Celebrating Indigenous Peoples’ Resilience and Looking Forward to a More Vibrant Elatia in 2022

“[Despite the pandemic], 2021 has been a good year for us. With the support of Tebtebba, we facilitated IPSSDD trainings both at the local and national level, livelihood initiatives, tailoring workshops, COVID relief drives, and community cocoa farming.”
Bouba Njobdi of the Lelewal Foundation in Cameroon shared how they incorporate the Indigenous Peoples Sustainable Self Determined Development (IPSSDD framework) in their work during the two-day Elatia start-of-the-year meeting on 31 January and 7 February 2022 facilitated by Tebtebba with support from Brut fur die Welt. Elatia partners shared their various initiatives in 2021, including the challenges they faced as well as the lessons learned from and recommendations on these projects.

In his presentation, Njobdi posited that they still had issues with the constant attacks against the Baka people due to land disputes and the worsening separatist movement in Cameroon, rendering women and children internally displaced.

“This year, we plan to continue in the relocation efforts for the Baka people. We also plan to localize the IPSSDD Framework, participate in international decision-making processes including those of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and encourage intergenerational exchanges in the community,” Njobdi added.

Gideon Sanago of PINGO’s Forum in Tanzania presented their organization’s achievements last year, stating their documentation of climate change mitigation and adaptation activities at the community level as well as their provision of support and dialogues with the different GCF accredited entities in the country. Like Njobdi, Sanago shared their group’s plan of continuing their meaningful participation in the different decision-making processes, both locally, nationally, and internationally. He also mentioned that their community’s ongoing land rights issue was already submitted to the East African court and that they were currently awaiting the verdict on this.

“The COVID-19 pandemic posed a huge challenge to the community. With the help of Tebtebba, we reached out to the different communities to share provisions and took to the local radio station so as to disseminate much-needed information on the dreadful coronavirus,” he continued. “PINGO’s Forum has been like a mother to civil society organization (CSOs) and indigenous peoples’ organization (IPOs) in Tanzania, supporting them as regards advocacy work,” Sanago said.

“The year has been generally fair for us, as well,” mentioned Kimaren Ole Riamit of the Indigenous Livelihoods Enhancement Partners (ILEPA) in Kenya as he, too, offered an overview of their organization’s achievements and challenges encountered in 2021 and their plans for this year.

As part of the Indigenous Navigator (IN) initiative in Africa, with support from the European Union, Riamit shared that ILEPA did community monitoring activities, enabling the successful instal-
lation of water pumps and a health facility in the area, among others. They were also able to participate in climate finance policy work, including in Green Climate Fund and nature-based solutions (NBS)-related activities. He also stressed the importance of localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through “local voluntary reporting,” saying that they were able to engage with several other national partners other than those of IN.

“SDGs are only relevant when they are put into practice on the ground,” he emphasized. While Riamit shared that teenage pregnancies, school dropouts, and land rights violations are still rampant and consistent problems in the communities, especially exacerbated by pandemic, he said that ILEPA plans to continue working to help solve these.

Hari Purna Tripura of Maleya Foundation in Bangladesh presented the worsening situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, also stating the continued “exclusion of indigenous peoples and CSOs in law and policy formulation” in the country. He mentioned, however, that Maleya facilitated several training-workshops that focused on IPSSDD, conflict transformation, and health for indigenous leaders including women and youth. Like other Elatia partners, the Foundation was able to actively participate in several key United Nations events in relation to climate finance, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and so forth. For this year, they plan on continuing advocacy work, representing the Jumma indigenous peoples in various platforms.

Situation of IPs in CHT (Cont’d)

- **Militarization**: with increases in the number of military camps and checkpoints and their undue interference in civilian affairs, along with the waging of “proxy wars” through disgruntled indigenous elements coerced or induced to work against their fellow indigenous sisters and brothers.
- Military in CHT currently controls road construction activities, owns more than a dozens of restaurants, bakeries, tourist spots, various resorts, schools, colleges, and cable network service in CHT.
- The restrictions on foreigners travelling to CHT, freedom of speech and movement of IPs.
“Most people returned to their communities because of this COVID-19 pandemic,” shared Beatrice Becerra of the Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú (CHIRAPAQ). Because of this, the organization has been focusing their work towards the realization of the SDGs, stressing the significance of enhancing capacities of their indigenous communities in Peru to be resilient amid the crisis. Prioritizing native agricultural biodiversity, among others, CHIRAPAQ has been supporting the communities towards strengthened “trading of local products and tourism” efforts. “It is also important to undertake a revitalization of our indigenous culture among the youth so as not to lose our identity,” she added.

Rande Bayate of Siling-gang Dapit sa Sidlakang Mindanao (SILDAP) in the Philippines shared that they also encouraged implementation of the country’s Department of Health (DOH) COVID-19 vaccination drive in their community. As part of the organization’s year-end assessment, he said that “addressing the needs of the community through the provision of assistance in terms of farming production and community education, among others, made the community not feel left behind during the height of the pandemic,” contributing also to the collective achievement of the different SDGs. Like the other Elatia partners, they have been initiating the same localized IPSSDD trainings and facilitation of indigenous knowledge transfer from community elders to second generation leaders.

For Joseph Ole Simel of Mainyito Pastoralists Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO) in Kenya, “2021 was a mixed year.” He shared that the drought that ravaged both Kenya and

---

**Indigenous Peoples & Human Rights**
- Community-Based IPSSDD Orientation and Training supported by TEBTEBBA
- DAVALOOGO with DOH, DSWD and DepEd by TEBTEBBA
- Facilitates transfer of Indigenous Knowledge Systems & Practices by themes as follows:
  - Traditional medicine/herbs
  - Traditional Governance
  - Sustainable Farming/Agriculture
  - Arts & Crafts

**Sustainable Development Goals**
- Contributed to the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 10,
- Supporting community farmers on their farm production
- Organizing/formation peoples organization who later lead their community enterprise
- Ensuring women’s participation in community decision making and activities
- Reducing inequalities by capacitating tribal leaders and councils in Indigenous Political Structures (IPS)
Tanzania caused food insecurity in the communities, including indigenous ones. “People have moved 400 to 500 kilometers away from their homes in search for water. Women and children who were left behind have very little to eat,” Simel reported, adding that schools are closed because teachers have realized that children were not eating at home and that they had no food to offer them at school as well. Additionally, the increase in teenage pregnancy and school dropouts was also observed.

“Nevertheless, under the IN initiative in the country, with support from the European Union, irrigations have started to produce encouraging results,” he enthused, although he also emphasized on the need to invest on food-focused solutions. “Drought is a serious priority,” he said.

Reporting on the activities done by Institut Dayakologi (ID) in Indonesia, Krissusandi Gunui said that the challenges that they experienced in 2021 are still observed this 2022. “We are still experiencing stagnancy in our efforts to pursue meaningful recognition of our rights,” he shared. He mentioned, however, that in Ketapang district, two indigenous communities were able to register their lands amounting to 10,000 hectares, allowing them to reclaim their ancestral territories. ID also pushed for at least 20 or more land titles to be recognized with about 2,000 hectares of land planted with oil palm reclaimed. In relation to NBS, the organization also conducted a study to identify solutions provided by indigenous peoples in the area toward addressing climate change.

Citing also goals similar to that of other Elatia partners, the institute plans to continue pursuing improved recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights in-
cluding those related to the reclamation of indigenous lands currently planted with palm oil and economic growth in the communities, encouraging effective adaptation of the new normal amid the still raging COVID-19 calamity.

Preity Gurung of the Center for Indigenous Peoples’ Research and Development (CIPRED) in Nepal shared on the organization’s capacity building efforts, specifically for indigenous youth and women. She enumerated CIPRED’s focus livelihood support areas including beekeeping, vegetable stacking, and indigenous seed storage. Coordinating with the local government in the country, CIPRED is pushing for the promotion and protection of indigenous practices, land tenure rights, and community forestry activities, among others. In connection with these, they were able to draft a local forest act, allowing them to complete several climate change projects after. Still in close coordination with the local government, CIPRED, like other Elatia partners, was able to provide COVID-19 support to their partner communities.

“Nepal is the fourth most vulnerable country in terms of climate change,” according to Gurung. “Hence, we have been collating a list of local indicators of climate change and how the said phenomenon is impacting indigenous peoples in the area,” she asserted. “There is a need to strengthen [the collation of] disaggregated data to support our call for the inclusion of traditional knowledge in the creation of policies,” Pasang Dolma Sherpa of CIPRED emphasized. “Strong documentation is a necessity,” she added.

“It took two years to organize the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). More than 30 consultations in seven socio-cultural regions were held prior to the summit which was held in Rome,” shared Myrna Cunningham of the Centro para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CADPI) in Nicaragua, citing their initiatives in 2021.

“At the pre-summit meetings, indigenous peoples demanded for the inclusion of indigenous languages in the right to food and the acknowledgement of indigenous food systems as change makers,” she reported. Stressing that we should participate in the upcoming UNFSS, Cunningham also emphasized the necessity of supporting indigenous self-determined development projects, adding that there is a need to mobi-
lize local organizations to intensify the promotion of indigenous food systems which can, then, be done in collaboration with several support networks including the Pawanka Fund. Additionally, she called for advocating Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) support in relation to protecting and revitalizing indigenous food systems.

“During the pandemic in 2021, we have seen that the impact has been very strong in Paraguay. A lot of indigenous peoples died from COVID and the country’s second wave [of infection] is happening right now,” reported Mirtha Pereira Giménez of the Federación por la Autodeterminación de los Pueblos Indígenas (FAPI). As with other Ela-tia partners, FAPI was involved in the provision of COVID support to various communities in their area through the assistance of Tebtebba. She also shared on their organization’s involvement in the pursuance of indigenous territorial rights, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and project development in line with strengthening the indigenous ways of life.

For the Centre of Research and Development in Upland Areas (CERDA) in Vietnam, several priority initiatives were mentioned: a) allocation of forest rights in four districts in the area, considering that 3,000 hectares of forest land have not yet been allocated with such directives; b) conservation of indigenous knowledge, specifically against illegal logging; c) support for the set-up of community cooperatives; and d) capacity development for indigenous peoples. “Hanoi is suffering from a fourth wave of the coronavirus pandemic right now. There was a very low COVID vaccination rate in 2021 and infection rate is even higher this 2022 [that, then, requires boosting vaccination efforts to hopefully curb the said contagion],” shared Vu Thi Hien, adding that the coronavirus epidemic has prompted the application of several measures that limited face-to-face gatherings which, in turn, delayed the implementation of the organization’s two planned projects.

Representing the Dignité Pygmée (DIPY) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Adrien Sinafas cited their ongoing endeavor focusing on the economic empowerment of Pygmy women in five pilot areas. The projects aim to develop economic value of the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) via the establish-
ment of cooperatives, with capital provided by the DIPY, ran by Pygmy women themselves, where the community could buy their basic needs at low cost.

“Basic understanding of accounting was part of the financial literacy training provided by DIPY,” shared Sinafasi. “Modules included essentials like how to count money because many can see the bills but they did not know the [specific] value of each,” he explained. Integrated also in the said modules, he said, were the processes by which land tenure could be secured, especially those where NTFPs were collected. These processes included mapping or land demarcation, obtaining a land title, and the revival of the Community Basic Monitoring Information System (CBMIS) which could subsequently provide indigenous community members with sufficient knowledge of their territories and encourage them to fight for these.

“In Roraima, we need resources to continue the work we have done initially, like the ones toward women empowerment and forest protection and management. There is a great distance from Roraima to the forest,” reported Sinea Bezerra do Vale of Concelho Indigena de Roraima (CIR) in Brazil. While the indigenous council was able to secure some resources to support small projects in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation, women empowerment, and youth involvement in solar energy use, among others, she shared that there was still a need to further bolster indigenous advocacy work. “We need to strengthen indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge revival,” she pointed out.

Aside from the presentations shared by the Elatia partner representatives, the meeting focused on areas of coordination and collaboration in 2022 such as the upcoming UN global events of the Convention on Biological Diversity (UN-CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), specifically the Conference of Parties 27 (COP27), the GCF meetings, and the next cycle of the IN initiative in relation to the SDGs.

“This Elatia partnership has made a big difference. We have been working together to attain our goals, both for the
indigenous movement in general and for our communities in our own countries,” assessed Victoria Tauli-Corpuz of Tebtebba as she called for the strengthening of the network. “We should shape programs to further enhance indigenous peoples’ rights recognition and the overall pursuance of our collective advocacy,” she continued. She added that report- and story-sharing, specifically on how Elatia partners have made a difference in their respective communities and locations are vital to the fulfillment of indigenous peoples’ sustainable self-determined development.

Elatia is an indigenous network founded in 2008 composed of different indigenous peoples organizations all around the world that implement the IPSSDD Framework in various priority areas of work that delve on the acknowledgement and protection of indigenous lands, territories and resources, indigenous women and youth empowerment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, monitoring and protection of human and indigenous rights, revival of traditional knowledge and governance systems, and community-based monitoring systems implementation, among others.

Written by: Doris Borna Mae Esteban
Edited by: Helen Biangalen-Magata
Layout: Paul Michael Nera
Tebtebba Indigenous Information Service