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Report: Second women leaders' exchange on the struggles for land, and natural resources

-29 July to 2 August. Chiang Mai, Thailand-



The second women leaders' exchange took place in Chiang Mai, Thailand (from 29 July to 2 August), led by ESCR-Net's Women and ESCR, and the Social Movements working groups with substantive contributions from collective projects on corporate capture, climate justice and community-led documentation. The exchange gathered eighteen women leaders participants from indigenous peoples, peasants/small farmers, fisher folk, and other groups from eleven countries. Participants represented fourteen (14) global, regional, and national-level networks, organizations and grassroots.

Strategic objectives for this exchange were:

1. Build solidarity, share our knowledge and experience as well as learn from other women leaders from around the world involved in building struggles for land, housing and natural resources.

2. Create a space for intergenerational dialogue and learning between female youth leaders and women leaders with more years of experience in the struggle;
3. Articulate our shared analysis, visions and common demands around land, housing and natural resources, as well as the climate justice and corporate capture;
4. Identify common goals for changes and collective action, with leadership by grassroots women leaders, to advance human rights relating to land, housing and natural resources.
5. Develop a consultation with the [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), in relation to the recommendation on land and sustainable development.

Read the analysis and points
of consensus of grassroots
women
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Summary of proceedings

Monday, 29 July.

Our struggles, and the realities we want to create.

Following an initial welcome, participants introduced themselves by telling their stories. They were given a book with a mirror inside and were asked to tell the story of the woman they were seeing at the book. Powerful stories of resistance were heard. Women connected their identities and their own personal struggles: as parts of families and communities, as indigenous, peasant, pastoralist, fisherfolk women. After the introductions, participants observed some initial connections between them.

Following this session, and in order to highlight how this second exchange was intended to build on the first one, several women participants shared their experience and learnings from the [first women leader’s exchange](#). The [#WomenLeadOnLand video series](#), realized at this space, was presented and women invited to widely disseminate and to use it in their struggles.

In the second half of the day, conversations deepened about their struggles. In an open conversation, women shared about the injustices they are confronting, and those forces, powers, actors, narratives they are resisting. Key issues highlighted include conflicts land and natural resources aggravated by the current development model, their struggles against projects driven by corporations and states, the lack of FPIC and meaningful participation in these processes and the disproportionate impacts on women and on groups that rely on the commons, among others. Participants were invited to visually illustrate the injustices they are confronting and the realities they are fighting to create.



Participants then revisited the [Common charter for a collective struggle. They reflected on](#) the connections they recognized amongst the various social movements represented in the room, in light of the common challenges and points of unity identified in the Charter.

Tuesday, 30 July

Corporate capture, climate change and women's leadership

The second day started with the session on **corporate capture and land**. Participants watched the [video on Corporate Capture](#) to start approaching to this phenomenon and Radiatu Sheriff (Liberia), a member of the Project Advisory Group on Corporate Capture, offered a presentation on the [manifestations of corporate capture](#) identified by members. Radiatu then moderated a panel amongst Juana Toledo (Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj, Guatemala), Christiana Louwa (World Forum of Fisher Peoples, Kenya) and Rojieka Scarlett (Pacos Community Trust, Malaysia). The panel addressed the ways in which the activities of corporations threaten the human rights of their communities, particularly the rights of women. In an open conversation, participants shared their strategies and stories of resistance.



Key issues highlighted include how corporations seek to manipulate communities, shape harmful narratives and use public security forces to protect their interests. Participants stressed the serious threats to the right to self-determination, meaningful participation and, for indigenous peoples, the right to free, prior, informed consent. Women's right to access, use and control land and natural resources, in particular, have serious impacts on their social and cultural rights, as corporate projects often reinforce patriarchal structures within the society and further marginalize women in decision-making around land. Participants shared strategies they have to confront these powers, emphasizing the importance of strengthening the leadership of women within their own movements to advancing resistance and articulating alternative livelihoods that promote true development and a healthy environment.

The following session, on **climate change and land**, started with an inspiring performance by several youth participants to express the suffering of mother earth as a consequence of the harmful human action. Participants then reflected about how they are experiencing climate change in their communities, and how their rights to access, use and control their land are being affected. They explained how climate change is affecting traditional knowledge, their cultural and spiritual connection to land, their livelihoods and their health. They stressed how the response of governments to the climate crisis is sometimes inconsistent with human rights and the meaningful participation of communities, sometimes leading to displacement, evictions and impoverishment.

Participants then proceeded to illustrate their visions of climate justice that positions people and the planet at the center. As they shared their drawings, participants began to explore shared demands to advance climate justice and insist that governments respect human rights in their response to the climate crisis.

Wednesday, 31 July.

Grassroots experiences documenting our struggles, celebrating our various identities and fostering diversity within our movements



The day started with a session on **community-led documentation**. Jessica Mayberry of Video Volunteers, a member of ESCR-Net's Monitoring Working Group, shared some initial reflections about data relating to economic, social and cultural rights. Women were asked about what kinds of data they collect and use, and what gaps they found in terms of the kinds of data used for decision-making. Participants noted that this data tends to be collected by governments or corporations and often does not reflect the perspective of communities. Following an open conversation, a panel was invited with the participation of Alina Saba (APWLD) and Sushila Thapa (AIPP), who shared with the groups their experiences regarding to documentation. Alina explained how her organization has used a Feminist Participatory Action Research framework to strengthen movements and make advocacy more effective. Sushila shared about AIPP's experience in using the Indigenous Navigator Tool, to monitor the implementation of the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples across several countries. Breakout groups followed the panel and worked to identify particular challenges communities face in terms of documentation and ways in which the Monitoring Working Group could support them in this effort.



Priorities highlighted by women leaders include data that: 1) is disaggregated and employs an intersectional approach, 2) captures the specific ways that different communities use their natural resources and land and 3) makes visible women's leadership in social movements struggling to advance land, housing and natural resources.

Participants also contributed to shaping a [collective position on data and ESCR](#) developed by the Monitoring Working Group. They discussed principles for gathering and using data that better reflects communities' lived experiences. For instance, states should meaningfully involve communities in deciding what, and how, data should

be collected and ensure that this information is transferred back to communities in a simplified form and in a timely fashion.

The second half of the day was devoted to strategies to strengthen **the diversity and equality within struggles for land and natural resources**.

In a “body-mapping” exercise, participants drew their silhouettes on large pieces of paper and illustrated their various intersecting identities that shape how they experience the world and their struggles. As they shared their drawings, participants discussed how their various identities enhance their social movements and bring diverse perspectives to the struggle.



Participants then reflected on the meaning of the word “intersectionality” in the context of struggles to advance substantive equality.

Chanda Thapa (Asia Indigenous Peoples’ Pact-AIPP) then facilitated a panel amongst Toribia Lero (Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas-CAOI), Christine Kandie (Endorois Welfare Council, EWC, Kenya), and Kamala Thapa (National Indigenous Women Forum-NIWF, Nepal). The panelists shared lessons they have learned and strategies they have adopted to build inclusive movements and advance intersectionality. Participants discussed the various ways in which women, including those with intersecting identities, have contributed to shape the movement and its demands. Reflecting on challenges their movements face to embrace diversity, strategies to foster the diverse identities within social movements struggling for land and natural resource rights were discussed.



The day concluded with an **intergenerational dialogue**, as youth and senior leaders shared their visions and strategies to advance intergenerational solidarity among women as a means to strengthen their struggles.

A video project will be developed to disseminate experiences and strategies that women shared regarding to intersectionality in practice and intergenerational solidarity.



Thursday, 1 August

Shaping points of consensus and visions for collective action

The fourth day of the program focused on **common demands and points of consensus**. In breakout groups women leaders deepened their analysis about trends affecting the rights of their communities with regards to land and natural resources. Initial points of consensus emerging from groups were shared and further refined in open discussion.

The fifth day of the program was devoted to a consultation with a member of the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) regarding a forthcoming General Comment on land and economic, social and cultural rights. To prepare for the discussion, participants reviewed the role and composition of the CESCR and recalled ways in which ESCR-Net has contributed in recent years to the development of the General Comment.



Participants then returned to their ideas for further collective work within the Women and ESCR working group for the coming period. The following ideas emerged from small groups work followed by discussion, to collectively advance human rights in the context of land and natural resources, centering women's leadership:

Mutual learning and shared analysis

- Debates and discussions on relevant issues for us as women leaders, and to make more visible our struggles.
- Sharing positive strategies, successful experiences we have put in place to confront injustice, and also as women within our movements.
- Share documents and knowledge we are building at our community.

Solidarity

- Simultaneous actions as a group or emblematic actions (including when gathered) to amplify our voices (e.g. Plant trees in deforested areas as a group)
- Disseminate our struggles via circulating videos and photos.
- Solidarity for protection of women human rights defenders, including collective statements.
- Emotional support among us.

Advocacy and campaigning

- Join to the Women's Global Strike campaign
- Advocacy before UN mechanisms. Position papers for international advocacy spaces.
- Bridge feminist organizations with women leaders from the grassroots to amplify the voices of women directly experiencing HR violations. Alliances.
- Communications strategy to advocate for women's rights relating to land and natural resources

The day was closed with an **intercultural exchange**. Women shared their traditional songs, dances and other cultural expressions, offering a window to their own cultures, countries and regions.

Friday, 2 August

Consultation with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)

Participants welcomed Heisoo Shin, a member of the CESCR, to discuss women's experiences and demands on the rights connected to land and natural resources to inform the Committee's forthcoming General Comment on land. Collective positions articulated during the meeting were discussed with CESCR and, subsequently to the meeting in Chiang Mai they were submitted to the Committee.

The program concluded with final remarks by participants regarding their experiences with the exchange, underscoring commitments to continue to advance collective action to realize women's land rights.



Read the analysis and points of consensus of grassroots women

[Click here](#)