



Intersections between women's ESCR, land, corporate capture and climate change.

Perspectives of grassroots women leaders from communities depending on land, across regions and struggles.

Measures to guarantee non-discrimination and substantive equality should be cognizant of and seek to overcome the impact that intersectional discrimination has on the realization of women's rights connected to land and natural resources.

Centering the voices of women and advancing intersectionality and substantive equality in challenging violations of human rights relating to land and natural resources is one of the core goals of the Women and ESCR Working Group. The project on women and land, housing and natural resources aims to bolster women's leadership in struggles for land, housing and natural resource rights, challenge large-scale dispossession and advance the adoption and implementation of relevant human rights standards including via fostering the participation of women who represent communities contending with human rights threats in connection to land. Amplifying the voices, analysis and demands of women from affected communities is a pivotal contribution to advance intersectionality and substantive equality in the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

This report

The purpose of this report is present and amplify the analysis and demands of women from indigenous, peasant, fisherfolk, pastoralist communities across regions, regarding to women's economic, social and cultural rights, and the access, use and control over land, corporate abuse and climate change. This report contains three sections: [corporate capture, land and women](#); [climate change, land and women](#); and [inclusive and community-centered data](#).

"[...] the achievement of substantive equality in practice requires a multifaceted approach which: **redresses disadvantage** (based on historical and current social structures and power relations that define and influence women's abilities to enjoy their human rights); **addresses stereotypes, stigma, prejudice, and violence** (with underlying change in the ways in which women are regarded and regard themselves, and are treated by others); **transforms institutional structures and practices** (which are often male-oriented and ignorant or dismissive of women's experiences); and **facilitates social inclusion and political participation** (in all formal and informal decision-making processes)" *[Women and ESCR Working Group briefing paper: the intersection between land and women's economic, social and cultural rights, 2016]*

This document is aimed to be a contribution from women from such groups to the development process of a general comment on land of the CESCR. It builds on the discussions that took place during the second exchange of women leaders (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 meeting was comprised of eighteen women leaders from indigenous peoples, peasants/small farmers, fisher folk, and other groups from eleven countries and representing fourteen global, regional, and national-level networks, organizations and grassroots¹. The methodology for the meeting was intended to deepen a shared analysis about the systemic forces and root causes of human rights violations connected to land and natural resources and specific impacts on women. Participants shared their experiences concerning the human rights violations they are confronting at their communities, identified connections among their struggles and articulated points of consensus to be shared with the CESCR in the context of the general comment on land.

Corporate capture, land and women

A model of development that impoverishes communities. Impacts on women and groups depending on «the commons»

Struggles against projects driven by governments or corporations can, in the name of “development,” lead to displacement, impoverishment and disempowerment of communities that depend on land and environmental harm among other impacts. From Guatemala to Nepal, from Bolivia to Malaysia, the reality present in women's stories seems to be the same. They pointed out how complicity by states and community manipulation play an important role in the execution of such projects and leave communities with very little means to enjoy access to justice and recover their lands. Indigenous women shared their demand for effective free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), enshrined into the international human rights framework, while women from wider communities (peasant, pastoralist, fisherfolk, landless peoples) reinforced their right to be meaningfully consulted and how customary law and their decision-making mechanisms should be respected. All participants pointed out that if community participation in decision-making over land and natural resources is very limited, it's even more so for women.

Women highlighted how “development” projects, put in place by either the state, corporations or both, respond to a particular **model of development** based on the commodification of land, natural resources and human beings. **They stressed how the right to self-determination of peoples constitutes the pillar for all communities (beyond indigenous peoples) to be meaningfully consulted**, given that all projects will necessarily have implications in the realization of their own development model and the wellbeing of their communities. *“For the state and*

¹ Women participants were representatives of the following networks, social movements and grassroots organizations: World Forum of Fisher Peoples – WFFP, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact- AIPP, Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas - CAOI, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development – APWLD, Endorois Welfare Council- EWC (Kenya), Women's Natural Resources Platform (Liberia), Chitta-gong Hill Tracts Headman Network (Bangladesh), National Indigenous Women's Federation – NIWF (Nepal), Ekta Parishad (India), Pacos Trust (Malaysia), Pakistan FisherFolk Forum -PFF (Pakistan), United Sisterhood Alliance- Us (Cambodia), Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj (Guatemala), Centro de Mujeres Aymaras Candelaria- ULAM (Bolivia).

corporations, money and profit are at the center. For us, our land, nature and our communities are". "Capitalism is destroying our community spaces", they said.

As land and water are treated as commodities and subjected to the forces of the market, women are used as cheap labor. Violence and harassment against women intensify in presence of corporations and "development" projects, either when they have had to accept working at the company as the only available alternative for their livelihoods, or when trying to access and use land that has been grabbed by corporations. Women also emphasized the increased burden placed on them as care givers in their families and communities: *"Given that the community has now less space for its own development, women are commonly at home while those working outdoors are mainly men. It was different before"*².

Women stressed the link between **the right to food and the right to health**. Due to environmental degradation often perpetrated by corporations, as well as the impacts of climate change, multiple barriers to accessing their lands, and shifts in land-use patterns, plants and food available have substantially diminished. *"Food does not come from supermarkets but from the land. This is why our land being grabbed and contaminated affects everyone"*³, they said. Women and children in particular are facing impacts in their health as a consequence of food insecurity.

Women pointed out how food insecurity has also disempowered communities: *"The bargaining power declined because of this, as well as self-reliance as indigenous communities who need to start relying on the cash instead. This has created more individualistic attitudes and dynamics within the community, as well as harmful shifts in*

Land and ocean grabbing of the 'commons'

Coal mining and the coal-power generating power plants has displaced people in across 230 villages [in Pakistan]. Our communities are prevented to inhabit and use coastal land, which is closed. The company hired fishermen on a daily basis and communities are not allowed to fish and their livelihood are destroyed. This is ocean grabbing. Wastewater is being disposed at the sea and coal being dropped close to where people are living. This is affecting marine life and diversity.

Mehwish Laghari (Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, Pakistan)

Our land is communal, and the investor has bought the land which is now fenced. There is a factory and most trees are being cut to create more room for the factory. The community has less space now for their own development and survival. We had a natural swimming pool with clean water, but it has been contaminated and there's lots of diseases given that this water is flowing next to the community.

Christine Chebbi, Endorois woman

The land was cleared through a company cutting down trees. They planted palm and left community in the middle of the farm. Community has no space, women usually go to the forest to collect firewood, food, mushrooms, proteins, but there is no more forest. They cannot step outside of it..., they are insecure because when they try pass through the plantation they are accused of cutting down the plant. There is no road to get out and so there are restrictions for community to pass through the plantation.

Radiatu Sheriff, Natural Resource Women' Platform, Liberia,

² Sheila Kipkazi, Endorois woman (Endorois Welfare Council, Kenya)

³ Toribia Lero (Coordinadora Andina de Pueblos Indígenas, CAO)

women's roles"⁴. Given the gendered obstacles women face to access, use, control land, as well as to realize property rights and credit, they have less resources to sort the loss of productive capacity. In this context, women's ability to meet both their own nutritional needs as well as those of their families is deeply affected.

Peoples depending on the 'commons' (Pastoralist, fisherfolk communities, landless, and other groups) are particularly and disproportionately affected by land and ocean grabbing, development projects and environmental impacts that result from them:

- Endorois women shared how investors have fenced the land and contaminated water, and how this has affected their livelihoods, caused diseases, and reinforced discriminatory gender roles in their community.
- Women from communities that farm the land and rely on resources from the forests in Liberia, shared how a palm oil company cut trees to expand its plantations, effectively surrounding their residences. They explained how they experience violence when they are forced to cross company lands; how there is no more forest for women to collect firewood or food and this has compelled them to work at the company under precarious working conditions while suffering incalculable cultural loss.
- Women from fisherfolk communities explained how **ocean grabbing** is taking place. As small-scale fishing communities are dispossessed of the resources upon which they have traditionally depended through diverse mechanisms such as fisheries governance and trade and investment policies, designated terrestrial, coastal and marine conservation areas, tourism and energy policies, financial speculation, and the expanding operations of the global food and fish industry, , among others. One of the examples they introduced was how coal-power generating power plants are grabbing coastal land in Pakistan

Women human rights defenders under attack

So many sisters have been killed for defending our earth. This affects not only women, their families but communities, but the whole world, this threatens the whole world. Communities are the ones defending nature, and all human beings without exception depend on earth to survive.

Toribia Lero (Coordinadora Andina de Pueblos Indígenas, CAOI)

"When our leaders were sent to jail males first- everything was documented through pictures and videos, a lot was done by the community for them to recover their freedom. When women were sent to jail- no one cared to document or accompany them to hearings. The explanation is obvious this is because they were women"

Juana Toledo (Consejo de Pueblo: Wuxhtaj, Guatemala)

I was attacked together with other women from the community. We were shot and we found out from the bullet that the state was involved. The guns were property of government.

Christiana Louwa (World Forum of Fisher Peoples, Kenya)

⁴ Rojiekka Scarlet (Pacos Trust, Malaysia)

Manifestations of corporate capture in communities

Community manipulation is a common manifestation of corporate capture that participants addressed, noting that that it directly affects free, prior and informed consent, meaningful participation in decision-making, and the power of the community to influence decisions that affect them. Women explained in various ways how communities are manipulated because corporations are exerting an undue influence over public affairs and decision-making processes. In one context, social movement leaders shared how people's poverty and low levels of literacy are used against them by companies that make false promises about benefits and wellbeing for the community. In another case, collective decision-making is undermined by fostering divisions among communities and recruiting individuals from those communities who are easier to manipulate and who may then serve to weaken larger community decision-making processes. *"Fostering inter-tribal violence as one of the ways in which corporations break communities"*⁵. Communities should be the ones appointing people who represent them, and those representatives should be held accountable to the community.

Women also referred to the problematic **use of public security services to safeguard corporate activities** to intimidate the communities and threaten human rights defenders. *"Government uses public forces to make communities accept extractive activities"*, they said. They stressed how governments are using public resources, like law enforcement, to protect the interests of corporations, and turning public security services against their own people. Participants also mentioned another manifestation of corporate

Stories of corporate capture

"In Guatemala, agreements were signed for the entry of extractive projects. Companies started to manipulate government from above: from the president, deputies, ministers, mayors, to the communities. They started telling us that Guatemala is being left behind and that we need foreign investment. Corporations went to schools, churches, and community spaces saying that there is a new development in which we will all live better, have jobs, hospitals, education. They lied to us because what they have done is to grab our land and our rivers"

Juana Toledo (Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj, Guatemala)

In the Lake Turkana project, the largest in Africa, companies have provoked divisions within the community. They prefer money and profit over human lives. Leaders are being coerced, taken to Mombasa and Naivasha in big hotels and given incentives by companies to support the projects, as well as given work within the company. Those who are supposed to protect communities are players on the side of company. When companies do assessments they don't involve communities. They involve politicians and also elders who are more likely to support their projects.

Christiana Louwa (World Forum of Fisher Peoples, Kenya)

"Government and public security forces do not protect or defend communities; they are violently repressing them. They denigrate and attack defenders of the community opposing to the projects. They tell distorted stories until everybody beliefs the communities are the enemy. We as women and the communities are small against government and corporations acting as one and the same"

Toribia Lero (Coordinadora Andina de Pueblos Indígenas, CAOI)

⁵ Christiana Louwa (World Forum of Fisher Peoples, Kenya)

capture, the “revolving door,” referring to the movement of individuals in leadership within corporations into political posts tasks with regulating those same corporations.⁶ “Sometimes we don’t know who we are dealing with... governments and corporations are one. They **shape narratives** against the communities, human rights defenders, and all those opposing to the projects, in order to favor their interests”.

The right to defend land

Criminalization and other attacks against **human rights defenders, especially women** were raised as an issue of major concern. When women are the target, they suffer particular and disproportionate impacts, as do their families and communities. Women leaders have experienced and witnessed how women’s traditionally unprivileged position at their communities often plays against them when it comes to access to justice and impunity overcoming. One of the women leaders shared: “Many of my sisters were criminalized and had to give up the fight. They were told: ‘Why did you cause this problem? Why didn’t you stayed at home instead of provoking this?’ and they were left alone seeking for protection or justice”.

Communities are also particularly affected when women leaders suffer human rights violations. Meaningful connections and dynamics within the community are lost, while gender stereotypes and other obstacles for women to participate in decision-making processes are reinforced. Women shared many stories of attacks they have suffered over time, and how they face judgements from their families and communities for having played a leadership role as the cause of such human rights violations.

When land is privatized or conservation areas established, private or public security forces (sometimes military) take possession of that land. The community needs to keep crossing or using that land, and women face high risks to suffer violence and harassment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence. Women human rights defenders are at higher risk.

Consultations and participation

Women from indigenous, peasant, fisherfolk, and other communities pointed out how governments and corporations have proceeded with projects at their lands and territories without **meaningful participation** of the

“Women’s voice and participation in decision-making over land and community development must be taken into account and recognized. Women are in the frontline of the struggles to defend nature... when rivers dry or get contaminated, when forests disappear, our soul hurts because that is the source of life”.

Juana Toledo (Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj, Guatemala

community and undermining communities’ institutions and mechanisms, even if the project has major impacts on their lives, livelihoods or culture; for example, projects that will result in the relocation of a group from its traditional lands and in cases involving the storage or disposal of toxic waste within indigenous or traditional lands.

Women stressed the importance of strengthening community mechanisms of protection of their leaders, given that public security forces are so often used to protect the interests of investors and corporations.

⁶ ESCR-Net members have advanced an understanding of corporate capture and described several manifestations. More about corporate capture can be found [here](#).

Governments should not act on behalf of communities. Government should be directly accountable to the communities that their operations affect.

Trade and investment agreements and contracts between governments and corporations are being signed at national or regional levels without the meaningful consultation, or consent, of affected communities. When local communities learn about the interests of corporations and investors regarding their lands, there is often little space to negotiate or stop the project in-question given that the government has already made an agreement with those private actors, rendering the consultation— at best —just a bureaucratic exercise and, often, a facade. Notably *“if communities are the last to know about a project, women are the last within the community”*.

They also stressed how their **customary law** is often disregarded. *“For them [governments and corporations], customary law doesn’t have as much weight as much as state law, and that’s what they use to take land”*⁷. Women reinforced how customary law should be respected and communities should have power over the management of land and natural resources.

In cases in which the community has been **relocated**, the assigned lands are often not similar in terms of extension, quality, and other characteristics, which dramatically affects their cultural life and their livelihoods. They mentioned how alternatives to relocation were not explored with the participation of the community prior to their resettlement.

Women stressed how the strengthening of community participation needs to be accompanied by **enabling circumstances and mechanisms for women to effectively participate** in decision-

Without consultation and without consent.

“Companies make communities believe the benefits they will have will benefit the community as well. We see this in Nepal Communities don’t get any benefit and need to move/relocate. We were not informed about negative impacts, and our community is not allowed to participate in impact assessment and the data they produce is discarded as non-valid. We lived this with the hydroelectric power plant”.

Kamala Thapa (National Indigenous Women Forum, NIWF, Nepal)

“We are an ancient people with political forms. We do community consultation: which is a mechanism to make decisions, an ancestral practice protected by international laws. The government wants to delegitimize these consultations by saying that they are the ones entitled to do it. We defend our community consultations at the power of our people”.

Juana Toledo (Consejo de Pueblo, Wuxhtaj, Guatemala)

After the construction of the dam the community was moved to a different area in the 80s, with a lack of information and resources. After several years they went back to those territories to seek their previous livelihood (in the place where they relocated there are no opportunities) even though they are not allowed in that area. Now they have to allow company to access their assigned land to benefit from natural resources, as a condition to have a minimum access to their ancestral lands.

Rojieka Scarlett (Pacos Trust, Malaysia)

“The center shouldn’t be the corporation or government’s language. The center is communities’ own language and culture. They shouldn’t call people illiterate because they do not speak their language. We have our own knowledge and culture”

Channsitha Mark (United Sisterhood Alliance, Cambodia)

⁷ Rojieka Scarlet (Pacos Trust, Malaysia)

making (for instance, capacity building, proportional representation of women in decision-making mechanisms, strategies to make sure women with disabilities and suffering other intersecting forms of discrimination are being heard and their needs addressed, among others). Collective community experience and emerging evidence suggests that women's security of tenure favors women's participation in decision-making.

Women are not all the same. In their own words, women pointed out the importance of **intersectionality** for decision and policy making about land and natural resources. *"If indigenous women are not there, the only women to benefit might be those in towns, those in better positions, but not those from the communities"*⁸.

Women highlighted that **information** about proposed projects and their impacts should be effectively provided to the community and understandable. Information should be adapted to their language and be presented on a clear, simple manner, without omitting relevant information. Both positive and negative impacts of projects should be exhaustively explained to communities and consultations must be done in their own language. Communities should be able to request and receive information about a specific project.

Differentiated strategies should be used to make sure this information is known and understood by women and they are part of the conversation (for example, bearing in mind that their family responsibilities might limit their time to engage in decision-making processes).

Women reinforced how **project impact assessment** should meaningfully involve people in all phases; it should be public. Communities should be given effective opportunity to challenge such assessments and provide their own data.

Women stressed that **governments and corporations should be held accountable for the benefits they promise to the community** from activities that take place on their lands. Institutions (even international or as a result of cooperation) that lend money for development projects should be held accountable to the community.

Climate change, land and women

Impacts of climate change on women and their communities

A development model that commodifies land, nature and living beings (including humans) was identified as the greatest root cause of climate change. Women stressed how indigenous and traditional knowledge and models developed over time by those groups depending on land are based on balance and harmony with mother earth. They reinforced as well how recognizing the rights of land and nature might help counter their commodification and strengthen their protection *"We have to see rights in mother earth as we see them in human beings, because we are all part of the same"*, they stressed.

"There are many models of development, but the dominant one is destroying our planet. Climate is not just an environmental issue but an ethical and political one. The powerful are not interested in Mother Earth. Corporations and governments think land is their property, but we believe WE belong to land".

Toribia Lero (Coordinadora Andina de Pueblos Indígenas, CAOI)

⁸ Christine Chebij, Endorois woman (Endorois Welfare Council, EWC)

How you and your communities are experiencing climate change?

Women shared about the impacts of climate change on their peoples and communities, and particularly on women. They described how climate change is severely affecting their rights to access, use and control land. The following are some of the **impacts** shared:

- Loss of natural resources and biodiversity is dramatically impacting the right of peoples to enjoy and take part in cultural life, their spiritual connection with land. This is also causing a dramatic loss of traditional knowledge, ancestral traditions, language and identity. *“It’s through the land that we get identity as a community and through our boundaries that we were able to celebrate our unique culture”⁹.*
- Climate change is reducing the ability of the earth to heal. Consequently, the effects of environmental harm are worsening, at a time when affected communities are more vulnerable.
- Communities are also experiencing significant food insecurity as well as health issues, particularly diseases affecting women and children, due to climate change related impacts. Community self-reliance regarding to their livelihoods has been affected. Women stressed how climate change is deeply affecting their autonomy and increasing poverty. They highlighted how climate change is also increasing their workload: for example, by requiring women to spend more time doing care and domestic work due to water scarcity.
- Women also highlighted how this is leading to the disintegration of communities or prompting them to

The impacts of climate change will result in the loss of many traditional plants. With the water shortage the plants disappeared, and our ecosystems began to deteriorate. There is a great loss of biodiversity. Our children will no longer see these animals, these amphibians, these plants. We have begun to look for seed varieties and document the plants and animals we still have. We have to look for other seeds because the ones we have used no longer produce. State practice focuses on monoculture and there is no diversification of seeds. Lakes of great significance for women's traditions have dried up. They have lost their habitat and cannot live as they used to live. In addition to being dry, it is also contaminated due to mining activity.

Toribia Lero (Coordinadora Andina de Pueblos Indígenas, CAOI)

In Kerala we have a lot of biodiversity. Our nature is a sensitive place. We have produced tea, coffee, spices. Our climate used to be very good for those products. Crops have been damaged by water scarcity and crop deterioration. Many suicides have occurred, and many people are dying from the intense sun. The last three years this has been increased. With the floods, our villages have been flooded, bridges and other roads destroyed. Women in particular have been affected.

Benzi Johnson, peasant woman (Ekta Parishad, India)

“There has been the loss of indigenous knowledge, language, and identity. Also, indigenous peoples who have been displaced have had to mix with other communities and cultural assimilation has taken place. Indigenous peoples are increasingly becoming climate refugees”

Sushila Thapa, (Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact)

⁹ Christine Kandie, Endorois woman (Endorois Welfare Council, Kenya)

abandon their ancestral land and migrate to cities or to other areas with better conditions to obtain their livelihoods. Progressively, peoples depending on land are becoming climate refugees. Climate-caused displacement is also accelerating cultural assimilation.

- Climate change represents a threat to future generations and the survival of communities.

Women stressed how they and their communities are suffering **human rights violations in the name of climate crisis response measures from states:**

- Displacements and forced evictions commonly follow the declaration of conservation areas, without any consent from the community, and without providing any alternatives for their livelihoods. Women are also experiencing disproportional impacts of land and ocean grabbing in relation to renewable energy sources.
- Legal frameworks being developed are limiting or denying the recognition of peoples inhabiting and depending on the land. One example are legal developments in relation to “fortress conservation” efforts.
- The notion of “public purpose” is being abused utilized to legitimate a failure to meaningfully consult communities that stand to be affected.

[How to confront the climate crisis from the perspective of women leaders of affected communities?](#)

- Climate change is having, and will have, substantial impacts the enjoyment of rights relating to land, including the human rights to health; work; and adequate standard of living including food, clothing and housing; and to take part in cultural life. Effective climate mitigation and adaptation should be aligned to human rights. States must meet their obligations to address climate change.
- It is vital to effectively respect, protect and fulfill the rights of indigenous peoples’ and other affected communities related to land in the context of climate prevention, mitigation and adaptation, as well as loss and damage. Collective community experience and emerging evidence suggest that women’s security of tenure is particularly important in this context. The right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples should be fulfilled, as should the right to meaningful participation for all peoples depending on land.
- The recognition and promotion of indigenous and local knowledge about the sustainable use and management of land resources is vital in addressing the climate crisis.
- Climate policy and action must not violate human rights relating to land. For example, there must be no land grabbing or forced eviction in relation to renewable energy sources.
- Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by climate change, but they are also the first to advocate for climate action. In decision making relating to climate policies and action, it is critically important to center the voices of women and girls advancing climate justice, particularly those from communities disproportionately affected by and resisting climate change impacts and drivers, and to foreground a feminist, intersectional approach.

- Effective, urgent protections and substantive support for women, human rights and environmental defenders are vital and a priority as these defenders are directly confronting powerful actors who particularly contribute to the climate crisis, for example the extractive industry.
- The fossil fuel industry causes a great deal of environmental harm, hugely impacts land rights and is clearly accelerating the climate crisis. For effective protection of land-related human rights and to address the climate crisis, it is essential to stop burning fossil fuels and completely phase out the fossil fuel industry as soon as possible, and at the present moment, hold this industry accountable, including through corporate actors being held criminally responsible for corporate activities that lead to irreparable damage to our planet.
- Many livelihoods, including those related to land (for example livelihoods based in agriculture) will be impacted by the climate crisis. States should act in the context, closely adhering to human rights, to secure a sustainable future, accounting for the needs of both urban and rural workers in formal and informal economies, and communities.
- The principle of common and differentiated responsibilities must translate into equitable climate financing. This exists in the law but must translate into practice. Countries most responsible for climate change and with the most available resources must substantively contribute in practice to mitigation, adaptation as well as loss and damage related financing to rapidly meet the needs of those most vulnerable to (and often least responsible for) the harshest climate impacts.
- Governments must urgently adapt disaster management laws and policies in the context of the climate crisis, prioritizing the most vulnerable groups, and the hardest hit by climate impacts. This should be done in coordination with indigenous peoples and local communities, with appreciation of their traditional knowledge.

In Bangladesh, the forest department comes and destroys the forests in the name of safeguarding the forests, they come and say that it is the government's forests and the lands from being the community forest to a reserve park. When this happens, indigenous communities cannot return to these lands, but indigenous people have a spiritual connection with mother earth. There are many rites related to water, earth, fire. Indigenous knowledge and traditions can be part of the solution for climate change.

Chandra Thapa, indigenous young leader (Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Headman Network, Bangladesh)

Inclusive and community-centered data

Communities are often excluded from the data and evidence used to make decisions about their lives. This is because the data used to make decisions about land and natural resources is produced by governments and corporations and aligned with their own interests and narratives. When communities are excluded from gathering and making sense of data, policies based on this data will not respond to the community's reality. **Exclusion in data may mean exclusion in reality.** This explains in part the big gaps between what policies are addressing and what our

concerns are. *“The process of data collection and community participation is what matter the most. This is what makes data strong”*¹⁰, they said.

Communities must set the agenda about what data should be collected, how it should be analyzed and used, and what role they might be playing in gathering it. In line with their human rights obligations, particularly the right to participation, States should involve communities at the onset of any data gathering process and ensure that their perspectives and voices are reflected in the data. To ensure accountability to communities, states and other actors should also report back what actions they have taken or will take on the basis of the data collected. Reporting back should happen in a timely manner and in ways that simplify the data and makes it accessible.

Secondly, when communities gather their own data, this is often disregarded as illegitimate and not credible. Women stressed how community voices are often silenced because current hierarchies uphold certain types of data – often quantitative and technical data– while disregarding communities’ perspectives as biased and not legitimate. Choices around methodologies, indicators and tools for gathering data tend to exclude traditional forms of knowledge, such as indigenous knowledge, which is often difficult to capture through desk-based, quantitative methods. Over-reliance on numbers tend to exclude or ignore essential issues and nuances that can only be captured through qualitative data, affecting how decisions are made. Instead a community-centered approach to data should recognize different forms and kinds of data, paying adequate attention to qualitative data which reflects communities’ perspectives and knowledge.

Finally, people are not homogeneous and each group of people is diverse. While data should reflect the situation of women in the community, it should also highlight different characteristics and identities (e.g. disabilities, ethnicity, age etc.) which shape they experience their lives and the challenges they may face in relation to their rights to land and natural resources. To do so, **data should be collected and published with the highest possible level of disaggregation. Priority should be given to an**

“They tell the story they want tell, which is not ours”

“We mostly rely on government data and on what institutions known about data gathering. Now communities are also gathering data, building on their perspective. It’s quite common that data about indigenous peoples comes from academics. The problem is that they don’t have the perspective and knowledge to correctly assess our practices, they don’t know what would be more important for us to document”.

Sushila Thapa, (AIPP, Nepal)

“Data from those that threaten us will not help us. If from the government of corporations, it will build their argument, will present a reality aligned to their interests. We have just sent a parallel report and we have collected data by our own to bolster our arguments. Only this data allowed us to defend our rights”

Toribia Lero (Coordinadora Andina de Pueblos Indígenas, CAOI)

“Governments will reject community data. They assume this data is not legitimate or valid. That is their thinking. Actually, community data is the best data because the community members have the best understanding of what is truly going on. We are activists. We move into communities. We collect data. We try to hold governments accountable on that basis. But they dismiss our data”.

Radiatu Sheriff, Women’s Platform, Liberia.

¹⁰ Channsitha Mark (United Sisterhood Alliance, Cambodia)

intersectional analysis to respond to the needs of persons with diverse and intersecting identities. It is also important to involve individuals and groups with intersecting identities in the design of data collection processes so that they identify categories and indicators that allow to capture the information that is most relevant.

The ESCR-Net [Women and ESCR Working Group](#) promotes substantive equality at the advancement of women's economic, social and cultural rights, including in the realization of rights connected to land and natural resources. Through engagement with UN bodies, capacity building and advocacy, it is collectively striving to ensure women's experiences and analyses are at the center of domestic and international policy-making and legal developments. The [International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ESCR-Net\)](#) connects over 280 social movements, indigenous peoples' groups, NGOs and advocates across more than 75 countries to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.