations@gmail.com](mailto:consciousheartcreations@gmail.com).



plans and scripts. The act of performing and watching calls for keen observation and active listening. All participants, whether performer or audience, are called to perceive the invisible qualities of the performance, where truth and deeper meaning often reside, and then convey this to others in dialogue. In this process, the stage is transformed into a sacred space and the performance becomes a sacred practice.

For the knowledge exchange, the Emergent Theatre was done through two components: performance and dialogue, enabling individuals to use performing arts to share what is happening in their lives and their communities, within the context of the learning questions and the goals of the event. It encouraged everyone to know and empathise with each other through different means. There were no barriers in terms of language, creativity, and ideas. Aside from Emergent Theatre, the participants were also encouraged to use other methodologies that spoke to them best. Lastly, a mindfulness component was also included in the design, to support everyone to listen to each other better.

## I SEE YOU, I HEAR YOU

### Session 2: Mindful Listening

As a start, the participants engaged in a mindful listening exercise. They sat side by side their chosen partner, ear to ear, and not facing each other. Taking turns, they shared their thoughts around a recent concern they experienced, either at work or on a personal level. The other person listening was not allowed to say anything back nor take notes; they only listened. Whenever the timer stopped, the listener reflected back or repeated what was heard from the other person.

*Question for Reflection: What did you notice as a speaker when you were sharing your thoughts?*

For many, the exercise was difficult as it did not feel natural. People, in general, have a tendency to look at the other person in the eye when having a conversation, mostly to understand the expression on their faces as well. One shared that it felt empty, but at the same time, the setup made her think more deeply about herself. Others have adjusted their language, or the words they used, as well as the tone and manner of speaking, in order to ensure that the other person was comfortable and able to understand everything. Some who had difficulty speaking English, on the other hand, found comfort in knowing that someone was there, intently listening to what they were saying. Lastly, some also felt more open after being able to reflect on their issues on a very personal level.

*Question for Reflection: How about the experience in listening?*

Because of the setup of the exercise, many expressed that they were able to really focus on what the other person was saying; they did not feel the eagerness to respond, contrary to what is usually happening in conversations. Some expressed that they felt a sense of connectedness, realising how similar their issues were. There were feelings of warmth, consolation, and validation, just by listening to another woman's thoughts. One of the biggest challenges for them, however, was to avoid asking questions. The more they listened, the more they wanted to dig deeper and know more about the person as well.

The facilitator affirmed that the venue was a safe and sacred space that everyone can own, and in which they can honour each other as women and as people. The tools were only there to help all to listen more, and have more empathy to allow everyone to connect deeper. Also taking note of the language barrier, the facilitator emphasised that the workshop was designed to have more performances in order to allow different forms of expression when verbal communication becomes limiting. Taken as a whole, mindful listening was able to set the tone on how the days of the workshop were conducted; facing each other, listening mindfully, and seeing everyone's faces without any judgment.

### Session 3: Introductions and Group Check-In

*Who are you? What is your purpose for being here?* These were the questions that everyone answered to introduce themselves to the other participants. Two simple questions that triggered passionate responses filled with stories of where they came from and what their struggles are. Experiences around stigma, discrimination, development aggression, harassment of women activists and human rights defenders, selling women like properties, denying girls their education, early marriages, killings and militarisation, and efforts to make women more visible and empowered were recalled and shared.

A woman from the Cordillera region in the Philippines said:

*“We are here to contribute to the objective of the activity, and to draw strength from colleagues and partners. It is important to be in such avenues because when you come from very difficult situations on the ground, and there are so many challenges, sometimes you waver. There are times when you feel that you cannot go on—, maybe to the point of feeling alone sometimes. But in circles such as this, you are reminded that you are not alone and there is a lot of hope and encouragement that will lead the way. So, I hope to contribute to that and draw inspiration from the stories also.”*

Another woman from the Maasai community in Kenya shared:

*“In the village where I come from, I am among the first generation of girls who started attending school, which means a lot to me. Because okay, this is not how we do it culturally, but now it is not healthy; we try to do it this other way. It is not an easy job because it means sometimes they think it is disrespect to the culture or we are not following what our mothers used to. But we understand that if we will learn what this thing is showing, then it means for us, the indigenous and marginalised people, to try and see how we can do all these things together. So I'm here to learn from you and share experiences with you. A lot of you are older than us and have been here, and have been walking this journey and there is definitely a lot we can learn from you, and also us teach you—and see how we can progress together.”*

Others have highlighted the importance of valuing the experiences of everyone, and shared their excitement to meet indigenous people from different countries. Fostering collaboration was also a common theme, as various participants mentioned the need to support the movement, to join the stories of struggle and make them highly visible, and to practice *inabuyog*<sup>4</sup> meaning to help each other without any monetary consideration. All in all, the group expressed that they were in the workshop because women play an important role in the assertion of their rights. They

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<sup>4</sup> A local word from the Philippines.

are at the forefront of the struggle for land and life, and there is a need for a concerted effort to respond to the various issues they face together with their communities.

Tokens or items representing their communities were also shared to the group as a symbolic gesture of bringing oneself and one’s experiences into the group; to a safe space where there is no judgement cultivated. Some were handcrafted products by women (i.e. accessories, bags/purses, etc.), IECs<sup>5</sup> materials from their organisations, and other personal belongings with sentimental value. Towards the end of the workshop, the participants got one item each, which symbolised leaving the space with new learning and an expanded awareness on the theme.

#### Session 4: Emergent Theatre – Word <-> World

Words mean a lot of things, and they can hold different worlds within them. In this exercise, the participants explored the worlds in words, and redefined or reframed them, creating new meanings or new words to contribute to the world. Some words can be associated with the lives of indigenous people and women, but they can also mean differently to other people. Examples of such are the following:

<i>inequality</i>	<i>equality</i>	<i>gender role</i>
<i>gender</i>	<i>collective</i>	<i>individual</i>
<i>man</i>	<i>woman</i>	<i>leader</i>
<i>struggle</i>	<i>rights</i>	

In order to investigate these words, the participants were divided into five groups according to their region and they picked two words of their choice. With Emergent Theatre, they tried to show the truth in how they see the words in their own lives and communities, or in other words, how real they are in terms of experiences. The groups looked at the words through performance and/or conversation or dialogue.

#### **Performance 1:**

The first to go was the Indonesia Group, and they enacted a situation that emphasised participation of women as an affirmative action in development processes. It was in the context of a village inclusion programme mandating a 30% quota for local women leaders who intend to run for electoral positions. The group portrayed a typical conversation between a local government representative and the women applying for a position in the village board. Some examples of the government representative’s questions and remarks for the screening process were:

- *“Why do you have a baby with you? Do you think you can fulfil your duties as a leader if you have to look after your baby?”*
- *“You cannot hear, you are deaf, so how can you do your job?”*
- *“Do you have a certificate or ID? If you only have birth certificate, elementary certificate, or family card, then it is not enough.”*
- *“You are only a housewife; do you know anything about decision-making process?”*

In the end, no single woman was considered qualified to run for office due to discrimination. The words they picked were **gender role** and **equality**, and their message was to build the capacity of women to allow them to be involved in development.

<sup>5</sup> Information, education, and communications

Dialogue / Open Discussion	
Questions and Comments	Responses
<p><i>“The story is very effective. I did not think that the scenario is still a reality nowadays. It is hurting to know deep inside.”</i></p>	<p>The performance showed what a woman is facing in her daily life, and how she can be a part of the decision-making process in her community. Even though the policy on their participation is affirmative, it is still not easy for women to achieve the quota of 30%, since they still need to build their capacity.</p>
<p>What would be the possibility for someone with that wish (i.e. to run) to find their way to be accepted in the village board?</p>	<p>It is an experimental method explored by the government at the moment, and it is not really working. As a response, some civil society groups started creating women’s organisations. Their roles might not be visible in the village programme of the government, but they can engage in initiatives that are beyond their own villages. Informal approaches also need to be used. For example, if there are two groups of women that have different needs (e.g. women with disability and women without disability), then both would need to undergo their own capacity building, and then eventually they can engage in more formal processes.</p>
<p>There are past experiences that can provide insights on what can be done regarding the story. It might also be good to work with people who are not sensitive yet, and not just the women leaders. Once they are sensitive, then they can also be open to work on other things.</p>	<p>In the specific situation shown in the story, women apply for the village board because they want to influence the regulations in their own respective villages.</p>
<p>For clarification, do women have to apply for positions in Indonesia? In the Philippines, the people elect those who they want to be in the council.</p>	<p>A person can either apply or be nominated by others, but elections will still be held at a later stage. When it comes to women, no one would usually nominate them or identify them as the people’s representative. The 30% quota is small, but women still cannot fulfil it due to many restrictions. It is as if they are encouraged to be part of the system, but the structures do not actually allow it.</p>

**Performance 2:**

The group from Mindanao (Philippines) chose dance, guided by the words **woman** and **leader**. They showcased a traditional dance of the T’boli tribe in South Cotabato. As the group emphasised, the only thing that differentiates a man from a woman is the biological aspect. But because of patriarchy, history, and colonialisation, her role has become more complicated. With this, the performance showed the perception of a woman about her own role; mostly doing household chores, but it is known that her leadership goes beyond it. She is part of a group in her community, and together they have a livelihood project. She is also leading a campaign that demands the government and private



institutions to respect their rights to ancestral domain. Overall, the group depicted how indigenous women are taking on leadership roles in their own communities.

**Performance 3:**

Participants from Laos were joined by Oxfam Novib and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) for a role-play that portrayed typical scenarios within a household in an indigenous community. The performance showed how a girl wanted to pursue further studies after getting high grades, but was demotivated by her father who thought that she should just stay at home because that is what girls and women do. In communities in Laos and Nepal, it is common for parents to only provide opportunities for the boys. The group also portrayed another reality that husbands would threaten their wives with cheating if they are unable to bear a son. Lastly, they showed a success story of the wife being able to convince her husband to also advance her studies with a scholarship. Sometimes, women have to persist in order to get what is right for them. The words that they picked were **gender** and **rights**.

Dialogue / Open Discussion	
Questions and Comments	Responses
<p>The scenarios are very typical in African indigenous communities; something even universal. What can indigenous women do to change these? What strategies are needed? In one community in Africa, women were able to change how men should decide within the family, which eventually allowed women to use their property.</p>	<p>In Nepal, there is a woman who left school when she got married. When she wanted to enrol again, the school did not give her admission anymore. She then lobbied with other community members until she was finally admitted to Grade 7, and eventually completed Grade 10. Today, she is one of the most prominent and influential leaders in her community. Indigenous women need to educate everyone this way and set examples.</p> <p>Everyone must also strive to create opportunities for women, which are not necessarily in terms of formal education in universities. If women want to build their skills, there should be other available programmes like vocational schools.</p>

**Performance 4:**

The participants from Africa used art to investigate the words **man**, **inequality** and **individual**. They gave everyone a glimpse of how gender inequality is reflected in the culture of many communities in Africa by citing practices and traditions that are limiting women and girls to develop. As shared by the group, a man is a decision-maker, but it is the woman who gives insights on what decisions should be made (e.g. what to eat and what not to eat). Nevertheless, it is the man who gets the credit. The man decides whether the children should go to school or not, how much to pay in dowry for marriage, etc., and he also heads the security of the community. A woman’s ownership is only possible once she gets married; she can decide whether something is only for herself or if she will share it with her husband. Even when it comes to inheritance, a woman can forward it to her sons but never to her daughters. When it comes to inequality, the issue is more on power dynamics. There is a defined boundary on how far a woman can go (e.g. a man with PhD has more privilege than a woman with PhD). A boy is also more privileged when it comes to greetings; a girl has to bow her head, but a boy can openly shake hands with the other person. Girls have to kneel down when they

have to serve guests at home. This is what it looks like for many communities in Africa, and as a whole, indigenous people are discriminated against when it comes to governance, policy-making and decision-making.

Dialogue / Open Discussion	
<i>Questions and Comments</i>	<i>Responses</i>
The social relations within the family and community are very revealing. How do those reflect at the government level? For example, in conferences, African governments usually call for gender equality, so there is an assumption that there is some level of awareness already on the side of government officials.	Africa is not there yet when it comes to equality. There is a proposed gender rule policy to put a quota on the number of women who can be elected/appointed. But it never passes in the parliament. It is quite hard to make it balanced. Last year, for example, in the primary schools, there was a rise in teenage pregnancies that alarmed even the government. Sex education was identified as a solution, but when it was discussed with government officials, they could not even listen. There is quite a good number of policies in different African nations, but the problem is the implementation. There are countries that have tried, for example, to elect a woman president. But then again, there is a need to look at her role, whether she is really visible or just there for ceremonial purposes. Indigenous women still need to keep fighting for visibility, and when they are visible, someone will come up with something that is not very friendly in order to put them down.
Truly, there is a need for women visibility and representation in the government. Not just a woman physically, but a woman who really carries the issues of the women. There are a lot of women leaders in the Philippines, but they are not advocates of women's rights.	The universal problem is that people do not elect the right leaders who really represent their needs.
On social interactions between men and women: do the women still practice bowing their heads to their husbands? Has there been any change yet as a result of women's movements?	For quite a time now, some of the men and elders will greet women as quickly as possible before they can even greet first. They do this to spare the women from bowing since they are still required to do so. Some changes are already happening slowly, even in the language used in greeting.

**Performance 5:**

The Luzon (Philippines) group enacted how typical conversations on critical issues among women in the Cordillera are able to facilitate mobilisations and actions in the larger community. In the performance, women were shown farming and harvesting together; elders and young women working hand in hand. In the process of pounding the rice, they started exchanging stories and news about their community and neighbours; from a rape case to new mining and hydro projects, as well as trumped up charges against their fellows who are human rights defenders. They shared opinions and insights on what needed to be done, and addressed the concerns of other women who were afraid to take action, pointing out that the issues affect everyone in the community and not just a few people. As they

emphasised, women’s and mothers’ genuine concern for their children and future generations must overpower their worries and doubts. To end the play, the group performed a local song that conveyed the message: “*We do not want to be alone; we want to work together. When we work together, we can draw strength and we can fight better for a better future.*”

The words they picked were **collective** and **struggle**, which are inherent in the lives of the indigenous people of the Cordillera. They have collective identity, collective practices in protecting the common good, and collective struggle against mining companies and external forces.

Dialogue / Open Discussion	
Questions and Comments	Responses
<p>Many tribes in Kenya find that politicians always come between them, with a divide and rule approach, when they are trying to build collective action among the community members.</p>	<p>Traditional politicians are really dividing communities as proven by history. In the experiences of Cordillera, the people ask themselves what benchmarks or standards they should look for when selecting their leaders. One is their track record in supporting IP rights and the movement. It is important for them to study and engage, and bring it up to the candidates to ask them how they would respond or support their causes. In the Philippines, the law mandates to have an indigenous people’s mandated representative (IPMR) in the governance system, but most of them are selected on an appointment basis. Still, there are some who are genuinely selected by the IP communities themselves.</p>
<p>The issue on politics is very important, because a lot of politicians do not want civic education for the people even though it is crucial. Politicians all over the world, in general, do not want communities that are aware, and so political participation is something that has to be continual, especially for women. That is the only way to bring changes in the lives of women.</p> <p>Truly, there should be one movement of women. In Indonesia, there will be elections this year, and there are 15 indigenous women candidates from PEREMPUAN AMAN.</p>	<p>A strong prerequisite for engagement in policy and lobbying at whatever level is a strong and vibrant movement from the ground. The IPMR in the Philippines, for example, is a good entry point to consider. But the context varies in different areas. Sometimes, even if there are IP leaders, they still might not be able to carry the various sectors’ issues and concerns (e.g. women’s issues).</p> <p>AIPP conducted one study which revealed that women leaders are seen as hazards to the media, and that the media is not very responsive to women leaders. There is a need to strategise how to really promote working together between the two to facilitate awareness raising for the public.</p>

### Session 5: Check-Out for Day 1

Through the performances and dialogues, the participants were able to surface and communicate effectively the many different issues faced by indigenous people and women at various levels (i.e. individual, family, community, and

society), showing not only the commonalities but also the nuances. Moreover, the learning question on how to address the different challenges had surfaced, including the strategies needed to sustain the initiatives that are already working. From the discussions, it was made clear that a *broader change in gender equality is still necessary*, which has to be across the board; not only on policy level, but also to be reflected in the lived experiences of the people. Another learning question of the knowledge exchange—*what makes women persist in the struggle?*—was slightly touched upon, but still needed to be pondered on. More reflective answers were encouraged, and so it was indicated as an agenda for the next day’s sharing and open discussion.

Some of the feedbacks from the participants on the first day were as follows:

*“I really appreciate that there are younger women who are here, because in our experience, it has been a collective struggle for us to have younger voices, younger men and indigenous women who would really speak about their issues. Because as you have said, this is how we could sustain the struggle—intergenerational leadership development is really very important—so we can continue with this journey.”*

*“I think the methods that were adopted to start the day and to get us interacting with each another were very good and participatory; getting comfortable with, first, one person, and then going around and introducing ourselves so that we will get to know who are the participants, and then again, working in a group to discuss words and the meaning of those and having to act it out. I think those methods are very very useful for this type of mixed group, and with really very different types of situations and experiences to share.”*

*“Working with strong women and activist youth, you tend to think that everybody is like that or the communities are all liberated. But, yeah, hearing from the groups here from Africa, from Indonesia, I mean, it really makes you realise that there is still a long way to go in the women’s struggle.”*

## I KNOW YOU, I AM YOU

### Session 6: Check-in for Day 2

The learning question from the previous session was recalled to start the second day of the workshop: *what makes women persist in the struggle?* Different responses were shared by the participants after a night of pondering, but were all interconnected. In summary:

People, in general, are social beings who have deep social connections. They have relationships not only with one another, but also with their land. If the land is taken away, the people, especially women, will struggle. This keeps up their motivation, because they have relational values and commitment that they want to honour. The land is also the indigenous people's source of livelihood, and when the livelihood is threatened, it affects the children's welfare. The women will have no other option but to fight, because they play an important role in shaping the circumstances of future generations, or in creating a legacy. The IP women are also aware that they face another layer of discrimination in their own communities. It is still a reality that many indigenous communities are patriarchal, as validated by the sharing and performances of the different groups.

From the younger generation's perspective, young women persist because they need to keep the dialogue going, even with the young men. If they stop talking, they will remain where they are today. In the process, they need the continuous guidance and support of mentors and older women. However, mentorship may seem like a double-edged sword. On one side, it is good, because more and more women are being capacitated. But on the other side, there is a lingering doubt on whether or not the women mentors or the mentorship in itself are actually bringing the women closer to where they want to be. This pertains to the effectiveness of how the mentorship was carried out in relation to the changing context or environment that younger women leaders are now facing.

All in all, it is the resilience of the women that makes them persist; the willingness and capacity to survive and keep moving forward despite the setbacks and challenges.

## Session 7: Community Visit

The Cordillera region is home to many organised indigenous people groups, women activists, and human rights defenders who hold a lot of success stories in their struggle for life and land. Their collective journey can be a source of inspiration to other IP groups in the world, especially those who are still struggling to organise their own communities. This was one of the ideas behind the community visit within the knowledge exchange.

### *Orientation by the host*

Before the actual community visit, an orientation was held by the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, the host organisation from Baguio City, to brief the participants on what to expect during the day. They identified Itogon as a good place for sharing and meeting new people, due to its rich experience in development aggression and community organising. Itogon is a municipality in the province of Benguet, and is a large scale mining area under the Benguet Corporation (BC)<sup>6</sup>. The main source of livelihood of the residents is traditional small-scale mining; BC buys and pays them for their outputs. The company tried to do open pit-mining before, after many years of doing underground mining. Fortunately, the communities in Itogon had successfully opposed it, causing the operations to stop.

The community visit had four legs: the first stop was the tailings dam, followed by the site of the recent massive landslide, then to the open-pit area where the significant period in the struggle of the people happened, and finally to Sitio Upper Ucab where the sharing with the local community leaders was held. The volunteer facilitators were the

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<sup>6</sup> Benguet Corporation (BC) was established on August 12, 1903 under its original name Benguet Consolidated Mining Company. It is primarily engaged in mining and mineral exploration, and produces and markets gold, silver, nickel ore and limestone. Its main operations are in the provinces of Benguet and Zambales, but the company also has mining interest in various parts of the Philippines.



first generation of kids who witnessed the struggle with their parents, way back in the early 90s. They are now women leaders themselves in their own capacities.

### *Ocular visit – tailings dam, site of massive landslide, and open-pit area*

Everyone had a visual sense of the scale of the mining operations in Itogon through the first three stops. The negative effects on the environment and the lives of the people were evident even from mere observations of the surroundings. The wastes from the tailings pond, which was once a river, had affected the water source of the *poblacion*<sup>7</sup> where the Ibaloi people live. The water is now contaminated, because the water table itself was already destroyed. In order to have clean drinking water, the people have to buy from a ration coming from Baguio City at a much higher price. The fertility of the soil was also destroyed, making it impossible to engage in agriculture. Only backyard farming can be done to augment food security and consumption. Moreover, the massive landslide in the Antamok area following the landfall of Typhoon Mangkhut on September 2018 was also attributed by the locals to the expansive tunnel system under the mountains created by BC. With casualties of at least 78, the area was declared by the government as a danger zone, and as a result, many families no longer have a source of income.

In the open-pit mining area, BC intended to scrape the mountain from the top to find gold ores. Then they will start digging down, taking away the whole mountain. They also had plans to make the Itogon area more accessible to the business centre in Baguio City by flattening the mountains and creating direct roads between the two areas. The company has this level of control over the land because they have perfect ownership of it; they have the land title covering 70% of the total area, and also a mining claim for the total area. The basis of their ownership can be traced back to the public land laws originating from the time of the Spanish occupation, and later on complemented by several laws created to benefit the mining companies in the country. But with the signing of the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997, the locals also found legal basis to push and fight for their right to ancestral domain. The issue is still unsettled at the moment because the laws themselves are problematic and contradictory.

### *Group Conversation with the Ibaloi and Kankanaey Tribes in Sitio Upper Ucab*

The Ibaloi and Kankanaey people welcomed the workshop participants with a song that they wrote for their struggle during the 90s. It spoke about their community having rich resources, which are gifts from God, and the importance of calling out to their brothers to look around and see the environmental degradation and social rupture caused by the open-pit mining. The song also challenged the community members to write their stories, and to wake up and help each other fight the external forces. The lyrics is shown in the following box.

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<sup>7</sup> Poblacion or población is the common term used for the central, downtown, old town or central business district area of a Philippine city or municipality

*Napateg a Kinabaknang<sup>8</sup>*

*Napintas a lugar  
Ucab ti nagan na  
Nabaknang a daga adu't balitok na  
Napintas ti apit kadagiti um-uma  
Bendisyon ti Apo kadata'y nga annakna.*

*Dios ti agbantay, Dios ti tumultulong  
Ti daytoy a bantay lugar naianakan  
Inta'y nakasursuruan iti na Kristiyanoan  
Ugali a napateg iti kaamaan*

*Kitaem man kabsat ti mapasasamak,  
Banbantay nadadael  
Mulumula napukawen  
Uray dagiti danum naawan da metten  
Gapu ti open pit  
Awanen ti pagyanan*

*Sadino ti papanan dagiti tatao,  
Nadadael a lugar ap-apalan iti kaaduan  
Gapu ti open pit lumugar ag-ap-apa, ag-aama, ag-  
iina, agtitinik-ol da*

*Bumangon ka kabsat,  
Agmamaysa tayo,  
Tapnu ilaban ta'y ti kalintegang tayo  
Denggen yo ti asug dagiti tatao  
O agtignay tayo,  
Agtitinulong tayo.*

*Invaluable Resources<sup>9</sup>*

There is a beautiful place  
Called Ucab  
A land rich of minerals and gold  
A bountiful harvest for the gardeners  
These are gifts from God for his children

God is the guardian, God helps this mountain  
The place where we were born  
Where we learned all about our faith  
A treasured culture from our forefathers

Look at what is happening, my friend  
Mountains have been destroyed  
Trees have been cut down  
Even the water is gone  
Because of open pit mining  
People were displaced

Where will the people go  
They are fighting over what is left of the destroyed  
mountain  
Because of the open pit mines people are fighting  
Families hurt each other

Arise my friends and unite  
Let us fight for our rights  
Let us heed the call of the people  
When we are aware of our rights  
We can help each other  
Let us help each other

<sup>8</sup> Lyrics retrieved from: <https://www.bulatlat.com/2015/05/01/ucabs-song-of-struggle/>

<sup>9</sup> Translation to English retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1NzDNdm4II>

To kick-off the exchange, one of the leaders shared the story of their struggle that even their children can tell. It all started from the colonisation era, from the Spanish to American occupations. It had the following timeline:

<p>↑</p> <p><b>Before 1980</b></p>	<p>The mining activity in the area started 500 years prior to the American colonisation, even before the Spaniards arrived. In 1901, the American troops started prospecting all the mineral lands in the country, and they found that Cordillera was rich in gold, silver and copper. Baguio City, during that time, was identified as a place for rest and recreation for the American troops due to its low temperature. A year after, they came down to Itogon and saw the tunnels dug by the traditional small-scale miners. It was the same year that the Benguet Corporation, with its first company name, bought a tunnel from an Ibaloi ancestor. Since then, the company had started making their operations bigger and bigger. Until 1981, they were implementing conventional tunnelling, and even up to now the communities are not sure how massive the tunnel system is. Because of it, the people are always afraid that landslides might happen during typhoons. Later on, BC transitioned and became co-owned by wealthy Filipino families.</p>
<p><b>1980</b></p>	<p>In the 1980s, BC made a move to do open-pit mining, which triggered the people to also intensify their fight. There was no water then, and the company installed fake pipes to deceive the people into thinking that they have programmes for the community. Various mining and development projects also started simultaneously to hasten the process of cutting the mountains off. They were blasting thousands of dynamites electronically all at the same time. Then, the communities experienced several health problems. In 1989, the elders and leaders started to hold meetings to identify what can be done, and they all agreed that the only way was to fight the company. As a result, several communities united and signed a unity pact (i.e. those affected by the mining operations).</p>
<p><b>1990</b></p>	<p>People started to barricade in the open-pit mining area in 1990, and it went on for about 11 months. In 1991, the worst scenario that people could think of that time actually happened. There were around 300 people barricading when security personnel came with ropes and guns to prevent more people from joining. As a response, some women took their clothes off; they saw it as a form of protest. Then a mass arrest happened in 1992. The people were in the same area when security came more armed. The elders conceded to be arrested with the mindset that it would not make a difference after all. They believed that mining will still kill them anyhow. They were then brought to Baguio barracks and were put to jail the next day. But allies came to the rescue to charge the uniformed officers with illegal detention. Cases were still, however, filed against the community leaders. Later on, the community members collected 50 pesos from each family to be used for bail, but it was not enough. The city Mayor then used his land title as a bail bond for the 48 leaders who were charged. They were tried in court, and the people attended the hearings to show their support. Interestingly, the judge always dismissed the sessions due to the intervention of the people; it can be described as chaotic. In 1994, the community won the case, and the mining operations also stopped.</p>
<p>↓</p> <p><b>Beyond 2000</b></p>	<p>BC still owns the land and continues to take control of all the small-scale mining activities in the area.</p>



This story is being passed down to the younger generations, one after the other, to keep the struggle going. They maximise activities, with or without visitors, to engage the youth and tell the stories of land, life, and resources. They do it through cultural performances and other storytelling methods. Unfortunately, activists are being tagged as terrorists especially those coming from the Cordillera. But as a people, they are handling the struggle in the most Christian way<sup>10</sup> possible. Many of the elders are already dead, and they still have not received any compensation from BC.

Dialogue / Open Discussion	
<i>Questions and Comments</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Were there any efforts to capture the cultural events and other activities? For example, videos, written documentation, etc.? It would be good to share them with other people, because the story could inspire other communities who are also facing mining companies.	Through the help of some organisations, the community was able to produce 7 song albums that contain compositions from the residents, using indigenous instruments; there are still available CDs for sale. There are also written and video documentation in English. Other information can be found on their Facebook page and website, and they always try to use technology to strengthen the campaign.
What are the chances that BC will continue open-pit mining?	Not sure, because there are so many laws around mining in the country. The company still owns the land, even though there are provisions in some laws stating that they need to revert it back to the government after 70 years of operations. They have already exceeded that. Some sister companies turn the land into subdivisions and golf course. They are trying to push through with different businesses to retain ownership.
How did the people know that they needed to fight? What were their personal stories?	Some leaders based it on observations from other people, and observations on the effects of open-pit mining in their community (i.e. knowing by seeing). Mostly, they considered the future generations. They knew they needed to fight in order to live; there was no other choice. How would they meet their financial needs, for example?  From the perspective of younger women, they knew they do not have anywhere else to go. It is also their fight, because no other people will do it for them. Their community is where they were born, and it is there where they will also die.

<sup>10</sup> Not explicitly elaborated by the community leader, but could refer to the use of non-violent methods in responding to the threats, continually protecting the environment as God's gift, and/or having faith in divine guidance throughout the struggle for land and life.

<p>How was it like as a woman during the barricade? Did the women receive any support? What were the challenges?</p>	<p>A woman leader shared that she chose to join the struggle because it was the right thing to do, even though she was pregnant at the time.</p> <p>From a male leader’s perspective, the women were the heroes of those times. The women initiated to be on the frontline, and they asked the men to stand back.</p> <p>Another woman leader shared that they were the ones to set up the structure of the campaign. They organised committees secretly to avoid being arrested; those responsible for legal matters, food, logistics, and many others. Several organisations also came to Itogon to extend their support in organising women’s organisations at different levels (i.e. village, municipal, and link to provincial ones). As a community, they saw that it was necessary to form wider alliances. The women also felt the need to improve their communication and leadership skills, and thus, they held capacity development activities. Moreover, since many people experienced health problems that they could not explain, other CSOs also came to help. They taught the community about herbal medicines and health practices. They also learned about land use and other important matters from other organisations. A lot of support was received and they were all very thankful.</p>
<p>Were there any instances in the past when the government had compensated the community? Are they checking and supporting the people?</p>	<p>The people are still claiming compensation up to now, specifically to convert the mining area to ancestral land and to rehabilitate it as well. Unfortunately, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) itself was encouraging mining in the past. Nothing has been realised yet.</p>
<p>Regarding the role of women in mining: does she have control over her share of the income? Does she have to give it to her husband?</p>	<p>The income sharing is two-way. The men are the ones who go inside the tunnel, and they get their own share from doing it. The income is equally divided in each crop (i.e. about 5 men for each). The women also get their own shares by processing the gold ore into the final output. The common understanding is that they will not compete with each other. Sometimes they give the money to pregnant women, elders, persons with disability, or the sick ones. They have to include them in the sharing system. This is the indigenous way of sharing resources. If they are lucky enough, they will butcher a pig to celebrate with the whole community.</p>

<p>What was the political support like during the barricade?</p>	<p>There was some support, but it always depended on the issue at hand. Most of the politicians did not support the struggle of women and the community, since many of them get shares or commissions from companies like BC.</p>
<p>From the past two decades up to now, how do women in the community support each other? For example, mothers to the younger ones and vice versa. What are the differences between the struggles before and the struggles now?</p>	<p>Younger generations support their mothers and try as much as possible to absorb their stories. They also draw strength from those experiences to be able to continue moving forward. They were taught by their parents that land is life.</p> <p>The older generations, on the other hand, make sure that there are available materials (e.g. comics) that younger ones can access to know more about indigenous practices and messages. At the height of the struggle, no parent had ever said that their kids will stay at home.</p> <p>But the challenge for all of them, especially for the younger generations, is to cope up with new forms of technology and governance. The context is now different. But no matter what happens, Ucab will always remain Ucab.</p>
<p>In other areas in the world, women are often not allowed to take on leadership roles. How did the fathers and husbands react or support the women before?</p>	<p>A lot of parents before were already open in letting the women join the struggle. Likewise, many husbands were also organisers themselves, and they understood the need to involve everyone, even the children. The support system in the community gave everyone the strength they needed. However, it is also true that the community was largely patriarchal before. But since the land struggle began, women have emerged to be effective leaders. They are now more empowered and involved. The struggle was a breakthrough; women are more active than ever.</p>
<p>Is the community still struggling to get the land back? In other countries, laws are also problematic and contradictory. For example, land can be owned by individuals and communities, but beyond 6 meters deep, it is already owned by the government. When events are being held to discuss it, most of the indigenous communities are not there, and even if they are present, they are not able to understand. Another problem is pollution, which is a killer in the communities. All chemicals run to the water, and many</p>	<p>Laws, indeed, are problematic. In the Philippines, there is a law that protects IP rights, then there are also many other laws that support mining companies. In reality, it is difficult to use such laws to leverage the fight. The approach being taken now is more on meta-legal. Communities should also be aware of the international mechanisms that can be used to support the struggle.</p>

other people are being impacted, not just the IPs. The IPRA Law in the Philippines sets an example to other countries that do not have any similar legislation. The IPs have to take many steps to be able to understand a particular law.

Participants from Uganda and Kenya also took the chance to share their own stories with the host community, and gave messages of solidarity as indigenous women themselves:

- Communities in Uganda are also experiencing the same struggle, as they are facing a mining company that has been operating for 10-15 years now (i.e. extracting marble). But what is impressive in Ucab is the unity of leaders with the younger generations. It is not the same in Uganda, since the government always intervenes to make people sign agreements that are against the interests of the community. Private entities are also encroaching on new lands, and together with the government, they do everything in their power to take advantage of the people. For example, only 3% of the income from mining goes to the communities. Environmental degradation is also a big concern, similar to how the tailings dam in Itogon destroyed the water source and affected their modes of food production; in their case, pastoralism. Sometimes, the women will teach their parents what they learned from the outside world, but instead of getting support, their parents will put them down and call them names to try to convince them they are incapable. This is why unity and respect are very important. They also won a case as an indigenous community against an investor involving their land, but eventually the government wanted to take control of it instead. Indigenous communities must know how they can be involved in decision-making processes to ensure that the implementation of good laws are followed.
- In the Maasai community in Kenya, the people also have land problems, but theirs resulted to a tribal war or rivalry with another indigenous community. They always end up fighting each other because the other community has a higher population. They show their force by taking their cows, but they have never been successful. The only problem is that their elders started secretly selling pieces of their land to other people, because the community does not allow it. There are times when they would realise they already have neighbours from another tribe, which is not good because they have different traditions. It seems as though the elders in their community love money more than their families. As a woman leader, she blogged about it and did what she can to take back the title. Now, with the help of some organisations, they are trying to educate women about land titling, in the same way that men know it. One time, for example, she came home only to find out that another family had already taken over their house. It was a problem because girls and women were not educated in their community, and not equipped with knowledge and skills on how to respond. But now, they are promoting awareness and building women's capacity to respond to tribal wars. Indigenous women go through a lot and must continuously persevere through the struggle.

To end the session, the host community enjoined everyone to sing a local song which meant: *Be brave children, mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers. Be brave, rise up, and fight.*

## Session 8: Visual Arts/Journaling and Check-Out for Day 2

To reflect on the exchanges and lessons from the community visit, the participants were asked to individually write or draw their experiences on paper, or create art in whatever form they like. They were encouraged to use different methods to express the experience, based on what felt right for them. A group sharing then followed, which created an open space for feedback and/or concerns.

Some of the keywords/phrases shared by everyone to represent their experiences were:

<i>Admiration</i>	<i>Joyous</i>	<i>Stimulating</i>
<i>Intergenerational</i>	<i>Inspiring</i>	<i>Beauty and destruction</i>
<i>Survival</i>	<i>Light persists</i>	<i>Togetherness</i>
<i>Strength</i>	<i>Courage</i>	<i>Solidarity</i>
<i>Never surrender</i>	<i>Fire burning</i>	<i>Energy</i>

To quote some of the messages:

*“When survival is threatened, there is no other option. [Women] will persist, because it is a life-or-death matter. I saw the theme came out really strongly--indigenous women rising.”*

*“Young people are really the future of the indigenous communities and even the whole world at large. -- These people are passionate about their issues so they can really bring them out. Young people are also knowledgeable, because they are educated; they go to schools so they have the information. They are also creative; they can package messages in such a way that it goes out to the elders and whomever the target group is. And young people are strong; we can run around and jump. So I’m so inspired by the youth and young people of the community.”*

*“We usually go to the [Itogon] community and interact with our colleagues there. But this activity made me also reflect on the many songs and performances which were rendered by the community and the young generations there. -- One song had the lyrics, “You look at the forest, you look at the trees; is it money, is it business, is profit that you see? You look at the mountains; is it only gold you are searching for?” That was like, for more than two decades ago, but up to now, it is still very relevant.”*

*“A struggle for life is not a one-shot or one-time, big-time deal. -- The method of their protest employed so many. -- They have established coordinated action before getting external support. -- I am also very happy and inspired on their efforts as a community because they never said surrender.”*

From the host organisation:

*“Your visit in the community did not only serve your purpose. But also on the part of the community, to know that there are people from outside the community that share the same struggles and share the same vision to fight for indigenous people’s rights is already something that helps in uplifting their morale. Especially at this time, there are leaders of the indigenous people’s organisations in that place who are being tagged as terrorists, and are experiencing surveillance by the suspected members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.”*

### Session 9: Check-In for Day 3

As a spillover of the previous day's reflections, the participants had another chance to share any lingering thoughts that they still needed to express. Three main themes were highlighted: the importance of understanding the laws, the contending views about mining, and the different levels of support of local governments to the indigenous communities.

On the laws, it was evident that there is a need to check back on the existing legal frameworks surrounding IP rights, and strengthen the capacity of leaders, especially women, to understand the law-making processes. Moreover, legal pluralism has to be analysed (i.e. understanding the context and use of each relevant piece of legislation), because there is no single law that can answer all the concerns of the IPs. It is also very helpful to engage experts and creative professionals to popularise the salient points of such laws, to make them more accessible to the communities. If people are able to understand the laws in their own language, then they will also be able to take action no matter how slow it can be.

As to the views on mining, there was also a realisation that it is important to acknowledge the conflicting positions of people on whether mining is good or bad for the communities. Having a black and white view on it can be very limiting, especially since it is also the primary source of income of many communities like those in Itogon. There are also government offices and agencies that are trying their best to address and balance both sides. Taking that into consideration, organisations that have a strong stand to stop mining must also help in identifying alternatives and strategic actions that would surely benefit the people.

Related to this was the issue on the support of local governments to the IP communities. In the case of the T'boli tribe in Mindanao, a woman leader expressed that their government seems to be more responsive as compared to the that in Ucab. Their town mayor is an IP, and the officials normally visit their community to assess their needs and provide services as necessary. They also receive royalty from the mining company in their ancestral domain, and they use it for developing programmes in their community (e.g. scholarship for students, medical assistance, etc.). The problem, however, is that the communities do not really know the gross output of the company as well as the basis of computation of the royalty they are receiving.

Evidently, everyone was able to reflect on their own experiences and situations. The exercise also further revealed that there are many similarities when it comes to the issues of IPs, but at the same time, every situation is highly contextual.

### Session 10: Emergent Theatre: Visioning through Introspection

*How will I be able to contribute to my own context to help in the bigger movement?* This was the guiding question that everyone pondered on individually, and was part of the process of visioning for oneself and one's community. Similar to the previous sessions, everyone was free to use any methodology that felt right for them (e.g. art, journaling, etc.). They also shared their individual outputs in groups, wherein the visions were consolidated into a story for indigenous women. In groups, they answered the question *how can we support each other?*

### Story/Vision 1

The women from the Philippines showcased a song and dance performance about women and indigenous communities working together for the common good:

<i>Katutubong kababaihan, kabataan, pamayanan: Sama-samang kumikilos at nagtutulungan</i>	<b>Indigenous women, youth and community: Working together and helping each other</b>
<i>Sa buong komunidad, bansa at daigdigang Kalikasa'y pinapahalagahan Lupa, tubig, yaman depensahan Paaralan para magbahaginan</i>	In the whole community, nation and world Environment is given importance Defend the land, water, resources Schools for exchanging ideas
<i>Kaalaman, kultura at karanasan Sa masalimuot na kalagayan Pangangailanga'y matugunan Maunlad na pamumuhay May dignidad at matiwasay Lipunang mapayapa, makatarungan at Malaya</i>	Knowledge, culture and experience On miserable situations Needs have to be met For high quality of living With dignity and security Peaceful society, just and free
<i>Dong-dong-ay Si dung-i-lay Insali-Sali dummay</i>	<i>No translation provided</i>

### Story/Vision 2

From Indonesia and Laos, the women used art to visualise a state of equality, harmony, and balance. The symbol was the sun, which represented the woman as a light not just in one place, but also anywhere else. It can be achieved by providing every woman education, capacity development, representation of identity, documentation, media coverage, meaningful participation, strategic position, and inclusion in policies and regulations. To amplify, other activities can also be done such as linking, sharing and learning, intergenerational exchange, and inclusion in community endeavours. These strategies were symbolised by a door, which meant opening ways and looking beyond the norms.

### Story/Vision 3

The group of network organisations performed a scenario where support CSOs held a meeting to share their observations of their most recent trips. The reports they narrated were odd circumstances that even they could not understand: people wearing dark clothes with ropes on their necks, place getting too hot to the point of being unbearable, the cold, rain, people dying, people casually throwing money around, high-end neighbourhoods, people digging colourful stones from the ground, and many others. Eventually, they were able to conclude that the issues they saw from the different places were all interconnected. They were talking about mining problems, environmental degradation, and the presence of organisations who are trying their best to help address the problems. In conclusion, the message was to help each other, open many doors to achieve solidarity, and take the issues seriously.

### Story/Vision 4

The African women used a combination of methodologies to convey their vision (i.e. oral presentation with visuals, personification and symbolism, theatre, and art). They started by highlighting the issues that women face in their communities: lack of government support, land problems, rape culture, stigma against elders, and lack of education. To visualise how real these issues are to a woman, they infused symbolism in a theatre performance with the following transcript:

*“We present to you a chain, and this is a chain of fear. A woman who is enclosed in that chain: she cannot speak, she cannot say anything, and everything about her is written as fear. And more and more chains are being added every day by the community. She is tortured psychologically, she is filled with isolation, she is amidst conflict—, she is bitter. She is doctored as being voiceless, and she is asking, “Who can rescue me from this situation? Who out there will speak for me? I’m crying out loud, who will call me out?” \*A voice came out\* “Do not be worried, do not be worried. God gave us life, God gave us land, God gave us knowledge; traditional knowledge that we have carried for many years, and it is almost possible to be free. We will free you so that you can be able to do what you are supposed to do, and free your people, and free your community. So we will unchain you—. We will be able to unchain you, and make you have all the freedom that you want. And those who have chained you will feel like you are no longer like the other people who they think you are.”*

All in all, their vision is to have a society that understands indigenous peoples within a culture of tolerance and learning. They aspire for indigenous women to be respected and considered as an equal member of society where she is involved in policy-making. They want to have a community of togetherness, love, and understanding. To end their performance, they enjoined everyone to sing a song with the lyrics *“As the sun rises and shines in the sky, we trust and believe we have a future. As the sun rises and shines in the sky, we know for sure hope is alive.”*

### Session 11: Indigenous Women Rising: Group Plan

Building on the group visions, the participants proceeded to develop more concrete actions that they can do when they go back to their communities. They rearranged the groupings to reflect what was more realistic in terms of fostering collaboration and harmonising the issues.

#### Group Plan 1

The Mindanao women agreed that their main goal was to increase the political space for IP women in their areas through equal representation in the decision-making processes. Their strategies involved increasing knowledge on relevant laws, capacity building, organising, providing support actions, building solidarity, and enhancing customary laws and traditions.

Dialogue / Open Discussion	
Questions and Comments	Responses
Who should the women link up or engage with for higher chances of success?	The activities will be done through organisations and coalitions that they are already working with.



What is the planned geographic scope and reach of the activities?	Some learning sessions can be at the national level. There are also community-level activities for the T'boli and Manolo Fortich. Bantay Kita's activities within Voice can also be maximised for organising a coalition.
Who are the targets of the change to be attained other than the IP women themselves?	Something to think about more.
Are there means of verification for the plan?	Something to think about more.

### *Group Plan 2*

The rest of the participants from the Philippines focused on how the organisations can support each other in strengthening the national IP women's movement. This can be done through leadership development, and skills development in campaigns, human rights documentation, criminalisation, and land rights, among others. Documentation of stories (e.g. human rights defenders) is also important, and linking with various networks and platforms such as the global IP group, Land Rights Now campaign, local biodiversity outlook (i.e. tools to highlight the contributions of IPs and women in biodiversity), the SDG processes, and many others. The targets of the initiatives are the media, academe, and various electoral processes (i.e. need for representation of women at different levels).

### *Group Plan 3*

The women from Indonesia identified 3 actual issues to focus their plan on, with the idea that a verification process with their own communities will be done as a next step after the workshop. The first one is on the Tarung village in Sumba, where people can only use particular trees from a forest to build their houses. However, the forest became a conservation area and locals could not get woods anymore. Their community is a centre for tourism development, and tour guides normally come from other places. At the moment, they do not have water, which is essential for the people. The other issue is how to amplify the campaigns against development projects affecting indigenous communities such as dams. The leaders need to be capacitated on when and how to take action (e.g. knowing when the peak moment is). Lastly, they will identify networks and organisations that women can link with, because the issues and contexts in Indonesia are very diverse.

### *Group Plan 4*

In Africa, there are 4 focus areas to work on: (1) intensifying intergenerational dialogues to build a youth that understands the community's culture, traditions, and history; (2) increasing understanding on various land laws and policies; (3) amplifying the voices of women through advocacy; and (4) sharing stories through exchange programmes and documentation with potential partners within the region and beyond. They plan to employ a series of workshops, trainings, and sensitisation sessions for focus areas 1 and 3, with emphasis on the importance of building women and young women leaders and giving education to girls. For focus area 2, they plan to conduct a baseline survey to identify the conflicting laws and policies, and engage experts to train the indigenous communities on the survey's findings and results. The activities will be done at the national level in Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda.

### *Group Plan 5*

For the women in Laos, the goal is for men and women to be equal in making decisions through education. However, it is very challenging for them to take concrete actions because at this point, their organisation is not registered with the government. As much as they wanted to plan, they were also not sure how to go about it because of that challenge; they have been working on the license for four years already. Another challenge is around their capacity to implement; there is limited funding, no support from men, women lack the knowledge, and there are no current partners to work



with. But overall, the aspirational goal is to make women equal to men, and help women get education. This can be done by training students on women's rights, running documents, and creating media materials to show the society how women really are and what are their challenges.

### Session 12: Closing and Final Check-Out

To officially close the workshop, everyone was given a chance to pinpoint or highlight their key takeaway/s from the whole event, and to get one token from items shared by participants from Day 1. Below were the words and phrases that summarise the success of the knowledge exchange:

Invaluable lessons. Culture. Language. Intergenerational sharing. Creative methodologies. Unity. Strength. Undefeatable women. Collective action. New faces. Innovative processes. Continuity. Honour. Engaging processes. Breaking out. Differences. A likeness. Connectedness. Simple but effective. Power. Organising. Stories. Family. Open. Resilience. Hope. Dignity. Passion. Struggles. Voices.

Quoting some of the parting messages and feedback:

*"Thank you Voice for inviting me--I learned a lot from everyone; I learned about their culture and language. -- I will miss you all."*

*"This was an empowerment for me. It gave me a challenge that I am looking forward to: to fight and to be strong for my people."*

*"This was really a great event. It was an opportunity and I am very proud to have come to Baguio--as I was always looking forward to come to Baguio because I wanted to see what is it in this great land that so many people have learned from, especially in terms of advocacy and championing human rights issues and so on. -- I think it was great to work with all of you, and for Voice for inviting us and putting us into this wonderful space of giving voice to the people and I hope this is not the last time. We can continue working and learning together."*

*"I am amazed how all of us are so different and yet we feel that we are all the same. My takeaway from this meeting is that it was a rich intercultural experience, and with this kind of experience and our diversity, the world needs indigenous peoples and also it needs them to be seen."*

### III. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The different dialogues, visions, and group plans provided a rich source of information on what can be further done to support the indigenous women and communities in their struggle. Drawing from those, the following recommendations summarise the key areas of action that various organisations can support:

1. Strengthen the indigenous communities' structures and institutions to counter the governments' efforts to weaken the women's and indigenous peoples' movements.
2. Build the capacities of indigenous women to take on leadership roles and help organise their communities.



3. Intensify intergenerational knowledge exchanges in the communities to develop more youth leaders who can sustain the fight.
4. Build the capacity of women and communities to understand various laws concerning the indigenous peoples' rights, and popularise them using local languages.
5. Reach out and link with indigenous peoples' organisations who are experiencing restrictions in the civic space.
6. Link the local initiatives with wider and bigger networks and platforms.