

**Indigenous Peoples' Development, Diversity, and Inclusion:
Emerging and Ongoing Issues in Asia-Pacific
A Webinar Series**

Webinar 7: Indigenous Peoples, Development and Inclusion - A Gender Perspective

Friday, 27 November 2020

1:00 - 2:30 PM

WEBINAR PROCEEDINGS

About

This webinar discussed the development and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples through a gender lens. The panel discussion highlighted why gender issues are important to the inclusive socio-economic development of Indigenous Peoples, and shared positive results and lessons learned from Vietnam, India, Lao PDR and Nepal. This is the seventh webinar of SDCC's webinar series on Indigenous Peoples' Development, Diversity, and Inclusiveness.

Speakers

Moderator: Samantha Hung, SDCC, ADB

Overview: Tulsi Bisht, Senior Social Development Specialist, Safeguards Division, ADB

Welcome Remarks: Woonchong Um, Director General concurrently Chief Compliance Officer SDCC, ADB

Panelists:

Hoang Thi Thu Huyen is Chairperson of Trade Union of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam (MOLISA). From 2014 to 2019, as the Deputy Director of the Department on Gender Equality of MOLISA, she was responsible for developing and implementing the National Strategy and Program on Gender Equality. In that role, she attended annual sessions of UN Commission on the Status of Women and other international conferences on women's rights. She was also the coordinator of Gender Action Partnership (GAP), a policy forum for dialogue on gender equality between the Government and development partners in Viet Nam. She was the Chair of the 2017 APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy, an effective mechanism to integrate gender equality and women in APEC.

Vijaylakshmi Brara is a sociologist and Associate Professor at the Centre for Manipur Studies, Manipur University, Manipur. Her major areas of academic interest are gender, culture and grassroots institutions. Her research has focused on northeast India for three decades. She is the author of the widely acclaimed book, Politics, Society and Cosmology in India's North East (Oxford University Press). She has published around 30 articles.

Chansouk Insouvanh is a member of Khmu ethnic group from Lao PDR and a Senior Social Safeguards Consultant, who works part-time as a Social Development Specialist/Gender Advisor for the World Bank Vientiane Office. She holds a Master of Sciences in Environmental Policy and Planning, and a Master of Arts in Development Studies from Ohio University, USA; and a Bachelor of Arts and Certificate in Women's Studies from Flinders University, Australia. Her work focuses on promoting and empowering rural ethnic groups, especially women, to ensure their access to development project benefits.

Kailash Rai is a researcher at Martin Chautari, where she has worked for over a decade. Her work focuses on gender, feminism, sexuality and social justice along with intersectional lens. She is the author of *Indigenous Women's Institution, Movement and Writing* (2017) and the editor of *In Search of Identity: Sociocultural and Political Context of Indigenous Women* (2016). She holds a master's degree in Political Science from Tribhuvan University. She is a co-founder of the Indigenous Media Foundation which has operated Indigenous Television in Nepal since 2016.

Discussion

Setting the Scene

1. Tulsi Bisht explained that this webinar is part of an ongoing webinar series, under the banner of *Indigenous Peoples, Development, Diversity and Inclusiveness: Emerging and Ongoing Issues in Asia Pacific*, that the Safeguard Division has been conducting since August 2020, in collaboration with other thematic groups, sector groups, and regional departments. The webinar series consisted of seven thematic areas concerning the indigenous peoples. Tulsi relayed that three of these webinars have already been completed and this fourth webinar shall look at the gender perspective of Indigenous Peoples development and inclusion. The fifth webinar will be held on the following week and will discuss the topic, *Indigenous Peoples and the Environment: The Need for Synergy in Safeguards Approach*. Two more webinars will be conducted next year.

Welcoming Remarks

2. DG Woonchong Um expressed great pleasure in seeing all the participants in this webinar, organized collectively by the Gender Equity Thematic Group and Safeguard Division of the Asian Development Bank. He emphasized that inclusion is one of the key pillars of Strategy 2030 and the indigenous people is one of the key stakeholders. He challenged everyone to try much harder in making sure that the indigenous people participation is included and to look after the interest of everyone, including the IPs.

3. To substantiate his point, he reminded the audience that about 70% of the indigenous peoples live in the Asia-Pacific region. That they represent a rich diversity of cultures, languages, ways of life and social and political systems. That they maintain close links to their customary ancestral lands from the basis of their identity and way of life. But unfortunately, indigenous peoples are often excluded from development processes and opportunities failing to grant due consideration to their needs and priorities.

4. DG Um warned that development processes, if not carefully considered, can be a pain for indigenous peoples and communities, causing degradation of their traditional lands and ecosystems, or leading to displacement or involuntary settlement from traditional lands. Consequently, indigenous peoples are three times more likely to live in extreme poverty, compared to non-indigenous populations. Majority of them live in remote and rural areas with very little access to service and civic amenities. They are subjected to systemic discrimination and nonrecognition of their rights. And these factors result in a complex vulnerability which often means that the indigenous people find themselves living on the margins.

5. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) engagement with indigenous peoples is guided in the ADB's Strategy 2030, through *Operational Priority 1: Addressing Remaining Poverty and Reducing Inequalities* through three-pronged approach that focuses on improving human capital and social protection for all, generating quality jobs, and increasing opportunities for the most vulnerable.

6. In addition, the ADB's Safeguard Policy Statement aims to ensure that projects are designed and implemented in a way that respects the identity, dignity, human rights, livelihood systems and cultural uniqueness of indigenous peoples. The policy seeks to ensure that the indigenous communities actively participate in and receive culturally appropriate social and economic benefits from the development projects and do not suffer adverse impacts. In this regard, meaningful consultation with affected indigenous communities is a critical component of the policy and is required to be gender-inclusive and responsive and tailored to the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

7. With respect to today's topic of indigenous peoples and gender, he explained that gender is one of the primary axes around which socio-economic life is organized. Along with ethnicity, culture, social economic status and age, it determines men and women social status and access to resources. Indigenous women and girls are often among the most vulnerable experiencing double discrimination from both, their ethnicity and their gender. An additional factor is poverty. Being disproportionately affected by these factors, indigenous women often lack access to education and healthcare. They have limited opportunities to participate in decision-making. They are also prone to gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

8. As the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has stated, globalization presents additional challenges for indigenous people. The loss of natural resources and depletion of ecosystems, as well as changes in local and social decision-making structures have impacted the role of indigenous women in their communities.

9. DG Um underscored that gender equality is at the heart of ADB's priorities under Strategy 2030 and across the institution. ADB is fully committed to safeguarding the rights and freedom of indigenous women and create opportunities to reduce gender inequalities and support indigenous women's empowerment. He also stressed the value of the indigenous women in the transmission, preservation, and elaboration of the traditional and local knowledge related to sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, climate change and food security.

10. He noted that many indigenous women are taking the lead in the defense of the indigenous lands and territories; or advocating for indigenous people's collective rights worldwide. While ADB support to developing member countries have led to huge gains in poverty reduction, accelerated gender equality and produced lasting progress, there is still much to be done, especially in the indigenous communities.

11. To ensure that these communities receive benefits from social and economic development and become less vulnerable to change, the ADB must continue to strengthen dialogue with indigenous and ethnic minority groups, and particularly the women and young people. The ADB needs to ensure that it truly understands the IP priorities and ways of life and work together with the indigenous communities to develop appropriate approaches to promote inclusive development and growth.

12. He conveyed the importance of this webinar when it comes to achieving the goals mentioned earlier, as such meeting provides a venue for discussion, for sharing of knowledge of good practices and lessons learned from the field. This webinar series explores various developmental issues that are of concern to indigenous communities while emphasizing the need to acknowledge indigenous peoples as active change agents who demonstrate extraordinary resilience in the face of extreme adversities.

13. Finally, he expressed his expectation of hearing such stories of indigenous women in today's webinar through a panel of four women speakers from four developing countries of

ADB. They will collectively present diverse accounts of indigenous women's struggles and resilience which will be incredibly valuable for guiding the ADB's work.

14. He ended his remarks by way of introducing the moderator for this webinar, Samantha Hung, chief of the ADB's gender equity thematic group. According to Woonchong, Samantha recently assumed her position in October 2020 but she has been around ADB for much longer than that. She's a real old hand on how ADB works and for certain she will provide proper guidance to this webinar.

Samantha Hung – Moderator

15. Samantha greeted the participants and commented about the customized zoom background of the webinar, inspired according to her, by the rich tapestry of indigenous peoples. She reiterated the key issues that will be the focus of the discussions and proceeded to remind the participants of the house rules. After that, she introduced each of the panelists noting the very rich mix of discussants who will be sharing their perspectives on these three key questions:

- a. Why are gender issues important for the economic and social development of indigenous peoples?
- b. What are the key gender issues and gender gaps that we need to consider and prioritize when we are working with and for indigenous peoples?
- c. What positive results or lessons learned can you share from the work you've done or currently doing with indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities?

Hoang Thi Thu Huyen - Panelist

16. H. Huyen shared that Viet Nam's adherence to the principle "No One is Left Behind" has contributed to addressing the gaps and other gender issues among ethnic minorities although admittedly there is no one-size-fits-all policy that can respond to all the issues. She relayed that the Vietnamese constitution recognizes Viet Nam as a "unified nation of all ethnicities and that "all the ethnicities are equal and unite with, respect and assist one another for mutual development; all acts of discrimination against and division of the ethnicities are prohibited". Further, the Viet Nam Constitution also provides that the State shall implement a policy of comprehensive development and create the conditions for the minority ethnicities to draw upon their internal strength and develop together with the country.

17. According to Huyen, gender issues among ethnic minorities in Viet Nam are as diverse as culture and these are also context specific. There are 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, with 53 of them considered as ethnic minorities. The common gender issues among ethnic minorities are:

- a. Language Barriers. Women and girls have lower access to education and to other public activities which leads to them having more language barriers than their male counterparts;
- b. Housework is less among ethnic minorities men;
- c. Limited economic conditions tend to prevent ethnic minority women from investing in time-saving equipment at home; and
- d. Ethnic minority women tend to be more time poor than ethnic minority male.

18. These gender issues of ethnic minorities become a challenge and barrier for women to accept opportunities in public service, in business (economic opportunities), and in public decision-making even though Viet Nam government promotes women's roles and position in

all sectors. These challenges tend to perpetuate and reinforce gender issues among ethnic minority groups.

19. H. Huyen recounted her experience from 1999 to 2001, where she was involved in a project that aimed to enhance the reproductive health of the Ha Giang people in the northernmost mountainous province in Vietnam where 88% of the population are members of ethnic groups.

20. According to Huyen, most of the ethnic minority women in Ha Giang speak only their own ethnic language. They have low literacy rate and high time poverty. As most pregnant women customarily give birth at home. They are also not use to visiting a healthcare center for prenatal care. Thus, there is a high incidence of infant and maternal mortality in the said province. Through their intervention, the project changed this behavior and has contributed to the increasing the rate of prenatal care and thereby reducing the maternal death rate in the province.

Vijaylakshmi Brara – Panelist

21. Vijaylakshmi begun her discussion with an old Indian proverb that says, “*Earth is not a resource, it’s a source*”. She related this to the Earth Day celebrations where people talk about harmony with nature. According to her, much of the discussions centered on the ways to transform the current system – one that is based on the domination of people over nature, men over women, rich over poor - into a new system that is based on partnerships. She directed the audience to take notice of the binaries of domination, where there is a continuum of dominated categories (nature-women-poor) and the dominant categories (people-men-rich). Dr Brara emphasized the need to overcome the wider and deeper apartheid of masculine and exploitative developmental mindset.

22. She purported that the present developmental mindset has evolved by colonizing and marginalizing the indigenous. It destroyed and made the indigenous knowledge systems redundant and part of the so-called primitive; where anything to do with tribes is equal to primitiveness. Civilizations have started with invasions - ravaging the earth, brandishing the flora and fauna, erecting large structures, cutting down the courses of rivers, digging the earth, excavating the minerals – all these expressions sound very masculine.

23. As a student of Sociology, Symbolism, and Gender, she shared that she sees a lot of masculine, aggressive, and violent baseline in our developmental processes. The sexuality of the body-politic gets penetrated in the paradigms of development and be perceived as a process for control, domination, subjugation, and exploitation. Hence, as much as it sounds like a cliché, Dr Brara claimed that patriarchy is the source generating our developmental mindset as opposed to the traditional wisdom of women that talks about harmony (not subjugation), equality (not separateness), and wholesomeness (rather than isolation).

24. Moreover, gender according to Dr Brara is not only a difference between male and female, but also a form of power. There is a close relationship between gender relations and the degradation of the environment around us. The vulnerabilities stem from marginalization of women’s control over rights on land towards access to technologies, insecurities and displacements.

25. V. Brara conveyed that we need the women to teach our developmental policy makers about development, like how it was when women taught forest officials about forestry during the famous Chipko movement in the 1970’s in Northern India.

26. On gender gaps, in North East India specifically, V. Brara postulated that indigenous cultures are not free from patriarchy and hierarchy. These societies have been embroiled in the identity and self-determination movements. As a result, cultures linking to the identities have become very rigid making them regressive and not evolving from within. The major points are customary laws, political participation, sexual division, and masculine mindset. She provided the following examples:

- a. In Nagaland, the women traditionally work in paddies or fields as it is their responsibility to prepare the fields, sow, breed, harvest, and store the grain and produce, and above all, manage the genetic utilization and balance of the crops. Today, many of the womenfolk as an extension of the traditional roles are engage in secondary income for households through commercial weaving and sale of forest and agriculture products. Nagaland has been under the troubled waters of insurgency since more than 70 years now. The issue of independence from the Indian state has overshadowed all issues of societal development. It is these identity issues which are also impeding the equity growth of its womenfolk. They are all still asked to adhere to the tribe's customs and not challenge the equal rights. Therefore, in this whole gamut of discourses on deconstruction of the state and reconstruction of nationhood, the collaboration of tradition, religion, and culture reinforces the notion of identity, patriarchy, and the ideologies. And here of course, the justification is the customary laws.
- b. In Meghalaya, the village level institutions called the Dorbars exclude women by not allowing women to participate in the political institution. The women intelligentsia in Meghalaya are voicing their concerns over their customary laws.
- c. In Sikkim, which is bordering Bhutan, 50% of political seats are reserved for women in the grassroots level governance.
- d. Manipur also reserves 33% of political seats to women. But what differentiates between Manipur from other states is that women occupy over 33% of political seats in the local government. Women representation in local governments is very impressive. Ironically, in a patriarchal mindset, these women are expected to just sit there, be quiet, and not to be aggressive. In spite of all these, they have not been able to break the glass ceilings.

27. Interestingly, in Manipur, Nagaland, even in Mizoram, there have been traditions of women chieftains during the ancient times. But over time, just like the clans of Iroquois Nations, the women in power have been somehow erased from the traditions and histories of these societies. So therefore, there are no more "her stories". There are only "his stories".

28. She declared that none of the traditional institutions in the North East India are allowing women to participate in politics, and therefore, excluding them from decision-making.

29. The healthcare facilities are also dismal in North East India. Sick or pregnant women are being carried out on a sack they use as a kind of a stretcher. It is a horrible sight. And there are no roads, they go through to the jungle. So therefore, there is a high case of maternal and infant deaths and there is hardly any focus on this issue.

30. In conclusion, V. Brara raised two issues: (1) the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems and (2) the marginalization of women as the result of the modern capitalistic or modern masculine developmental processes.

31. As for the positive results, V. Brara noted three things: first, there is a very good baseline to start with, and that is the women's collective; second, the very tremendous success and rise of self-help groups; and finally, when women come physically in front, things are about to get changed.

32. She shared the story of Mrs. Keshli, former president of Nagaland Mothers Association. She is also a member of Indigenous Women's Association. She takes the Nagaland women planting trees, propagating the positive aspects of true cultivation. They are saying that this is the best way to maintain soil fertility. They emphasize the fact that it is not the money that matters, it is a food security which really matters. They are urging people to take this view and stop mining and the introduction of cash crops. Collectivity is the strength of women in all these. There are all-women market in Manipur called Ima (mother) Market. There is the Nagaland Mothers Association, and all the women's organizations in every community, church-based, indigenous, who does collective weaving, helping each other, mobilizing people in the resolution of conflicts, keeping the peace.

33. With some efforts by some funding agencies like ISAD, WFP and even government of India, these women's organizations have been able to form self-help groups that have grown to become very successful business ventures. But the developmental mindset is so rigid that these remain as micro efforts and not taken into the macro planning of the country.

34. She maintained that freeing the women from domestic chores will bring the repository of indigenous knowledge systems in the development discourse. Because then the women will get space then they will speak and then they will be heard. So women experience in managing natural resources, their involvement in climate sensitive activity such as agriculture, weaving, fishing, forestry and strong social networks in which they engage mean that they often hold knowledge, skills and experience that the fundamental for a successful developmental plans.

35. Dr Brara concluded her presentation with these questions: Who is listening? Who is going beyond binary the exploitative developmental mindset? Who is listening?

Chansouk Insouvanh – Panelist

36. Chansouk explained the context of the ethnic groups in Laos and compared them to Vietnam in terms of the number of different ethnic groups. The Lao is the main group while the 49 others are collectively called the Lao Multi-Ethnic Groups. Chansouk shared three case studies on how development projects in Laos have impacted the indigenous women and the indigenous communities.

- a. The first case study involved an ADB-funded project where a young Hmong ethnic woman engaged in community relations and community development activities is asked to sing to the public during community engagements. The people in the community received it so well since the staff is also very talented. Among those in the audience are Lao men from the city, from Vientiane Capital, working in the construction and timber companies. The project staff was ridiculed and harassed. She asked for help, but she did not get any. Members of the community including from her own family suggested that she just ignore the incidents for her own protection as well as not to go against Lao guests and humiliate her own family in public. She felt powerless, helpless, and humiliated not only as a woman but also as an ethnic minority. In this case, this is not only

a case of men dominating over women but also a majority ethnic group (Lao) dominating over a smaller ethnic group.

- b. The second example came from the experience of a project staff in a mining company. Women were recruited to drive trucks because they are more skillful, more patient than men, and they can take care of the trucks very well. Although it promotes gender equality, the mining company did not consider that men and women may need to engage in work differently. Since the women also work at night shift, there were cases that the women are being sexually harassed by work colleagues. One such victim was a married woman who was rejected by her husband after the incident.
- c. The third example is currently the talk of the town in many villages. There is a Chinese railway development project happening on the ground where lots of Chinese men perform construction work. A lot of young women, I specifically know that lots of them are from the Khmu ethnic group from the villages, are trying to gain “economic benefits” from the project.

37. C. Insouvanh demonstrated that these are real incidents on the ground. She emphasized the need for a code of conduct and a mechanism on how to properly implement it. There may be programs that promote gender sensitivity but the reality on the ground reveals that it is weak especially in the countryside, and that the issue that needs to be addressed is triggered by poverty and COVID-19, wherein young ethnic women are being exploited.

Kailash Rai – Panelist

38. Kailash commented on an established narrative that the indigenous nationalities of Nepal have high socio-cultural mobility in comparison to other communities. But unfortunately, she warned that it has a misleading conclusion. The said study was done in the early 1980s and stated that women from the indigenous communities are more enterprising and more involved in economic activities than those from other groups.

39. She compared this to a 2018 study that was conducted by the National Indigenous Women’s Federation on indigenous women’s economic empowerment. This study showed that indigenous women are socio-economically vulnerable and highly marginalized. It revealed that they are struggling as ethnic group to regain - not gain - but regain the multi-ethnic socio-economic capacity and to strengthen their efficiency for feminist and ethnic accompaniment to create a just society.

40. According to Kailash, the dominant narrative in Nepal today is that development (in terms of building infrastructure, achieving GDP growth, and providing access to social services) is not focused on the marginalized communities. Development projects have become a means to commit state violence against the indigenous peoples of Nepal. So indigenous nationalities of Nepal are being least benefited and highly involuntarily displaced, demolished and migrated from their ancestral territories due to the initiated development projects. She cited the following examples:

- a. The massive hydroelectric power projects being operated in the land territories of indigenous peoples of Nepal;
- b. The transmission lines that connect North and South (Nepal);
- c. Road constructions and road expansions that connect rural areas to urban areas bringing serious environmental problems including landslides.

41. For Kailash, these development projects profoundly lead to ruthlessness against the indigenous peoples through aggressive development. The indigenous communities and indigenous women are constantly demanding free, prior, and informed consent for them to be compensated or for them to receive shares of the benefits at the individual and collective levels of development projects. But the national and international development partners, or even local governments are not interested to consult with indigenous peoples. In this regard, the indigenous communities especially women bear the high socio-economic and environmental cost for development projects.

42. She pointed out that marginalized communities are always at high risk during the actual shock. The indigenous nationalities and the indigenous women of Nepal are having a long and intense resilience experience during the pandemic. Indigenous women play a vital role to cope with external shocks than men. There were a majority of female-headed household of indigenous communities who maintained their livelihoods even with limited access and resources provided by government.

43. Kailash hypothesized that the COVID-19 pandemic will contribute to further widening of the gap in the development activities on indigenous peoples in Nepal and indigenous women of Nepal. Locally, the economic activities where indigenous women are mostly involved in is with ecotourism. Indigenous women will find it difficult to find other income opportunities due to lack of education, language barrier, government's shifting priority to spend more on public health services, and lack of employment opportunities.

Open Forum

44. In moderating the open forum, Samantha Hung organized all the comments in the Q&A box into a set of related questions and directed the panelists to respond or provide an insight.

45. The first question wanted to get the perspectives of the panelists on how in some indigenous matriarchal societies, women actually have the highest status in the family level in terms of ownership of property, decision-making, and rights to inherit but this elevated status within the family is not necessarily reflected in the bigger political or broader society.

46. Dr Brara clarified that these societies are not "matriarchal" in the sense that it is the opposite of a "patriarchal" society. These are, however, matrilineal societies, as in Meghalaya, there are the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias that have a long tradition of a largely matrilineal system. It is true that inside the homestead, the women have a lot to say and to decide because the family unit is of the mother. The power relations are not there because in the homestead, it is the mother's brother who is the deciding figure. The power runs through the lineage, but it does not pass through women. It passes through the matrilineage to the mother's brother.

47. The second question wanted to explore how indigenous knowledge should be passed on from the indigenous women to the next generation considering that the indigenous women have a lot of valuable knowledge to offer and whether there are ways to integrate this through education systems for children.

48. Chansouk emphasized the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge in the formal structures (education) and within the legal framework. She suggested that understanding the similarities and differences between and among the ethnic groups and incorporating these into the educational system as part of the curriculum is one way of promoting ethnic group sensitivity. In Laos, she cited as an example, many people are talking about equality, but sometimes they overlook the specific needs of the ethnic groups. To illustrate, it is important for her as a Khmu to communicate in her own language and to be

recognized as a Khmu. Individual ethnicity should never be invalidated over homogeneity or equality.

49. Huyen shared the Vietnamese government's policy of providing educational opportunity for all the ethnic minorities. She narrated how the teachers assigned in the marginalized areas are encouraged to learn the ethnic minority language and understand the cultures of the all the peoples in there. Viet Nam also maintains an ethnic minorities group channel in Vietnamese television.

50. The next set of questions are inter-related. The first one is a supposition that there might be some reluctance to address indigenous peoples and women issues for fear of being viewed as interfering with culture or imposing western values. A related follow up question is addressed to Huyen, as to whether there was a tension or conflict when she went to introduce modern health practices vis-à-vis the traditional health practice.

51. Huyen agreed that it was not easy especially in her case, when she saw very young girls already as mothers with four children.

52. As for Nepal, Kailash argued that indigenous communities are facing two layers of intervention. One is from the mainstream, dominant, and patriarchal culture. The other layer is from the globalized or western culture. Kailash shared the problem in Nepal as it attempts to re-indigenize the cultures. The indigenous women are considered as the pillar and bearers of culture, they preserved the cultures through the language, traditional customs, and indigenous knowledge. But the Nepali indigenous women today are facing difficulty identifying what comprises indigenous cultures because of the absence of historical data or documents. All the documents and facts were erased by the state, erased by the government from the beginning.

53. Chansouk deliberated on the process of promoting gender equality in development projects by requiring more women to participate in the consultation meetings although at the same time, proponents are aware that their culture allows only the men to attend such meetings. Some women would say, "*Why would you force me to do things that are not done before?*" In the same manner that land titles are now under the names of both husband and wife, contrary to indigenous tradition. These may also be considered as impositions from the western culture. It might conflict with tradition, but it does not have to be forced on them.

54. The fourth question would like to explore the conditions of women with disabilities and how they compare with the indigenous or ethnic women in terms of the degree of discrimination.

55. Dr. Brara brought to the core the importance of understanding the theories of intersectionality. She observed that what we see in the North East today is the rise of a new class of elites among the tribes. Their life and their world view are very different from the rest of the populace. So much so that today when we hear voices of a certain tribes, they are not sure whether it is a voice of the whole gamut of tribe or it is only the voice of the few. Class, especially in Indian context, especially North East context, class has to be taken into account in our discussions.

56. The fifth question probed on whether it is fair that the land, which is originally a property under a man's name is compensated and replaced with a new land title under the name of both husband and wife.

57. Dr Brara shared her belief that it would be a male-centric of a policy if the compensation is given to the male members only and not to both husband and wife.

58. For Huyen, she believed it is fair for the land title be under the name of the husband and wife.

59. Chansouk, on the other hand, offered her view that land issues are very delicate and complex matters in Laos.

60. As for Nepal, Kailash expressed her apprehension that the provision itself is being misused. She suggested to pay more attention to it as there have been data that supported the growth rate of land ownership by women.

61. At the end of the webinar, Samantha thanked the panelists for their contributions in the fruitful and interesting discussions on the presented issues.