



Creating Waves, Fostering Movements

2nd Asia Pacific Feminist Forum

Empowering women to use law as an instrument of change and promoting women's human rights in the Asia Pacific region.

F  **FORUM NEWS**

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Dear Sisters, Friends, Feminists and Readers,

This special edition of Forum News is dedicated to APWLD's recent 2nd Asia Pacific Feminist Forum, held in Chiang Mai, Thailand on May 29th- June 1st! Our forum brought almost 300 feminists from across the five sub-regions of Asia and the Pacific (Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia and the Pacific) as well as global allies. It was a beautiful and empowering gathering filled with activists from the grassroots, lawyers, academics and women human rights defenders working on the multiple struggles of women in the region. At the forum we met women on the front line of women's rights activism: land rights activists, migrant workers, Indigenous women, rural women leaders, democracy activists, labour movement leaders, women who have been imprisoned, harassed and intimidated yet remain determined to pursue our collective struggle for justice, rights and equality.

The APFF provided a space to be inspired and invigorated but also, let us collectively strategise to shape movements, new analysis and to imagine different social, political and economic structures. This was achieved with more than 30+ workshops as well as open space where participants created conversations needed to advance our movement. Our world is at a crossroad.

Global policy making has led to wealth, power and resources accruing to a tiny minority of the world's richest and most powerful people and corporations. Policies of increasing consumption, financial speculation, unregulated exploitation of the world's resources, privatisation of essential human services, resources and infrastructure, deregulation of labour and economies have made the world unsustainable, insecure and grossly unequal. Women account for approximately two thirds of people living in extreme poverty. Austerity measures, adopted to respond to the financial crisis, have reiterated neo-neoliberal approaches that fuel wealth inequalities between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women.

But we can change this. We know that the only way to achieve real and lasting change is through the power of peoples movements. Big or small, local or global, feminist movements are powerful strategies that can and have shaken political, economic and

cultural perspectives and played a powerful part in stimulating change. We need to be building movements to shift and take power, to challenge dominant structures and systems - particularly patriarchy, globalisation, militarism and fundamentalisms. We are facing a global moment where decisions about the future of this planet are being made - we need a fully equipped and powerful movement to shape that future! On behalf of APWLD's 180 extraordinary members I welcome you to relive the APFF through our participant's reflections and stories, and photos.

Kate Lappin
Regional Coordinator, APWLD

APWLD Members in the News

ASIA FEMINIST FORUM TO DISCUSS BURMA'S INTERFAITH MARRIAGE BILL

CHIANG MAI, Thailand – Burmese women are raising concerns about a proposed interfaith marriage law during a major conference in Thailand that brings together about 300 feminists from across the Asia-Pacific region.

On Saturday, the second day of the Asia Pacific Feminists Forum (APFF) in the northern city of Chiang Mai, they plan to seek advice as they devise a strategy for countering the proposed law, which would require Buddhist women to get permission from their parents and local authorities before marrying a man of any other faith.

"This law takes away women's decision-making power," Htar Htar, founder of the Rangoon-based Akhaya women's network, told The Irrawaddy on the sidelines of the forum on Friday. "This is not just a local problem—it is a global issue. We will discuss how to respond through collective efforts."

May Sabe Phyu, coordinator of Burma's Gender Equality Network, said Burmese women would seek support from other feminists.

"We will see whether they have had experiences tackling similar problems," she said.

*Excerpted from the IRRAWADY News website,
<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/asia-feminist-forum-discuss-burmas-interfaith-marriage-bill.html>*

ADVERSARIAL POLITICS CREATE BARRIER TO PACIFIC WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE, SAYS FIJI ADVOCATE

A group of Pacific women parliamentarians, former parliamentarians, future parliamentarians, policy makers and civil society advocates are meeting in Fiji to advance women's political participation and leadership in the region.

The Pacific Islands have consistently produced the lowest number of women in governance in the world. In the island nations that comprise the Pacific Islands Forum (without Australia and NZ), only 4.7 percent are women. If the 13 women elected in the 2006 Fiji election are not included, the figure drops even lower to 2.6 percent for the remaining countries.

The 20 women from seven different island nations and territories – Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and West Papua – are participating in the Suva workshop organised by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) have come together to address the low levels of participation but also to share approaches to transformative leadership that prioritise consensus building, accountability and solidarity.

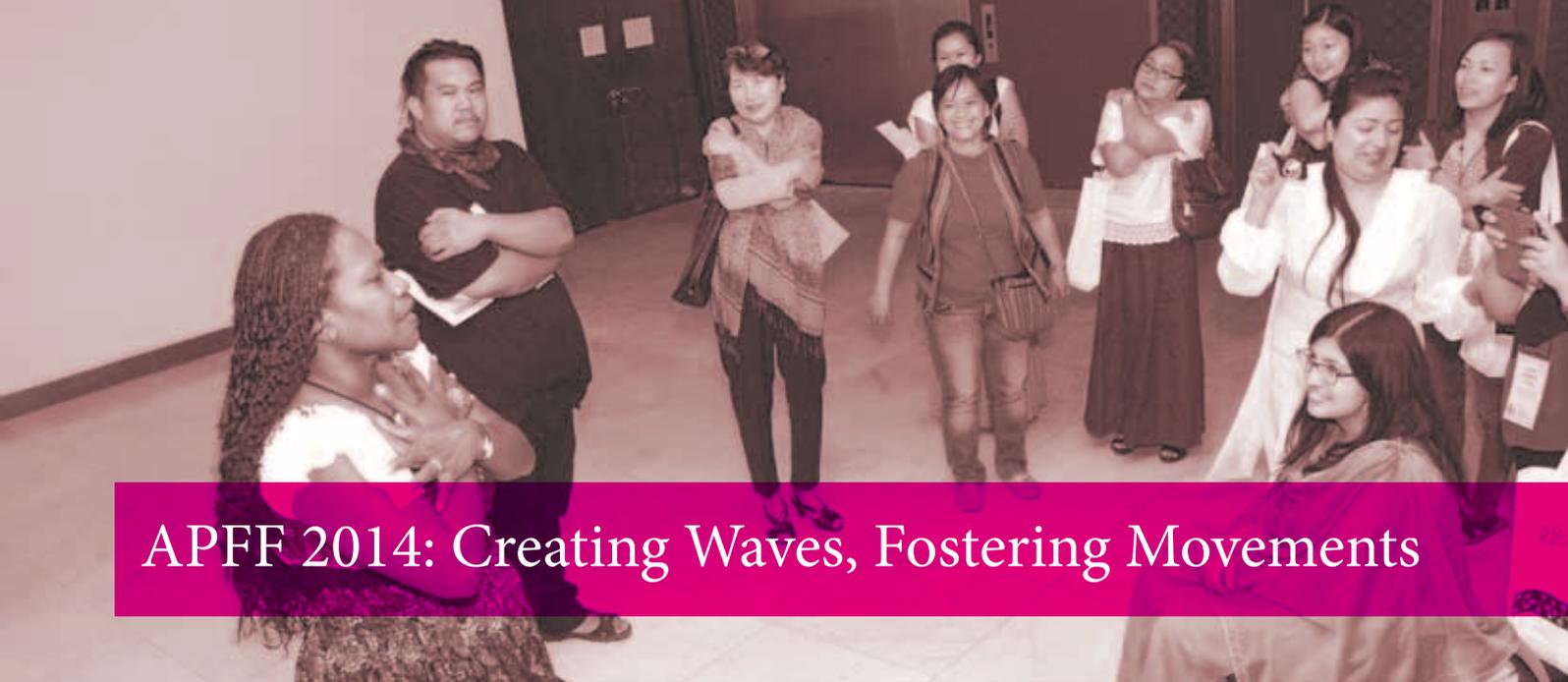
"Adversarial models of government are one of the barriers to women's participation" said Mere Samisoni of Fiji. "Women can model different forms of Pacific leadership that are collaborative, democratic and accountable to our communities."

This model of leadership is particularly critical in countries or communities where conflict and militarism have occurred.

Countries recovering from long term conflict have often turned to women as leaders to offer a new form of leadership and to lead genuine commitments to development. But changing leadership models requires a larger cohort of women to have an impact.

"I was inspired by the way Fijian women leaders are working across party political divides in a spirit of collaboration and solidarity to secure a return to democracy" said former Papua New Guinea Member of Parliament Dame Carol Kidu, a resource person for the training.

Excerpted from Pacific Scoop, <http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2014/01/adversarial-politics-create-barrier-to-pacific-women-participating-in-public-life-says-fiji-advocate/>



APFF 2014: Creating Waves, Fostering Movements

Photo Credit: Lisa Kerry

by *Shobha Shukla*

The 2nd Asia Pacific Feminist Forum, organised by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) kick started in Chiang Mai, Thailand on 29th May, 2014. It brought together nearly 300 feminists from 30 countries of the five sub-regions of Asia and the Pacific as well as global allies. Activists, lawyers, academics and women human rights defenders working on the multiple struggles of women in this region gathered to collectively share and strategise to shape movements, and to imagine different social, political and economic structures.

On the opening evening, the forum saw a conglomerate of spirited women determined to pursue our collective struggle for justice, rights and equality. There were land rights activists, migrant workers, Indigenous women, rural women leaders, democracy activists, labour movement leaders, women who have been in difficult situations and yet remained committed to their cause. Their diverse backgrounds notwithstanding, the main aim of the forum was to sharpen activism and strengthen our strategies to meet the multiple challenges that we face as feminists.

Officially starting this 4 day event, Sanaiyya Faheen Ansari, Regional Counsellor at APWLD and Senior Deputy Director Gender and Social Justice Unit, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) in Bangladesh called the Feminist Forum as an open space for women to share ideas and to get inspired by each other to strengthen and deepen the feminist movement. In her welcome address, Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator of APWLD, appealed to the women to strengthen 'our movement and solidarity' by engaging meaningfully with the forum and

enlivening and enriching it with their experiences. She said that while the impact of globalisation, fundamentalism, militarisation and patriarchy ran as undercurrent theme of the meet, little could have one imagined that the forum will be held at a time when Thailand was under military rule.

It was an evening of performances that showcased the diversity of expression and inspiration that goes into feminist activism. Participants visited a round of sites within the venue where they were treated to a rap about domestic worker's rights, a song about indigenous women's plight, a heartfelt monologue on violence against women, a community mandala, and a rousing dance.

The cheering gathering joined Kate in raising a mocktail toast to our sisterhood and solidarity – the anti-patriarchy punch.



Photo Credit: Lisa Kerry



Gender Justice to be at the Heart of Development Justice

Photo Credit: Bing Concepcion

By Shobha Shukla

The Asia and the Pacific Region contains some of the world's most powerful economies and the 21st Century is often touted to belong to this region. Yet the region is home to 66% of the world's poorest poor. Denouncing such stark disparities, the 1st plenary session at the 2nd APFF (Asia Pacific Feminist Forum) currently being held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, focussed upon 'Feminist Visions—framing strategies, analysis and resistances in the current political, economic and social moment'. The speakers, as well as the audience, reiterated the need for a new development framework based upon development justice model (as opposed to the corporate model) that includes economic justice, social justice, redistributive justice, environmental justice and accountability to people.

Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator, Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development, lamented that globalisation, fundamentalism, militarisation and patriarchy have joined hands to produce the stark inequality plaguing our world. Research shows that the total earnings of 85 individuals of the world are more than the combined income of 50% of the world's population. One member of the Walton family that owns Wal-Mart store chain earns in one minute what a garment worker earns in her whole life time. In our hunger for power and degradation of natural resources "we have already exceeded 4 of the 9 environmental boundaries, making planet earth environmentally unsustainable. Ownership of land is concentrated in the hands of a few which further fuels women injustice."

She exhorted that to chart our common strategies and the way forward in solidarity with each other.

Judy M Taguiwalo, Chairperson Committee on Women Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Philippines appealed for resisting the neo-liberal hijack of feminism. She insisted upon harnessing women's energies to remove glaring economic and social inequalities by promoting the type of feminism in which gender emancipation goes hand in hand with participatory democracy and social solidarity. Redistribution remains the key plank of this feminism which is very much wedded to the people's movement that is both economic and political. However while creating waves and fostering movements, it is important to clarify economic, political and social context of the region and how women respond collectively to such context.

Judy pointed out that:

- Increasing poverty in the region further increases heavy workload for women; reduces their job opportunities more than men
- Privatisation of social services results in women taking on more care-giving roles on top of economic responsibilities
- Fundamentalism curtails women's already limited exercise of their human rights and exacerbates violence against women
- War and the accompanying human rights violations are affecting more and more women
- Migrant women are highly vulnerable to violence and to unprotected work conditions
- Loss of bio-diversity and environmental quality affect rural and indigenous women adversely

She said that, "We must say no to Privatisation; say no discrimination on the bases of class, gender,



Photo Credit: Bing Concepcion

Judy Taguiwalo

or disability; say yes to Peace instead of war and militarisation; and insist upon Inclusive growth and development”.

In the opinion of Tin Tin Nyo, General Secretary, Women’s League of Burma, “feminism is a collection of ideologies and movements aimed at defining and defending equal political, economic, cultural and social rights for women. The focus of feminists’ movements should be to influence decisions on matters concerning women (including building sustainable peace) through greater participation of women in political decision making processes, economic empowerment and increasing access to natural resources. There should be zero tolerance for all forms of violence”.

Rizwana Hassan, an environmentalist from Bangladesh (whose speech was read in absentia) spoke about the struggle for environmental justice in Bangladesh where 60% of the population earns their living from agriculture, while millions depend on the forest for their livelihood. Degradation of the environment has direct implication for the commoners whose lives are inextricably linked with nature and natural resources. Women are especially vulnerable to such degradation as their access gets further limited and their ability to cope with alternative choices is less.

The core values of the women’s movement in Bangladesh include upholding community



Photo Credit: Bing Concepcion

Tin Tin Nyo

ownership and management of natural resources in a just, equitable and gender sensitive way. This runs contrary to the core objective of commercialisation through the ongoing exploitative mode of resource utilisation. The strategies include legal assistance, awareness raising, community mobilisation, and networking both at national and global level.

It would be appropriate to quote the great poet and author Maya Angelou (who passed away recently) here:

‘Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
But still like air
I will rise. I will rise’

Let all of us rise in solidarity against injustice and inequality affecting society.



Building Feminist Movements To Stimulate Change

Photo Credit: Bing Concepcion

By Shobha Shukla

Grassroots women of the Asia Pacific Region have borne the brunt of the unrelenting global desire for increased consumption and accumulation of wealth by a tiny minority. Their aspirations and livelihoods are regularly trampled upon in this new Asian Century, prompting thousands of women to be at the forefront of leading movements in their communities for social justice, economic equity and accountability.

Helen, Chanreasmey, Vernie and Khadiza are four such women leaders from 4 different countries spreading feminist movements on 4 different, yet interlinked issues, who shared their experiences of triumphs and travails at the 2nd plenary session—Feminist Resistances-- of the 2nd APFF currently being held in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The session had for its audience activists from various feminist movements related to indigenous women, peace and security, LGBTI, sex workers, disability, environmental justice, peasants/farmers, migrants, civil and political rights, and many more. The suffering and victimisation of women as a result of the civil war and the degradation of their environment and lives by the mining industry inspired Helen Hakena of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, cofounder of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency to start a movement to protest against violence against women and to restore peace to Bougainville.

"We mobilised communities, particularly women, to speak up against the atrocities they were being subjected to. We were prohibited from making speeches. So, wearing black badges, we took out marches singing songs demanding peace. Each one of us was a leader in our own way".

Helen lamented that although now peace has returned to the island, other developmental problems have cropped up. A huge copper mine has been reopened and sold to foreign investors, endangering the livelihood of the local people. Women have not been included in the talks of reopening of the mines. It was only after returning from a conference in New York at the beginning of this year, where she heard about developmental justice, that Helen organised a Women's Mining Forum.

"We formed a women only development committee to negotiate about issues related to mining—addressing land owners' grievances, including women in mining committees, payment of adequate compensation by the mining company to the people concerned, especially widows and orphans".

The session had for its audience activists from various feminist movements related to indigenous women, peace and security, LGBTI, sex workers, disability, environmental justice, peasants/farmers, migrants, civil and political rights, and many more. Helen mentioned that they were building movements to deal with other issues affecting Bougainville—such as the unlawful torture and killing of women (including a rights defender) branded as witches. Till date there has been no justice and no arrests made.

Khek Chanreasmey became a land and housing rights activist when her home in Phnom Penh's Boeung Kak area came under threat of eviction due to an urban development project. The Cambodian government gave a 99 years lease contract for that area to a private company. Faced with the fear of losing their homes without any decent

compensation, she mobilised the women of the 4200 affected families to protect their land and home through non-violent means. She played a key role in securing tenure for 634 families (including her own), despite mounting odds. Her fight for housing rights and for the right to live continues under the slogan 'Even Birds Need A Nest'.

Vernie Yocogan Diano is an indigenous woman (Kankanaey Bontoc) and a human rights activist from the Cordillera region, Philippines. She has been espousing the cause of indigenous women, especially in relation to their ownership of land and natural resources. Corporations and governments are conniving together to gain control over these assets for their selfish interests. In Cordillera itself 66% of the land is owned by big corporations. Vernie felt that, "Although women are powerful instruments for bringing social change, their role is not highlighted in mainstream media. We have to bring women's contribution to the pages of history-- to the forefront".

It was her first foreign visit for Khadiza Akter, Office Secretary at the Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation and Treasurer of Awaj Foundation, Bangladesh. She has been working for the past 12 years to defend the rights of readymade garments' workers. Bangladesh has >4500 readymade garment factories employing over 4 million workers, 85% of whom are women. This industry is the biggest income earner for Bangladesh and yet its workers are the most ill-treated ones. When Khadiza started working in a garment factory at the tender age of 12, she was appalled at the human rights abuse and harassment at her work

place and felt a strong need of trade unions of women employed in the garment industry. She joined the Bangladesh Independent Garment Worker Union Federation, learnt about the legal rights of workers and organised her co-workers to demand them. This resulted in her harassment by the management and ended in the termination of her services.

With help from the President of Awaj Foundation, the untiring efforts of Khadiza and other likeminded women have now resulted in the formation of 150 registered trade unions, largely managed by women. Khadiza strongly believes that, "Workers of all garment factories should be organised and unionised. As the buyers earn a profit of 77% from our goods, they must ensure the health/ life safety and job security of the work force in return. Negotiations between workers and factory owners are very important and these have already begun because of our combined efforts." All the speakers agreed that women should be united in their efforts and fight together for their legal rights. Women's movements are continuing their struggle and their links with national, sub regional, regional and global networks need to be strengthened so that all work in harmony. Vernie rightly remarked that, "There is no shortcut to building movements. We have to go through the process of mobilising and strengthening women by raising awareness and building capacities so that they can make informed choices and collectively achieve a lot. Establishing linkages/partnerships with other networks/movements and sharing resources and ideas is important because Women united can never be defeated."



Photo Credit: Bing Concepcion

Khek Chanreasmey



Photo Credit: Bing Concepcion

Khadiza Akter



Barriers To Women's Rights

By Shobha Shukla

Despite women's rights to economic, social and cultural equality, poverty and discrimination still remains the reality for a large majority of them in the Asia Pacific Region. Women not only comprise 70% of the world's poor, they are also victims of the greed and avarice of the powers that are. They are the ones who endure physical, mental and emotional hardships and are yet denied any political or economic gains. Women's bodies are targeted in many devious ways—be it a forced abortion to kill the female foetus, or acid attack to teach her a lesson, or sexual violence to subjugate her, or honour killing for daring to exercise her rights.

Several feminist leaders and participants, at the recently concluded 2nd Asia Pacific Feminist Forum 2014, organised by APWLD in Chiang Mai, shared with CNS their thoughts on the most pressing problems besetting women that need to be redressed keeping gender justice in mind.

What came out very strongly in these interviews was the scary and ugly rise of religious fundamentalism. Religion and law now seem to be coming together to discriminate against women. Faith based extreme nationalism is resulting in the violation of women's human, sexual and reproductive health rights. In Brunei they have adopted the anti-women Shariat. In the multi-religious country of Malaysia, there are groups of politicians in favour of adopting the Hudood law which states the bounds for acceptable behaviour and punishment for crimes and is very anti woman. In many other countries too right wing extremists are trying to subvert women's freedom of expression and action in very subtle ways.

In Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country, an anti-interfaith law has been proposed that forbids a Buddhist woman to marry a Muslim, under the garb of protecting her. The all powerful Buddhist monks are deliberately trying to snatch away from women their right of making informed personal choices. Delegates at the forum from Myanmar said that women groups are fighting hard against this law but are not very sure if they would succeed in protecting their freedom. They wondered, "Why are we moving backwards instead of going forward for development of women?"

In recent years, religion along with militarism has also been used to systematically create divisions in the indigenous communities of Philippines to destroy their culture of unity. Coupled with this is the development aggression of the government, where the state and corporations are subverting the communities by imposing development projects (like mining and energy) that are threatening their very existence and filling the corporates' coffers. The framework of development still revolves about monopolising land and resources-- not for women but for industries. Lives of indigenous and rural women depend upon land for their survival but the structures of power are taking it away from them.

In Papua New Guinea women are denied economic, political and social justice. Domestic violence, rape and childhood pregnancies though common are not on the government's priority list. Even though the society is matriarchal and women are owners of land, in reality the power rests in the hands of men. Women are not empowered to participate in political negotiations concerning the land they own.

We are at the beginning of the Asian Century. The battleground of struggle for women's rights is shifting to the Asia Pacific region. Our agenda should be social transformation to bring about lasting changes. An imposed development framework influences and vitiates the mind set of people including women. Women are often led to believe that their culture demands them to be subservient to males. We have to build their consciousness and debunk the myth that reprehensive and dominating behaviour of males is normal. This change can happen only by enabling a process of empowerment of women so that they themselves are aroused to take action. It will have to come from within and not imposed from outside. As one delegate remarked, "Having good laws does help but if the government does not respect the rights of women and communities, then laws do not work due to poor implementation.

It is only the collective strength and unity of women that can bring about a change."

The five finger model of development justice was at the core of deliberations at the feminists' meet. This model addresses the issues plaguing womenfolk by aiming for equitable distribution of wealth, power and resources between all human beings through: redistributive justice to redistribute resources and opportunities to everyone equitably; economic justice to make economies work for people rather than compel people to work for economies; social justice to eliminate all forms of exclusion and guarantee human rights to all; and environmental justice to hold countries accountable for environmental disasters that affect especially the marginalised communities.



Women human rights defenders and allied movements defending women's rights in Burma / Myanmar opposing the Interfaith Marriage Bill



The Power of Feminism Why we still need to fight for Women's Rights

Photo Credit: Lisa Kerry

Hilary Cadigan

"We're living in a world of obscene inequality," says Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator of the Chiang Mai-based Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD). "Right now, 85 people own more wealth than half of the world's population."

It's the opening plenary session at the second Asian Pacific Feminist Forum (APFF), held at the (fittingly named) Empress Hotel here in Chiang Mai. Over 300 feminists are gathered from around the region, and the Imperial Ballroom is buzzing with energy. Next to me sits a soft-spoken woman in a hijab who hails from the Philippines, and on the other side is a woman from Georgia (the country) wearing a black t-shirt festooned with police tape that reads, Caution: Women Crossing the Line.

Onstage, Lappin, a Chiang Mai based Australian who has been working for women's rights for the past two decades, goes on to describe the particular blend of militarism, globalisation, fundamentalism, patriarchy and environmental catastrophe that forms the world we're living in today, one desperately in need of activism and reform.

"This so-called 'Asian Century' that economists talk about is built on the shoulders of women – enslaved, displaced, oppressed women," Lappin continues. I look around the room and there they are, rows and rows of female activists from some of the most repressive nations in the world: India, Nepal, Burma, Pakistan (where just two days prior a pregnant woman was remorselessly stoned to death by her own family for refusing to marry her cousin). They're listening intently, nodding along.

A woman in a wheelchair raises her fist in unity at one point and I feel a fluttering in my stomach, the threat of hot tears under my eyelids. This is real, and powerful.

Next up on stage is Judy M. Taguiwalo, a twice-imprisoned activist from the Philippines who has been fighting for women's rights since her university days in the late 1960s. She scrolls through photos of protests past on a projector before launching into a critique of the current situation. The battle has not been won, she says, when militarisation is big business and the number of unemployed, impoverished, vulnerable women increases even as Asian economies boom.

"We women have to come together and fight," says Tin Tin Nyo, General Secretary of the Woman's League of Burma, who is currently battling proposed legislation that will make interfaith marriage illegal in Burma. "We have to start calling ourselves feminists."

THE F WORD

Feminism. The word that hath inspired a million wars, mostly on Twitter feeds and the comments section of Salon, these days. You can't throw a rock into cyberspace without hitting a new essay or op-ed devoted to either renouncing the word or embracing it, or another survey, or another personal essay: "Why I'm Not a Feminist" or "Why Feminism Doesn't Need Rebranding" or "Can Dudes Be Feminists?"

Meanwhile, the de rigueur media move of the moment seems to be asking random female celebrities whether or not they identify as feminists. The responses run the gauntlet of witlessness: "That's too strong," says Kelly

Clarkson. "I'm not a feminist! I love men!" says Lady Gaga. "Whenever people bring up feminism, I'm like, god. I'm just not really that interested," says Lana Del Rey, who goes on to claim she's more interested in "you know...our intergalactic possibilities." And Taylor Swift is like, "Wait, what? I like kissing boys in the rain." (Okay, that last one was a bit of a paraphrase.)

Now, while I certainly wouldn't claim that a bunch of white Americans famous for singing pop songs should be held up as a global example of how to think and what to be, these comments illustrate a sad state of affairs for a few reasons. One, of course, is that women feel the need to publicly reject a word that simply means "the theory of political, economic, and social equality of the sexes."

It's also sad that our public discussions of feminism have devolved into this: debating semantics and taking cues from the uninformed opinions of celebrities. This is sad because it makes us forget that feminism is not a thing of the past, nor is it merely the territory of successful white western women; it's a living, breathing thing that is just as relevant and necessary today as it was a hundred years ago, and there's still a lot of work left to do.



A CRUEL TWIST OF FATE

Funnily enough, most of those who reject the word feminism (which is, depressingly, about 80 percent of the American population, according to a recent poll) actually do claim to believe that "men and women should be social, political, and economic equals" – which is, of course, the very definition of feminism. While many of these people probably just don't know what feminism actually means, or have antiquated stereotypes of hairy-pitted bra burners that they find threatening, some

are rejecting feminism for other, more compelling reasons.

Let's return for a minute to that elite 85-person group that holds 50 percent of the world's wealth. Within it, there are 11 women, the richest of whom is number six on the list: Christy Walton of the infamous Walmart fortune. Now consider this: in just one minute, Christy earns more than a female Bangladeshi garment worker will earn in her entire lifetime.

"This must be addressed within the feminist movement," says Kate Lappin. "Our goal is not to just have more rich women and more poor men; our goal is to flatten hierarchies. That's why we focus on justice and development. Equality is one element only, it's not the whole thing."

Indeed, one of the biggest dividers of feminism today is what APFF speaker Taguiwalo called the "neoliberal hijack of feminism." She and others argue that the global feminist movement has let itself be engulfed in a westernised, capitalist agenda that leaves most people – particularly the marginalised women of the world – out of the picture entirely.

"In a cruel twist of fate, I fear that the movement for women's liberation has become entangled in a dangerous liaison with neoliberal efforts to build a free-market society," wrote British feminist Nancy Fraser in *The Guardian* last year. "That would explain how it came to pass that feminist ideas that once formed part of a radical worldview are increasingly expressed in individualist terms."

Indeed, some of today's most prominent self-proclaimed feminists are wealthy, high-powered white women like Sheryl Sandberg, the Facebook COO whose bestselling book *Lean In* encouraged women to embrace feminism by being assertive at work and climbing the corporate ladder. Unfortunately, while not inherently wrong, this message comes off as elitist and exclusionary when the majority of women are too busy working minimum wage jobs and raising children to even approach the ladder, let alone climb it.

In many ways, this internal disconnect is exactly what APWLD seeks to address. Established in Malaysia in 1986 before moving to more open-minded Chiang Mai a decade later, the forum focuses on encouraging a new global model of development justice, one that asserts the rights of people over profit. Feminism, here, is a movement

that leaves no one behind, one that addresses not just the elite few but the collective whole. And in a region that contains within it some of the world's biggest gender gaps (globally, Pakistan ranks second only to Yemen for gender inequality), this is crucial work.

WOMEN ON THE FRINGE

During my days at APFF, I was able to attend a number of eye-opening workshops led by women from around the region. What struck me most was the huge range of subjects spoken about, the vast scope of what feminists are trying to accomplish on a grassroots level here in Asia. Some of the most profound statements came from voices that are often left out of the picture entirely, including women with disabilities and sex workers. These two very different groups had surprisingly similar things to say about their marginalised positions not only within the general population, but within the feminist movement.

"Society has turned sex into a bad, weird thing," says Liz Hilton, American spokesperson for the Thai sex worker rights group Empower. "It tries to keep groups of women separate, the good girls versus the bad girls. That's what we're trying to change."

The three Thai sex workers sitting at the table beside her nod their heads. This particular workshop is primarily a Q&A session entitled *Why Good Girls Go Bad*, designed to transcend one of the most age-old internal divides of the feminist movement: sex work. The women at the table are in the process of creating a new model for their much maligned occupation by becoming their own agents, via a unique Chiang Mai venture called *Can Do Bar*, the only bar in Thailand owned and operated by sex workers themselves. At the same time, they're trying to erase the stigma and the misconceptions that so often accompany sex work.

"Sex work is not an accident, it's a job," says Lily, who wears a t-shirt that reads, *Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere*. "We are not victims, so please don't try to save us."

LET'S TALK ABOUT THAILAND

As one of the first Asian countries to grant women the right to vote (in 1932), Thailand possesses the highest percentage of working women in the Asia Pacific region, one of the lowest gender gaps in Asia, and until recently, a female prime minister. Add that to the widespread visibility of "ladyboys" and seemingly laissez-faire approach to sex work, and you may come away with the opinion that Thailand is quite progressive when it comes to gender.

Or, you might look through a different lens, observing Thailand's equally prominent reputation as a hub for sex trafficking coupled with the fact that abortion is illegal, Thai soap operas glorify

not only hugely limiting gender stereotypes but also rape, and the Buddhist Sangha considers womanhood itself a direct result of bad karma. Then there's the sky-high teen pregnancy rates (Thailand ranks number one in Asia), the rising levels of domestic violence, and the surprising lack of both sexual health and gender studies at all levels of education.

Ariya Svetamra is a Women's Studies lecturer at Chiang Mai University, the first of only two universities in all of Thailand

to teach Women's Studies. "We get about 10 to 20 students a semester, mostly women and transgender students," Ariya tells me. "What we teach is completely new to them, and many say they never knew about gender construction before, only that their mothers do the household chores and their fathers go to work. They were never taught to question that."

Ariya says there is a notable lack of gender knowledge in Thailand, and very little talk of sex aside from some rather obsolete reproductive health classes taught at some schools. "Women in Thailand are marginalised," she adds. "There is a fear of feminism because many think it is anti-men. Here, women are constructed to become 'good girls' with a concentration on virginity. At the same time, they're never taught when to say yes or no, so they don't know what's dangerous because no one ever talks about it."

Feminism, here,
is a movement
that leaves no
one behind, one
that addresses not
just the elite few
but the collective
whole.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Ouyporn Khuankaew is an inspiring feminist peace activist who has spent decades working for women's rights in Thailand. For the past twelve years, she has run the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice in Mae Rim, which provides unprecedented training against gender-based violence for Thais working in the government sector, such as nurses and police officers. Ouyporn says that while Thailand is one of the more evolved countries in the region when it comes to women's rights, it still has a long way to go.

"We don't have a feminist movement in Thailand," she tells me. "We have feminist groups and feminist individuals, but no movement."

Indeed, Thai feminism is divided in ways quite similar to the west, thanks to high levels of wealth inequality and a diverse mix of ethnic groups with different issues sharing space. Here, however, the divides are even more pronounced because unlike in the west, where the vast majority of feminists tend to fall pretty squarely on the left-leaning side of the political spectrum, here in Thailand women are said to make up the backbone of both movements, yet neither the red shirts nor the yellow shirts have ever made gender equality a priority.

On the contrary, female politicians like Prime Minister Yingluck have often been subjected to highly gendered insults, from "whore" to "dumb bitch" to this charming comment from a university professor: "The Prime Minister still has some time left to be a nude model. Resign now before your periods come to an end. Otherwise it would be too late to start a new career."

Thai social critic Kaewmala decries the lack of feminist response to these kinds of gendered attacks. "The appalling misogyny deserves more domestic reflection and condemnation," she wrote on her blog, Thai Woman Talks.

"The lack of response just further illustrates we don't have a feminist movement here," says Ouyporn. "Most of my academic friends are either yellow or red and political divides take precedence. Politics polarise us so that we don't come together to defend our rights as women."

A CALL TO ARMS

A movement is made up of many individuals and many subgroups, and when that movement is designed to address the issues of half the globe's population – across continents, creeds and class – there are bound to be conflicts within it. The bright side of this coin is that we do have enough (wo)manpower to address each individual issue at the grassroots level. The point of an overall movement is solidarity and support, but that's the casing, not the meat (yes, this awkward analogy is comparing feminism to sausages, but please bear with me). The meat is all the individual victories and advocates within that movement, people like Ouyporn and Tin Tin and Taguiwalo, without whom the movement would be nothing but empty words.

Calls for female leadership in a corporate setting must not supersede the unsung grassroots advocacy happening every day within migrant worker communities in Thailand and groups of women with disabilities in Pakistan. Feminism is not designed to be glamorous or trendy or sellable in book form; it's about the day to day struggles, and triumphs, of women and the entire networks of people that rely on them. We need female power at all levels of society, with the ultimate goal of levelling the playing field not just between men and women but between women and women as well. Our goals are not mutually exclusive, and if they are then we're doing it wrong because they don't need to be. There is space within this movement for everyone, and that's perhaps the best thing about it.

"What APFF sought to do was to bolster the movement by bringing women together and finding a sense of solidarity and common belief in the midst of so many diverse issues," Lappin tells me. She recounts a particularly moving moment from the last day of the forum, in which a woman from Pakistan approached her.

"My life has always been in a divided community," the woman said. "I've never felt like I was a part of something until now."

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crafting solutions



places and spaces

creating visions



brainstorming ideas



reciting poetry



for making waves

networking, networking



opening a marketplace



Tweets from the Forum: #apff2014

Interesting stuff coming out of #APFF2014 Asia Pacific Feminist Forum which started today. Thank you to the live-tweeters!

Zara Rahman @zararah

We are workers not slaves #apff2014

anis hidayah @anishidayah

This meeting is one of the crossroads btwn the feminist movement and sex workers movement. Now Liz reads fr Bad Girls Dictionary. #apff2014

amanda the gigler @amandagig

End of Day 2 of the #apff2014 and looks like we've taken another important step towards a Pacific Women Caucus.

Diyana Yahaya @diyana_yahaya

Sampling dotmocracy & Open Space Technology as meeting methodologies that allow people to have the conversations they want to have #apff2014

Isis International @IsisIntl

" We are young & beautiful- now we are just beautiful." Judy Taguiwalo on being 60+ year old feminist . #apff2014 #apfeminist

Fiji Women's Rights @FWRM1

#apff2014 starts session today to discuss about feminist visions #apfeminist @apwld pic.twitter.com/eYadMo- k187

Ruby Kholifah @RubyKholifah

Feminists Speak

This forum is very important as it brings together women from different parts of the Asia Pacific region to discuss about issues concerning women and their development. I believe that the work of us feminists will go across not only in this region but across the world and that every woman will become confident enough to stand up on her own as a feminist for her rights.

Tin Tin Nyo, General Secretary Women's League of Burma

We have been empowered through the years and we have to continue to work on the issues concerning women, for the future of our children, for the future of our young women and for their children.

Helen Hakena, Director, Leitana Nehan women's Development Agency (LNWDA), Papua New Guinea

APFF brings together diverse groups of women's organisations and movements of this region. The diversity of issues which women participants will bring to the forum, will define a clearer action plan to tackle human rights and other development issues faced by women.

Vernie Yocogan Diano, Executive Director of Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Centre



We appreciated the methodology utilised at APFF, in that each workshop that we attended combined elements of participation and capacity building. We also appreciated that each workshop was creatively executed. ARROW convened our own workshop on the 1st day of APFF, entitled: "Reclaiming and Redefining rights for SRHR in the Post 2015 era". It was an interesting way to draw attention to the urgent need to build momentum for SRHR in the build up to the Post 2015 process. It enabled participants to understand the undercurrents in the discussions around the Post 2015 and how the advocacy needed for women's rights and SRHR in the deliberations around the Sustainable Development Goals.

Neesha Fakir and Nalini Singh, The Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW)

A major strength of this workshop of women in trade unions (and I'm sure this applies to the APFF as a whole) has been the success with which APFF has managed to bring together such a wide range of people, organisations. It certainly was wonderful to be surrounded by so many amazing, experienced and like-minded fellow travellers.

By Anna Lee Fos-Tuvera, ITUC-Asia Pacific

Feminists Speak

Sonia Bullong-Miralles, Women Program Coordinator, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM):

Joining the 2nd APFF was an achievement for me. Having met the diverse feminists of the different regions of the world I got inspired more to the women's rights advocacy. The solidarity of feminists draws me more to appreciate and imagine how women can move in different regions and still collapse into a small village towards a versatile women perspective.

I was impressed with the first plenary of day 1. The presentations gave a glimpse of the different issues to eventually be presented. It truly set the mode for the piled discussion of the coming hours and days.

Apparently, what engulfed me the most were the continuing and productive discussions with every feminist I met during breaks or by chance. The different experiences and stories, successful and non-victorious, strategies of facing unfair legal frameworks on women and views of a patriarchal dominated society, were confronted by magnificent, determined feminists' ideas and optimistic concern that can unite us into a collective core to work with one another vis-à-vis different approaches of advocacy but definitely with similar perspectives. Looking at it comprehensively, at the end of every discussion was the solidarity of feminists towards liberation from the bondage of being behind all panels of the social structure.

It was a great opportunity and appreciation that I was invited by APWLD as one of the speakers on the Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers known as C189 on The Many Faces of Slavery Workshop, highlighting APMM's global advocacy about the C189 and the sharing of the Middle East experience. In this opportunity, I was able to share the global status of the ratification and laid the need to work for more networking and advocacy about the Convention to the forum. Lastly, I look forward to more activities and events that APWLD will be spearheading and facilitating. We urgently need this kind of forums to further advance the women's movement.



Nazma Akter and Khadiza Akter, Awaj Foundation:

The APFF was nice and a great experience for us. We feel honored to participate in APFF. It's a great platform where women come from different countries and gather

and share their knowledge and views with each other. We appreciate the event because there was much focus on labour rights, working conditions, increased women participation in trade union, occupational health and safety, women rights, wages, women empowerment and other issues. Usually family violence and violence against women is the main topic of discussion in women platform. But we observed that in this platform workers rights get privilege.

We believe that only economic empowerment can bring women empowerment, independency and freedom in their life. We need to focus more on worker's rights and women rights in their work place and as the same time, in their family. It was a great opportunity for us to join in the event. We shared our ideas and point of views to each other. Such program could enrich our knowledge and self assessment on women rights, cultural diversification, young professionalism, women leadership and women empowerment, self confidence. We are in solidarity and wish to work together in the future.



**Ashrafun Nahar
Misti, Women
with Disabilities
Development
Foundation**

I was very pleased to be a participant at APFF in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 29 May to 1st June 2014. It was a very

great opportunity for women with disabilities to be part of mainstreaming women's rights movement in the region.

We, women leaders with disabilities, came from different Asian countries and had the opportunity to learn about mainstreaming the women's rights movement. We not only learned, but we had the opportunity to explore and share our views with other woman leaders from Asia-Pacific.

APFF gave a floor for women with disabilities to express our difficulties with the women's rights movement. We had a session on inclusion of women with disabilities and development, where women participants and activist leaders learned how to include women with disabilities in development programs.

I am especially pleased to have a platform in the Forum where all types of minority women that are socially excluded have the opportunity to talk, share and show potential.

I learned a lot from APFF and gathered lots of ideas to integrate innovation for my own work. It was also the very first time for me to have conversations with donors, learning who can/ couldn't fund us. APWLD gave emphasis to women with disability rights, so we might have the opportunity to further develop the Asia Pacific Women with Disabilities United (APWWDU) network.

At APFF, women with disabilities became equal with others, which does not happen in our own countries. APFF was very positive for us. For the future we need to ensure needs for sign language or if needed, brail papers for visually impaired women.

Hope we have an opportunity to attend future Forums.

Pranom Somwong, Protection International

The 2nd APFF has also welcomed the participation of five women human right defenders (WHRDs) from South, North and Northeast Thailand who are defending their land and community rights. Protection International, Thailand conducted a workshop on WHRD and environmental justice: a space to share challenges to collaboration between women activists from different backgrounds. It allowed the participants to advance their skills and become better equipped to shape knowledge on security assessments in their community, thus how it linked to contributing to social change.

The gender stereotypes of women as mothers or caregivers account for the high incidence of threats or attacks against family members of women and some defenders; as well as being subjected to sexual harassment, assault or rape. The participants also drew attention to an urgent need for community-based WHRDs to be aware of the risks they face when defending and challenging oppression and human right violations, especially for environmental justice and further developing the link between women's rights movement and WHRDs. We must form a group to jointly identify sources of strength for women defenders themselves, share strategies and tactics



WHRDs from Thailand are holding banner "In Solidarity with Nanongbong Community (Khon Rak Ban Goed Group, Loei Province)". The community is at grave risks defending for their community rights against gold mine.'

for protection. The importance of alliances, networking and building solidarity for protection networks enables immediate and effective action among WHRDs in Asia.

Some reflections from community based WHRDs after participation in APFF:

Supanee, WHRD against the bio-fuel power plant in ChiangRai: I think the APFF was very useful. I gained experience as this was the first time I attended an international conference. I learned a lot from other participants. "Why Good Girls Go Bad" workshop, where women working in nightclubs and sex workers shared their stories, was very interesting. I think there were many things I could take back and apply to my community work. APFF has opened-up my view! It has inspired and encouraged me to continue fighting against injustice.

Watcharaphorn, WHRD against mining companies illegally invading protected areas for mineral resources in Loei: I learned a lot and gained valuable experience from APFF. I am a community leader who fights against the iron mining in my province. I really enjoyed the Protection International workshop because it has expanded my view and knowledge; and also taught me to manage my work-associated risk and threats. I really encourage APFF to extend invitations to women working on land rights and environmental issues who are actually based in the community to join in the rest of the movement.

For more information on Protection International:
www.protectioninternational.org



EMPOWER

As the Forum took place in their hometown, eight Empower activists were able to join. Empower turned out to be the only sex worker organisation from the region present at the Forum.

As everywhere, sex work and sex worker rights are contested issues in the regional feminist movement.

After the Forum, Malee, Nutchan, Pim, Mai, Oa, Liz, Wi and Lilee shared their reflections.

When good girls go bad I expected...

"We were taking part in a feminist forum so this was very important for sex workers. We wanted to take all experiences, good and bad and use them in our sex worker movement."

We encountered...

More than 300 women joined the APFF, and Empower ...well we were 8 women among many! For some of us it was the first time we had attended a meeting with women from around the region and the world. There was a great diversity in the conference. We were happily surprised to meet a member of our extended family - a sex worker from Uganda.

We shared...

We had a session with about 34 women joining us. It was really important we had this space otherwise we would have been limited to trying to squeeze sex worker voices into other forums. It was also important to have Esther presenting about Mama Cash's support of sex worker organizing. We know from friends and reports that many feminists strongly disagree with our work and are against our movement and organisations. They don't have the same analysis about sex and sex work as we do. They don't see us as feminist guerrillas and resistance leaders but as victims or traitors. We were ready to meet them but either all feminists at APFF support sex work or none of those who oppose us wanted to take the opportunity to begin a conversation. How are we going to find ways to work together in the feminist movement if we cannot talk together?

Emilia Reyes, Gender Equity, Citizenship, Work and Family, Post-2015 Women's Coalition:

I get up really early to have breakfast and get a front row seating in the plenary room. Can't seem to get there soon enough, though. The food is delicious: Thai food is one of the finest in the world, so it is already a festivity and the session has not even started. The morning is filled with warm hugs from brave and endearing colleagues: partners in life engaged in the fight towards gender equality. Something unsaid is also floating in the air. We all know that every single person in that Forum is twice ratifying their political commitment: firstly because of our common engagement in guaranteeing women's human rights; secondly due to Thailand's coup d'état recently declared. The Forum itself is a political stand, and more so a regional political stand: women from all over the Asia-Pacific region (and others, like mine) are there to support a gathering reaffirming the importance of civil society's active participation, and the radical need for a feminist agenda.

Some months before, members of the Post-2015 Women's Coalition were consulted in regard to possible participation in APPF. There was a lot of interest and we expressed our desire to take an active role in it. Derived from that, the organizing partners of APPF sent an invitation to CWGL and the Post-2015 Women's Coalition to attend. ICPD had recently ended, CSW was still resonating in our minds: we witnessed a terrible backlash in SRHR and in the basic acknowledgment of women's human rights. The climate change negotiation also reverberated as a dark echo and the world was still doomed in uncertainty. This was a moment to consider: what is missing amidst the urgency? Holding to structural issues, we replied. And we decided that APPF was the perfect place to share our concerns and proposals. But, most of all, to learn back from the structural reading derived from the feminists traditions in the Asia-Pacific. So there is a lot of expectation in that morning breakfast. Better not prolong it further and head straight to the plenary.

And from that point on, the expectations are completely left behind, because APPF is proving to be mind-blowing in every respect. Every plenary is thought provoking, warm, challenging. Every workshop is an entrance to a valuable exchange of know-how tools. To me, as well, it is a privileged opportunity to bond with a region that has so much in common with mine. I can't help admiring

every single way they are dealing with the same problematic we face back home. I am from Mexico, a Latin American country. We are facing as well serious concerns for the safety and integrity of our environmental and human rights defenders. We are also threatened by a Trans-Pacific treaty. We know women and feminist organisations are having a hard time in funding their initiatives. So it is refreshing to learn from all the proposals and strategies shared by collectives of young people, people with disabilities, unions, SRHR promoters, and on. All of them gathered under the umbrella of justice in all its dimensions: gender, environmental, social, redistributive, to mention a few.

In the Post-2015 Women's Coalition we decided to host a workshop on "Tackling key structural factors for feminist movement building across regions". Several members of the Post-2015 Women's Coalition had brought their inputs into the concept and the contents, so those who were able to attend APPF made every effort to capture the spirit of that collective work, making sure all of the voices were there. Representatives of the Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR), Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), WPP and Gender Equity joined to facilitate an exchange of ideas. Within the discussion it was highlighted the importance of a macroeconomic framework as a structural element for the instrumentation of a feminist agenda on gender equality, linking the provision of basic services and the unpaid domestic and care work to macroeconomic policy making. Also, it was a core element to discuss the transformative capacities of UNSCR 1325, the military spending and its diversion of funds away from public or social services, as well as unpacking the masculinity lens in the context of UNSCR 1325, discussing demilitarisation strategies from a feminist perspective. Finally, the group arrived to the development and exchange of strategies for tackling obstacles to the realisation of women's rights and gender equality. For the Post-2015 Women's Coalition, it was an honour and a great opportunity to attend APPF. The exchange amongst its members and with people attending the session, as well as the proposals derived from it, were highly valuable.¹

Looking back I am aware of the intense days we had in the Forum: I was learning so much from my colleagues and people attending the workshop, I am still absorbing the discussion. The same happened in every hallway: a friendly exchange of looks, some laughter, and we were all of the

¹ The discussion and outcomes of the workshop are available in the following link: <http://www.post2015women.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Post-2015-APFF-Meeting-notes.pdf>

sudden engaged in an interesting discussion in regard to our regions, our political realities, our ways of dealing with them, and, in every one of those talks, we would end up finding ways in which we could strengthen the ties, making alliances for the future.

Every moment attending the APFF, every day, I felt privileged. Of interacting with brilliant women committed to change their worlds. Not in an abstract way, but in meaningful, daily situations that comprehend the wellbeing of women and men. I could admire them closely, in detail. And also felt part of a huge movement seeking for real transformations, so I engaged with all my heart in every discussion.

What comes next? An alliance I never thought was possible. Regions are in need to strengthen their voices in the global field. We are living a moment in which the equations that will shape the face of geopolitics in the next 15 years are now being formulated. The feminists of the Asia-Pacific region are bravely leading its own path, enriching the dialogue in global spaces, such as in the Post-2015 Women's Coalition and beyond. To me, the regions of Latin America and Asia Pacific are the closest in views, structural proposals, dilemmas to face, passion to move forward. We are in dialogues to close our ties for the Post-2015 process and the climate change agenda. Everything is possible when feminists gather to strategise to achieve the world we deserve and dream. Was not that precisely the spirit of APFF? We are still honouring it. Everyday.

Judy Kan, HER Fund, East Asia: **PASSION, COLLECTIVE POWER, AND COLLABORATION**

This was my first time to join the APFF, and I was so excited to meet and greet all the sisters around Asia Pacific! I could feel the passion and power throughout the different workshops and performances.

The opening night had an Art meets Feminism performance. I like the idea of touring around to get involved in different art forms to show the feminist movement and women's stories. The interactive performances raised my attention to learn the issues. After I came back to Hong Kong, I shared this with our grantee partners as we need different, but interesting, ways to raise the general public to understand the issues.

At APFF, I was a speaker in a workshop called "New Resources, Sources, Discourses: The Future of Resource Mobilisation for Feminist Movements in Asia and the Pacific." The time was very tight for all our presentations and discussions, but I still noticed a young lady. She couldn't speak or understand English. She was dressed up. She paid a lot of attention to listen.

I saw her the next day as a plenary speaker. She is a housing rights activist, Khek Chanreasmey. I listened to her speech, and I really admired her. Hong Kong is encountering this kind of land rights issues too. I can imagine how difficult it is for her, as a widow, to stand up in front of a totalitarian government.

I felt surprised to find very very few organisations in East Asia to join APFF! Let's put collective effort in creating waves in East Asia too!

Nang Lao Liang Won (Tay Tay), Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) & Women's League of Burma (WLB), Southeast Asia:



Like many other women's forums, I enjoy meeting long time friends, getting to know new friends from other networks, and learning different strategies from women. At this APFF, we saw friends, activists, lawyers, academics and women human rights defenders working on the multiple struggles of women from the Asia Pacific region, which we usually don't see in Southeast Asia. These forums give us a space to get great support, where we can seek sisterhood support, where we can get technical support, where we can raise awareness and update about current situation of women and burning issues for women across the region. We believe that we got our message out.

The highlight of our participation was the workshop jointly organised by Women's Network of Burma/ Myanmar living in different geographical areas: Gender Equality Network, Women's Organisation Network (WON) and the Women's League of Burma (WLB). This workshop has shown the bond between, we, women from Burma, the solidarity support of our sisters from regional & global women's networks and partners. We are so heartened to have the immediate attention and support of prominent feminists and UN experts like Heisso, Nana and Mahdu for the campaign of women of Burma against the interfaith marriage bill in Burma/Myanmar.

Like us, other women's struggles have been supported in various ways in this forum. We should continue communicating and following up what we have talked, agreed, and hoped for. Forums are about sharing and gathering voices for a strong movement. With continued collaboration with mutual respect and understanding among each other, the future of feminists will be bright and clear.

Anne Pakoa, Vanuatu Education Policy Advocacy Coalition, the Pacific: **REGAINED MY DREAM TO 'NEVER GIVE UP' AT APFF!**



I have never met so many powerful, beautiful women from all walks of life in my entire life! At times in my life as an activist, I felt that the tight of anti-corruption, autocracy, and gender inequality will overtake me and those fighting for women's rights all across the globe until I walked into this hotel conference room in Chiang Mai for the Asia Pacific Feminist Forum. A feeling of belonging, relief and satisfaction over took me as I looked around, hearing almost the same conversation about women activists, welcoming each other with, heart to heart hugs, sharing tears and joys of successes, those with tears of pain are embraced with so many comforting hugs and taps on the shoulders saying all will be okay, that we are all together in these battles. We fight for a common good, and that is to ensure that there is equality for the 'she' being in all areas of development. I wish I was there to comfort those whose lives were endangered and even taken by war against feminism and religious fundamentalism, where the loudest 'she' voice cannot be heard. Hearing all the stories of difficulties faced: women with disability, professional women who cannot even mount their career ladder because of gender inequality and the level of unbearable discrimination faced.

These are real life stories of professionals, activists, political workers, religious workers and many other skilled professionals from all over Asia and the Pacific region including some other countries around the globe who were brought together by APWLD to share stories of successes and challenges and to put together a way forward to improve level of participation in sectors of development in particular, political participation, social and economic development.

The organisers and facilitators were awesome! All materials needed for the topics presented were available. There were so many workshops, plenary sessions and side events to choose from but the best for me, to name a few are: the dialogue with Frida the Young Feminist Fund, the Pacific women caucus session, democracy for Myanmar women; and the best of the best was the Reiki session in the wellness space.

This most empowering forum ever, was a way forward for me; personally, as an activist, and also as a woman leading one of Vanuatu's strong NGO working in education policy advocacy work. Women have commonalities. In particular to areas of holding the government to account for all ratified and signed conventions in particular to CEDAW, I learnt a lot from participants of the Southeast Asian women caucus and members of the Pacific women caucus on good strategies to improve women participation in parliament. In order to achieve goals such as MDGs and EFAs (Education for All), women should be voted into parliament to make big progressive changes in education gaps. This is my belief with other women working on CEDAW issues too.

The forum has enabled me to activate an existing group called the 'Vanuatu Women for Educational Business', which was established in 2011. The group's new name now is 'Vanuatu Young Women for Change.' This is a group with most members ranging from age 15 to 35 years old, who are keen to raise one voice for a change for Vanuatu women. Issues such as teen pregnancy, dropping out of school at an early age and undermining women's and girl's voices in communities; this will be a platform for them to come in to share their issues where it will be much easier to channel these issues to the ears of policy makers in order to make changes for the common good! Already, I am looking into submitting a proposal for the Vanuatu Young Women for Change to the Frida Fund. I do hope that other organisations in the region can look out for us on Frida website. We do need your nomination to move forward! Thank you APWLD!! Thank you APFF organisers! This was a chance of a life time and I am so glad to be part of it!!!

Alina Saba, Mugal Indigenous Women Upliftment Institute (MIWUI), South Asia:

My participation in APFF was my first experience of being part of an international Feminist Forum. The pleasure of meeting many great feminists and activists from over the region and listening to their experience of activism and movement building lifted my spirit to become like them. My knowledge about feminism was very limited before but after attending APFF, I have not only understood the concepts, but have started analyzing every dynamic in our society with a feminist perspective – economic, social and political. I represent an indigenous women's community of Nepal, who are yet to be included in the mainstream feminist movement of Nepal. There's still a long way to go for indigenous women in Nepal but as I met so many indigenous sisters and organisations at APFF who have successfully established their rights in their home countries, this has become a great inspiration for me to do something back home for the movement building of indigenous women. The inspiring life journey of strong feminist like Halen Hakena, Judy M. Taguiwalo, Vernie Diano and Khek Chanreasmey and the success story of grassroots originations becoming national pillars of the feminist movement and its impacts on society has made me realise the power of collectiveness and acting together against any form of injustice. The most important thing I have learned from APFF is that development is not always prosperous, the disadvantaged community, particularly women, have to pay for the price for it. We need to be more vocal and observant regarding development projects and policies. Coming from an underdeveloped country where economic development is blindly regarded as the solution of everything and no one talks about negative implications, the plenary discussions focusing on development justice has broadened my perspective to view development ideas differently and with critical approaches, so that we can be both just and a developed country. The opportunity of meeting various feminist donors was another crucial part of APFF where I got to share my view on how funds are often concentrated on urban based women's organisations and hardly reaches village based grass root organisations, where women are most in need as donors prefer an established institutional profile to give grants. This paradox is a hindrance of an inclusive women's movement building in Nepal. I also got the opportunity to build my technical knowledge of making digital videos by attending the workshop on making digital stories, organised by Women Win, being able to tell the story on our own and reaching to the outer world is an important aspect of movement building.



Calls to Action

With the collective wisdom of almost 300 feminists we have the capacity to invigorate movements, utilise formal and informal opportunities and spaces and build new alliances. The final plenary mapped out our opportunities and mobilised around key moments. Workshops that developed specific recommendations for collective work fed into the final morning together while weaving a collective strategy web.

The following is a list of announcements made:

1. The Gender Equality Network (GEN) & Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)/ Women's League of Burma (WLB) called for support against the interfaith law in Burma by including anti-interfaith marriage law in plans of actions and asked for technical support in drafting concerns to UN bodies.
2. Feminists from the Pacific were so impressed with APFF, they wanted to create a similar forum that brought feminists from all over the Pacific together to discuss about their sub-region.
3. The Women with Disabilities Network further asked participants to include women with disabilities in their programmes and line of work, citing that women with disabilities are hardly ever consulted or included in the current model of development.
4. People Surge, from the Philippines, asked participants to monitor the Philippines vigilantly for the government's failure to provide relief and recovery to the victims of Typhoon Yolanda.
5. Forum Aktivist Perempuan Muda-Indonesia (FAMM-Indonesia) collected signatures for their free Eva Bande petition. Eva is a woman land rights activist imprisoned recently in Indonesia for opposing mining activities of big corporations.
6. Participants were asked to monitor the current actions happening in Cambodia, where workers who have been asking for a raise to their minimum wage have been beaten and arrested.
7. Protection International and WHRDs asked APFF participants to sign a petition in support of Khon Rak Ban Goed Group in the north-eastern province of Loei of Thailand, in order to raise attention to Thai authority and all stakeholders about the continuing threats and violence happening to HRD's and their community due to their defence of community rights.
8. A call to initiate an NGO where indigenous women will be in leading positions so that feminism is better understood in indigenous communities as male counterparts/colleagues are unable to bring attention on feminism, instead they focus on using women as token, presenting women physically only just as showpiece.
9. APWLD will serve as chair for Transitional Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism. They encouraged all feminists and NGOs to engage in the process.
10. APWLD also asked participants who wanted to join their new Women, Peace and Security Network.
11. APWLD along with Ibon International announced their development justice global days of action, a series of global events where CSOs will be holding the current development model accountable, and proposing a more just and sustainable development justice model.



The practice of development justice among Cordillera indigenous women: in defense of land, food and rights

Vernie Yocogan-Diano

“The history of the Cordillera is not complete if the role of the indigenous women in the struggle for the protection of their communities is trivialised. The courage of indigenous women has inspired other Cordillera women and advocates to set up an institution that would promote the rights of the Cordillera women and help in their empowerment through research, education and organizing work” – Geraldine Fiagoy, anthropologist.

In 8 March 1987, the Cordillera Women’s Education and Resource Center was established by indigenous women across the Cordillera region in Northern Philippines. The first three years were dedicated in establishing a regional women’s alliance hence the holding of provincial consultations and workshops which produced the Basic Women’s Orientation. The BWO was an organizing and awareness-raising tool that transformed traditional women’s organisations into responsive women’s organisations. It was an advocacy and networking tool. At that time, CWERC was the only institution that spoke of women’s rights and empowerment in the Cordillera. CWERC was tapped by government agencies in developing their gender and development programs.

Three years of enthusiastic work led to the formation of the regional alliance of indigenous women’s organisations in the Cordillera region, Innabuyog on 6-8 March 1990. The name was adopted from the indigenous practice of reciprocal labor. Innabuyog led women’s struggles and earned its record in being at the forefront of the Cordillera women’s movement until the present.

The succeeding years saw the flourishing of

women’s organisations in both rural and urban areas. Innabuyog chapters were established amid a challenging climate of repression and economic crisis. The vibrance inspired CWERC to broaden its services like setting up a women’s human rights program, a women’s crisis center and a reproductive health program. Socio-economic services were also increased in response to the failing economic condition. CWERC and Innabuyog organised the first Asian indigenous women’s conference that established the Asia Indigenous Women’s Network in February 1993.

In 1994, the women’s movement in the Cordillera underwent a process to sum-up its experience and draw the lessons in women’s development work. The following lessons were drawn: 1) The expansion of programs (specifically the women’s crisis center, women’s reproductive health program and socio-economic services) were not at pace with the women’s movement. CWERC expanded its programs beyond the carrying and sustaining capacity of the women’s movement; 2) Narrow handling of women’s issues brought by a shallow analysis on the roots of women’s oppression making CWERC and Innabuyog vulnerable to narrow feminist influences from national and international women’s organisations and movements. There was a tendency to overstate the problems of women without the social context, especially the context of class. That mindset created an anti-male tendency, treating males as the root of women’s oppression that caused division in most of the partner communities and tension between women and men, wives and husbands; 3) Integration of the women’s movement to the wider peoples’ movement. The women’s movement is the ground for women’s empowerment, however it should exist in the

context of the society it is part of and not in isolation with the wider peoples' movement in recognition that liberation of women is achieved with the liberation of the society it is part of.

From 1997 to 2005, CWERC and Innabuyog focused in consolidating women's groups at grassroots level. popularised the corrected Basic Women's Orientation (BWO) that integrated the lessons learned. A more conscious effort was exerted to include peoples' and multi-sectoral organisations as targets for the BWO. This approach facilitated unity and understanding, elevating the discussion not just as a difference of gender or sex but as an issue of class. It was also this period that systematic work on LGBT and women migrants was done. In January 2004, CWERC help establish BAI, a national network of indigenous women's organisations in the Philippines.

Pursuing the defense of land, food and rights A shift of program for CWERC which became Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center (CWEARC) in 2005 happened and the relationship with Innabuyog as the indigenous women's alliance, changed from being the main beneficiary to partner in program-making. CWEARC developed tighter strategies of evidence-based advocacy and production of knowledge resources; capacity building through a training of trainers' model of indigenous women on food sovereignty and women's rights; and partnership building.

Meanwhile, Innabuyog continued to lead indigenous women's actions and mobilisations at local to regional levels, and raise indigenous women's issues of land, food and rights at various levels.

Development justice is movement building In this moment where the state and corporations eye at our land and resources as their means of survival, the recourse for indigenous women is resistance. National economic development plans are always framed on neoliberal policies, allowing extractive industries like mining, logging and energy projects and other forms of development aggression in our territories at unprecedented levels. In the Cordillera region alone, 66% of ancestral territories is covered by ongoing and planned mining projects, all major rivers are outlined for hydro projects, several geothermal plants are being enforced on target territories and commercial agriculture is being intensified. It is our historical experience that resistance is always countered with force and state repression. Impunity

continues to be committed by the Philippine government, tolerating extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances of those those who defend human rights and development justice. State security forces are also made to secure corporate investments.

In whichever arena we choose to fight our battles, we are able to do so because we continue to build our strength, share that strength with other women and peoples' movements and gain strength from other movements as well. Our experience have inspired other indigenous women in Asia, encouraging them to form their own organisations and follow the steps that we took.

Much work remains to be done and shrinking resources should not be a hindrance but should enable creative means in mobilizing available human, technical and financial resources.

The indigenous women's movement in the Cordillera of which CWEARC is historically part of and proud to be part of, will continue to live out the inspiration of Mother Petra "Tannaw" Macling, "Protect the land as this the source of rice seedlings that nourish. The span of more than two decades of movement building has yielded fruits. More and more women are bravely speaking out, giving education and leading organisations and villages."

The struggle for land, territories and resources shall remain to be at the heart of development justice for Cordillera indigenous women.





Migrant Movement on the Rise

Cynthia Abdon Tellez

As a development worker among migrants for more than three decades now engaged in direct service to those in distress as well as the empowerment of the community, I can say that the building of the grassroots movement in Hong Kong did not happen overnight. Throughout the years, faces have changed save for a few who have managed to stay on as domestic workers in Hong Kong.

But though in different ways, still, women migrants speak the same language, sing the same song, recite the same poem, then and now.

Organizing migrant women is not easy, more so to maintain. Migration has left them with no job security. Thus, it is amazing how organisations of migrant women can survive when migration is so fluid and the status of migrants is so insecure.

Thirty years ago, cultural presentations of migrants did not include rap. The number of Indonesians in Hong Kong was also not that large 20 years ago and, in fact, Thais placed second in population after the Filipinos but with a large gap. Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan domestic workers came in trickles, hired by their own compatriots. Nepali women were as well nowhere to be seen if not with their husbands who were in the Gurkha army.

But they sang the same songs, they recited the same poems, they cited incidents from their own experiences that were essentially the same as what are being said nowadays: physical assault, sexual molestation, verbal abuse, labour violations, and the desire to go home for good.

Those who encountered problems fought hard, albeit, individually at first until they found the value of being together and how much can be achieved when they stand their ground. They learned the importance of finding support network when they are together.

The strength the migrant women mustered in struggling together calling for changes in the policies that control them gave them added strength. This was a very important development. They learned the process of analysing their condition, their situation and finding ways to properly address them. They learned the process of analysing how migrant women are further marginalised and excluded, treated to be different from locals and other migrant people. They started to lobby sympathetic Hong Kong legislative council members and government department officers to make laws and policies favourable to women migrants. They saw the need to learn the art of monitoring if good policies were implemented or not.

Their stories have been repeatedly told in similar settings, in different tones. They were told in different voices but with the same conviction. Together they told their stories, they persevered and spoke for themselves.

Yet, their stories could not really be complete if they were to other people in other countries. Campaigns of migrant women, even if it is localised (local issues, local policies) needed support from women's groups in a sending or receiving countries because the experiences were not too different. Issues needed to also be worked internationally and regionally in coordinated campaigns.

This was realised and still is advanced by internationally coordinated formations most notable of which is the International Migrants Alliance, or IMA, which is genuinely composed of grassroots led by them.

Such was the impression created by the Asian Migrant Women's Summit (of domestic workers) in Hong Kong. It impressed and established confidence that the only the grassroots women migrants themselves could bring about the change that they want. Only they can make their history.

This they did and continue to do so. Despite the snags along the way, they honed their capacity to step back to learn and to step forward as they did on 31st August 2014.

The 490-seat capacity of the auditorium at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University that was filled with 600 migrants coming from Nepal, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. While the overwhelming majority of them were migrant women, there were also local and expatriate women, and students who came to be with them.

Never mind the long walk to the venue, tunnels to pass and heat to bear. Migrant women and their supporters spent their otherwise free time or their

day-off not resting, but busily and seriously attending a summit conference. But as one participant said when I asked if she regretted missing out going to the beach with her friends, she said, "not a bit."

She said, "This is a learning experience. I never expected to be attending a conference while in Hong Kong as a domestic worker. How was it that we can easily articulate what we said there? I never imagined me understanding concepts outside of the kitchen, outside of the toilet, beyond the markets, past my ward's school. I am in a university sharing my ideas, like I am in a classroom. But I actually am learning. Developing concepts, which I thought were only for academics and policy makers. I realised that I can influence policy makers if I am with my organisation, if I assert what can be good for my sector as migrant workers, as migrant women. I say end Slavery, end Social Exclusion! I have learned new concepts of development though I have yet to digest that. I know it will work both for this place where I work as well as for my homeland which I was forced to leave temporarily, I hope."

With the enthusiasm, militance, and vigorous participation of those in the summit, I know that her hope will live and will be realised.



Reports from the Frontlines

ADVOCACY AND SPEAKING TOUR IN EUROPE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE, WOMEN AND PEOPLE'S ISSUES IN THE PHILIPPINES (JUNE 2014)

Continuing extrajudicial killings. Detention and injustice against women human rights defender Andrea Rosal and all political prisoners, and other attacks against human rights defenders. Bombings and forced evacuation due to military operations of indigenous communities especially in the Mindanao region. The stalled peace talks between the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and the arrests of peace consultants Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria Tiamzon. The Aquino administration's incompetence in addressing the needs of typhoon Yolanda (international code name: Haiyan) victims.

These are among the issues raised before the international community this June 2014 through the advocacy and speaking tour of Karapatan Secretary General and Tanggol Bayi (Defend Women) convenor Cristina "Tinay" Palabay in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and the United Kingdom. The tour was organised by Karapatan and the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines and supported by the United Church of Canada, Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, German Action Network for Human Rights-Philippines and the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD).

HR issues brought before the United Nations

Human rights defenders under the Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines (EcuVoice) participated in the 26th United Nations Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva, Switzerland. The delegation delivered oral statements before the rights body and met with Geneva-based missions of government, independent experts and special procedures, and international human rights organisations. EcuVoice's participation in the said session is a follow up mission to the international lobby and advocacy efforts during the 2nd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Philippines in May 2012 and the succeeding intervention and reports it has submitted to the sessions of the Human Rights Council and the UN Human Rights Committee.

The EcuVoice delegation led by Palabay is composed of Atty. Edre Olalia (Secretary General of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, NUPL), typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan survivor Rev. Irma Balaba

(National Council of Churches of the Philippines), Sr. Stella Matutina (Sisters Association in Mindanao), Dr. Angie Gonzales, Atty. Mary Kristerie Baleva, and Julie Palaganas (International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines).

The delegation met the independent expert Dr. Chaloka Beyani, UN special rapporteur on the rights of internally displaced persons and welcomed the news of his upcoming official visit in the Philippines. Beyani is set to investigate on reports and complaints on the continuing displacement and poverty in the typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan affected areas, forced evacuation brought about by Philippine military operations especially in rural and indigenous communities, and forced eviction of urban poor communities displaced by projects of big business and corporations.

They also met Prof. Philip Alston, newly appointed special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and Ms. Gabriela Knaul, special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

In 2007, Alston, who was then the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, went to the Philippines for an official visit to investigate the cases of extrajudicial killings under the Gloria Arroyo administration.

In what would be referred to as the Alston report, he pointed out the responsibility of the government, military and police in the targeted killings and disappearances of hundreds of political activists and those tagged as rebel supporters as part of the counter-insurgency campaign of the State. He recommended a checklist of concrete steps the Philippine government should do to address and abate the rights violations.

Palabay told Alston, "seven years after his report most of the recommendations remain unheeded or just paid lip service as impunity persists."

EcuVoice submitted to Alston a report on the impoverished conditions of the 2,102 displaced farmworkers who lost their livelihood in Hacienda Luisita through the maneuvers of the Cojuangco-Aquino clan in implementing the Supreme Court order to redistribute the lands. Several complaints on the forced eviction of urban poor in many Metro Manila communities were also submitted to Alston. Typhoon Haiyan survivor Rev. Irma Balaba emphasised that seven months after the typhoon, hunger, absence of decent shelter/housing, and a

dearth of livelihood pervade in the eastern Visayan region.

Alston expressed concern over these reports and said he will look into these issues complementary to the actions of other UN human rights experts' mandate-holders.

The delegation updated Knaul on the escalating tactics employed by the State to jeopardise, not only the independence of lawyers and judges but also their very lives and personal security. They pointed out the continuing killings of lawyers and judges, particularly human rights lawyers, as well as various attacks like red tagging, surveillance, hacking of phones and emails, and filing of nuisance charges.

Atty. Olalia underscored the case of NUPL officer Cathy Salucon especially because of the imminent threat against her. "The human rights lawyers in the frontline are also under attack and immediate steps must be taken by the international community on top of domestic efforts before things even get worse."

Members of the delegation also met with Geneva-based country missions of Ireland, Austria, Canada, Norway, The Netherlands, Mexico and the Holy See. They informed the independent experts and country missions that the "extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and enforced disappearances of human rights defenders, political activists, and community leaders, specially indigenous leaders, who resist large scale development projects escalated in 2014."

They said that in the first quarter of 2014 alone Karapatan already documented 21 victims of extrajudicial killings and 23 victims of frustrated killings.

Other members of the delegation delivered oral intervention on the reports of the Special Rapporteurs on the independence of lawyers and judges, internally displaced persons, while Palabay delivered her intervention on human rights and transnational corporations, and violence against women.

She urged the UNHRC to adopt a legally binding treaty that will hold States and transnational corporations accountable for the numerous violations of human rights in the Philippines, particularly in the cases of people affected by

large-scale and destructive mining operations of British-Swiss TNC SMI Glencore/Xstrata and Indophil Resources of Australia. During the interactive dialogue with the UNSR on VAW, she cited the case of women human rights defender Andrea Rosal, who was illegally arrested this year and is still detained as of this writing. Rosal, who was 7-months pregnant when she was arrested based on trumped up charges, lost her 2-day old baby, whose condition was aggravated by the inhumane conditions in jail.

Palabay also spoke as one of the panelists in a side event organised by Civicus on the attacks against indigenous human rights defenders and environmental activists. She joined human rights activists from Bahrain and Venezuela and Special Rapporteur on peaceful assembly and association Maina Kai and Frank La Rue, SR on freedom of expression.

International solidarity against killings, arrests in PH strengthened

Filipino migrants' organisations and human rights groups organised various events and fora where Palabay discussed the Philippine human rights situation.

Solidarity activists in Zurich, Switzerland hosted a forum and video presentation on the plight of indigenous peoples in Talaingod, Davao del Norte at the height of military operations this year. Women's League Courage in Gelsenkirchen, Germany organised the "Monday demonstration" and later an indoor gathering to hear updates on the case of po Andrea Rosal. The group expressed support for Karapatan's campaign to free all political prisoners.

Migrante-Austria hosted a round table discussion for the Filipino migrants in Vienna. At the end of the activity, participants signed a statement that called on the Philippine government to: stop suppression of legitimate protests; stop filing trumped-up charges against activists; Stop red-tagging and political persecution of activists; and to rescind its counter-insurgency program Oplan Bayanihan.

There was also a resounding call among the participants to resume the peace talks between the GPH and the NDFP, to respect all signed agreements between the two parties and the release of JASIG-protected peace consultants. In London, Palabay spoke before human rights lawyers and activists in a forum organised by the

Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines-UK, and Amnesty International. Andy Whitmore from the CHRP-UK provided a background on a video on the killings in Tampakan, South Cotabato. The London-based Xstrata-Glencore Mining Corporation encroached on the ancestral land of indigenous peoples in the communities of Gen. Santos and Davao del Sur in Mindanao. The video was produced by War on Want.

Liz Davies, chairperson of the Haldane Society, expressed "full and unequivocal support for the Filipino human rights activists led by Karapatan" and the "continuing struggle for just and lasting peace in the Philippines."

Anna Morris, vice chairperson of the Haldane Society, supported the call for the resumption of the GPH-NDFP peace talks. She said the GPH "is bound by international law to respect its commitments in Article 2 of the CARHRIHL (Comprehensive Agreement for the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law) to pave the way for comprehensive agreements on economic, social and political reforms that will ensure the attainment of a just and lasting peace."

During the said tour, Palabay also briefed representatives of international institutions and organisations on the human rights situation in the Philippines. Among these organisations were Dignity in Detention Foundation, Migrante-Switzerland (Switzerland); South East Asia Division-German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of Member of Parliament Sabine Batzing-Lichtenthaler of the Social Democratic Party, Reporters Without Borders, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Amnesty-International, Bread for the World, European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (Germany); Erzdiözese Wien Referat für Mission und Entwicklungshilfe, Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (Austria); Equal Rights Trust, Redress, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Privacy International, Peace Direct (United Kingdom).

In a fundraiser event for typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan victims, Palabay called on the English people and Filipinos based in the United Kingdom to remain vigilant on the possible misuse of aid for typhoon victims, amid the corruption scandals under the Aquino administration. The event was organised by Kanlungan Filipino Alliance, UK public service union UNISON, International Transport Workers'

Federation (ITF) and the Filipino Activist Network in Unison. ###

Palabay is the secretary general of Karapatan, a human rights organisation that monitors and documents human rights violations in the Philippines. She is also convenor of Tanggol Bayi (Defend Women) – Philippines, an association of women human rights defenders, and a member of the Grounding the Global organizing committee of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) for international human rights mechanisms. Her experience as a social activist includes being national president of the National Union of Students of the Philippines, the alliance of Philippine student governments, and secretary general of Gabriela Women's Party.

ALINA SABA OF NEPAL AND AGNES KINAKA OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA REFLECT ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE UN CLIMATE SUMMIT, SEPTEMBER 2014



In addition to the 120 Heads of State who attended the UN Climate Summit in September, 38 civil society

representatives were selected by their peers to provide a people's perspective of climate change, its impacts and the urgent need to take drastic global action.

Amongst those selected to attend were women representing grassroots communities most affected by climate change. Communities where the science isn't debated but survival is. Communities who can't imagine the levels of consumption that exist around the world but now have to imagine that their limited access to resources will evaporate.

Alina Saba, a Limbu Indigenous, young woman working with some of the most remote mountainous communities in Nepal was selected to speak on the "Voices from the frontlines panel." Alina was working in a Mugal community and had to walk for two days just to reach a town with communications capacity when she was selected. Agnes Kinaka, a single mother of four children

from the Cateret Islands in Papua New Guinea, whose Islands are rapidly becoming uninhabitable, attended together with Bianca Hakena, a feminist participatory action researcher from Bougainville working with Agnes and other women in the community who are relocating to Bougainville. In this article they reflect on their experience of attending the UN Climate Summit, held on 23 September.

Both of us were shocked when we arrived in New York by the inequality of the world. Days earlier we had been in communities that live without power, without access to health services and often live on less than one dollar per day. We felt that we had arrived on a different planet. But the problem is we live on the same planet, a planet that is deeply inequitable. A planet where the actions of people living far beyond their needs is making the lives of women in our communities unlivable.

Alina Saba - When I was speaking at the UN Climate Summit I felt proud, nervous and, most of all, fearful. Of course I was fearful about speaking in such an important event. I had never done anything even remotely similar. I was fearful that I might not say the right thing, that I might stumble over my words and might not live up to the expectations of the civil society movements supporting me. But most of all I was fearful that governments wouldn't listen. I was fearful that governments listen only to the power and money of corporations who urge them to continue on the path of increased consumption, production and emissions. I was fearful that our Indigenous communities are destined to lose their lands to landslides, that our crops will continually fail, that women will continually feel forced to migrate as

domestic workers. And I was fearful that this planet will not be habitable by the end of this century.

So I put my nerves aside and did my best to provide a picture of what climate change looks like to Indigenous women living in the most remote regions of Nepal. There are few countries with as much to lose from climate change as Nepal. Nepal was recently ranked as the fourth most climate "vulnerable" country globally. Melting glaciers are already creating glacier lakes that will cause devastating floods. Erratic, often heavy rains have already caused many landslides. Melting snow and changing weather are making some of our traditional herbs scarce and crops fail. I tried to paint the picture of what is currently happening, of the isolation of the women and their inability to have a voice in climate policies. And I tried to explain the truly terrifying prospect of what will happen to our communities if countries don't immediately act to stop emissions and create a new world order.

At the end of the panel some of my fears were realised. Very few wealthy countries attended the panel. President of Bolivia Evo Morales co-chaired and opened our panel. As the only Indigenous President in the world, I felt privileged to speak to him prior to the panel. His opening reflected many of our realities and the need to address climate change as a social justice issue. Agnes was happy to see the panel included the Prime Minister of Tuvalu who spoke strongly about the risks to Island nations. But of the high emitting countries, only France spoke from the floor and it appeared that others instead attended private sector events.

We wanted to tell countries that climate change is,



essentially, a social justice issue. Those who have caused the least harm to this planet, indeed those who have nurtured and cared for our environment are the very same people being punished for the excessive consumption and pollution of the obscenely rich. It is the Mugal women from the remote mountainous region of Nepal that I have been working with who live without power, without phones and now more frequently without crops, and who walk two days just to get to markets, or seek medical attention or services, who are now threatened with the most devastating long and short term climate losses.

They have not benefited from "development," their human rights have never featured in global plans. They were expected to wait until the fruits of globalisation "trickled down" to them but instead all that trickled down to them is the toxic waste of globalisation – climate disasters.

Agnes Kinaka – Like Alina, I came to the UN Climate Summit with many fears as well as hope. I had never left the Islands before. I had never been to our capital city Port Moresby, been on a plane and every step I took brought me face to face with something new and strange. I was fearful when I was taken into immigration for three hours and questioned about my trip and about climate change. I was fearful when I crossed the street, when I went in an elevator, when I went on a train, but I am far more fearful that my children will have no future, that their matrilineal birthright – their Island – is no longer habitable and they will have nowhere to live, no garden space to grow their food, no way to fish.

I found it difficult to understand life in New York. I asked people where the food came from. They told me shops. But I couldn't see anywhere that food was growing so I asked again and found out that the food came in on planes, like I did. I could see so many expensive things but no wealth to make those expensive things – no trees, no resources, no mines.

I had never spoken in front of foreigners before. I was nervous. But when I saw Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands address all the governments and mention my island and when I saw Alina and the other women speak on the panel, I felt empowered. I felt that it is women like us who really should be speaking up. I was able to speak to UN representatives, to other civil society groups and even to media, and after the UN Climate Summit I spoke at the People's General

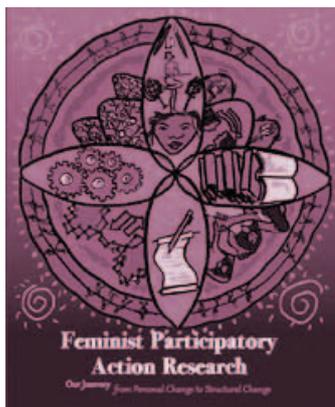
Assembly. There I told a room of more than 100 people about our disappearing Islands, our lives and the demands of women in my community.

Attending the UN Climate Summit gave us both opportunities to let the world know about our communities through the Summit, through the various meetings and events we attended, including the Women Leaders' Forum with the Mary Robinson Foundation and also through media coverage. Neither of us had ever done media work and now the concerns and demands of our communities have been published globally, in our regions and in our community. Even though both of us felt fear and some disappointment, we came away with hope. Climate change forces us to reconsider the global, inequitable system we have created. Maybe climate change can force us to actually consider a new, more equitable and locally driven, sustainable world. If wealthy countries honour their existing commitments to take responsibility for their historical debt to the world's poor and compensate for their pollution and halt their emissions, we could finally deliver on the promises made 66 years ago through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We both wondered whether people in rich countries are concerned about the impact of their lives on women in the Global South. Initially we walked through the streets of New York and felt shocked and saddened by the levels of inequality. But when we marched on the streets of New York, when we listened to other civil society and even some governments at the Climate Summit, and when we got such a good response to our visit, we felt hopeful. We went home with the knowledge that there are millions of people mobilising to demand climate justice. Our future now relies on a complete shift in climate, in economies, but also in power. From the streets of New York to the streets of Kathmandu, the villages of our mountains and the Islands of the Pacific people are ready for a new, just and sustainable world. They are ready for development justice.

Alina and Agnes were nominated and supported by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) to attend the UN Climate Summit and to build the voice and influence of women in their communities and respective organisations: the Mugal Women's Uplift Institute, Nepal and Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, PNG.

New Resources



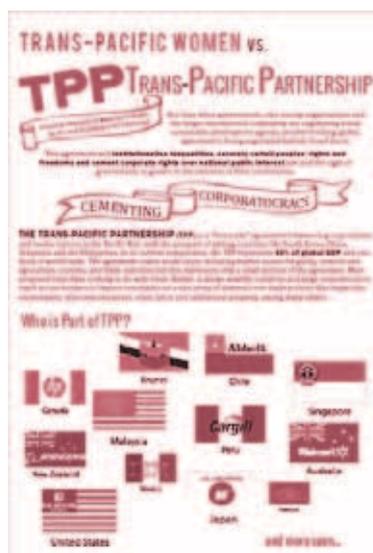
FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH- OUR JOURNEY FROM PERSONAL CHANGE TO STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Our journey of FPAR is a story of a democratic, non-hierarchical mutual learning process and part of our struggle for social transformation. FPAR emphasizes on local knowledge, while share and develop knowledge and skills based on experiences of participants. It looks at the power relations in our daily lives and society and challenges the gendered power asymmetry. It is strong combination of theory and practice which strengthens knowledge and helps to gain skills for further advocacy for structural changes.



FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH BRIEFS

APWLD produced research briefs resulting from the 1.5 year research conducted by grassroots women's organisations in their communities on issues relevant to rural and indigenous women.



WOMEN AGAINST THE TRANSPACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

At a time when governments, civil society organisations and the larger international community are negotiating a new sustainable development agenda, another binding, global, agreement is being negotiated behind closed doors. Learn more about the impact this trade agreement can have on the women in the region.



THE ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT JUSTICE (VIDEO)

Inequality is now so high that a woman garment worker earns less in a year than the Walton family earns every second. Climate change will force 50 million people to migrate from Bangladesh alone. The global crises of inequality and climate are both caused by our global economy. Together they threaten the future of humanity. It's time for a new model – a model of Development Justice. This video explains Development Justice and the shifts civil society in the Global South demand. It makes the case for why we need a new development model to address the double crises of inequality and environmental collapse.

VISIT THE APWLD WEBSITE AT APWLD.ORG TO DOWNLOAD THESE RESOURCES

Comings and Goings



Daungkamon Doncha-um
Mon joined APWLD as an Executive Assistant in March 2014. She graduated from the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) from Chiangmai University. Mon has worked

with local, national and international non-profit organisations in Chiangmai and Bangkok for the past ten years. Her work experiences is in the healthcare sectors especially working with people living with HIV/AIDS, drug user, sex workers, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) and other marginalised people.



Camille Rislér
Camille Rislér joined APWLD first as an intern and is now back-filling the Climate Justice position as Bana, the Programme Associate for this position, is on maternity leave. As an intern, Camille helped with the organisation

of the 2nd APFF and with "Grounding the Global" programme. In 2013 she graduated a double Master in Human Rights Law from the University of Paris 10, France and the University of Medellin, Colombia. During her studies, she spent one year in South America interning as a lawyer at the Constitutional Court of Colombia and as legal researcher in an Argentinian NGO, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She also worked within the Legal Clinic of her University with the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) on women's rights in Africa.



Pichayapuk Leangsombut
Pichayapuk Leangsombut, also known as Buai, is currently the program associate for APWLD. She provides assistance and coordination for APFF, CSO Forum on Beijing+20 and the other APWLD programs. Started out her social service

at The Cabin Chiangmai Drug and Alcohol Rehab Centre, Pichayapuk coordinated the Sober House Living Program for patients to apply what they learned in primary care in the community. With her passion for social work and gender equality, she is also an active member of One Billion Rising Chiangmai Committee which functions as a group to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women.



Banamalika Choudhury
Banamalika Choudhury is APWLD's programme Associate for the Climate Justice programme. She has been activist for gender and sexuality, peace and indigenous people's rights. Previously she

has worked with ActionAid International and is also a freelance writer.



Reileen Joy Dulay
Reileen Joy Dulay joined APWLD in July under the Grounding the Global Programme. Before joining APWLD, she worked as the Coordinator of a global platform of CSOs working on aid and development agenda and had been part of the consumers movement among others.



Trimita Chakma
Trimita Chakma works as a campaigner for the rights of women and indigenous peoples of Bangladesh. She recently joined APWLD as the Programme Associate for Research and Publication. Prior to joining APWLD she worked at Australian

Government's Australia Awards program in South Asia and UNDP's Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF). In 2012 she initiated and mentored a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) on sexual violence against indigenous women and girls of Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and their access to justice with Kapaeeng Foundation and APWLD. She was one of the key coordinators for One Billion Rising Bangladesh.



Betty Barkha
Betty Barkha joins APWLD as part of a new initiative called the South-South exchange from our member organisation FWRM in Fiji Islands. She has been working with various youth based movements in the

Pacific and in India on areas of education, peace-building, conflict resolution, sustainable and youth development. Prior to joining APWLD, she was based in the Fiji Islands working with The Pacific Theological College examining Democratic trends and Challenges in Fiji and the Pacific and the UNDP Pacific Center with their Capacities for Peace and Development (CPAD) program in the Pacific.

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ABOUT FORUM NEWS

Forum News is a regular publication of APWLD. FN provides space for network members to share information on their activities, campaigns, stories and reflections. The opinions and positions expressed in the articles in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the APWLD network, but those of the individual authors.

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APWLD is Asia Pacific's leading feminist, membership driven network. We hold consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Our 180 members represent groups of diverse women from 25 countries in the region. For 25 years APWLD has been empowering women to use law as a instrument of change for equality, justice, peace and development. We use research, training, advocacy and activism to claim and strengthen women's human rights.

APWLD's secretariat is based in Chiang Mai, Thailand



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