Dear EMRIP,
We hope this finds you well. We are sharing, herewith, a copy of our brief report about the Indigenous Youth Empowerment Project we implemented in 2018 with support from the UNICEF and in partnership with the Philippine Government's Department of Social Welfare and Development. We think this is one good collaborative practice in response to empowering indigenous youth while building relations and advancing IP rights in and through government agencies. The Project Brief contains a summary of the project and its results. Annex 2 contains recommendations for the indigenous youth themselves developed thru the capacity building activities and finalized during the Indigenous Youth Summit - the projects' culminating activity. These are significant even today. While these recommendations may be very specific to the Philippines, we are sure that it also speaks to the situation of indigenous youth and children in other countries.

At the moment, indigenous children are not spared from the aggressive anti-insurgency campaign of the state. Indigenous community schools have been under attack for more than 5 years now. Displaced students accommodated by Universities have been forcibly brought back to their provinces by state forces. Some students were detained with some teachers.

Needless to say that the criminalization and attacks on indigenous peoples' human rights defenders impact on their children physically, mentally and socially and impairs their full development.

• Indigenous women are increasingly being targeted and criminalized in their efforts to assert and protect their human and collective rights. Aside from overall insecurity, indigenous women suffer from gender-specific threats i.e. sexual violence, trumped-up charges, smear campaigns and threats on their children among others (Global Witness, 2017). In August, Leah Tumbalang, engaged in the campaign against mining activities was shot dead. She was the14th of indigenous peoples rights defenders killed in the year in the province of Bukidnon alone. Tumbalang was mother to 7 children. In July, Urikhimbam Thoibi with her sister-in-law and a child survived a shooting incident after having been tailed and verbally abused by unidentified men. Urikhimbam Thoibi is the daughter of Urikhimbam Nobokishore and Mangsatabam Sobita, both engaged in the work for defense of indigenous peoples’ rights in Manipur and targeted by armed persons in 2018.

From our other engagements with partners in the region :

• There are thousands of undocumented/unregistered indigenous peoples up to the present in Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal, Malaysia and the Philippines, many of which are women and girls. These includes those who may have citizenship documents but are not in the official censuses. This impacts on their capacity to access basic services, mobility, redress and state protection. For indigenous women and girls, this predisposes them to discrimination, violence and abuse. In Thailand alone, an estimate of over 100,000 indigenous peoples are reportedly without citizenship. A lot of these are women, unable to register due to their marginalization based on patriarchal ideologies, lack of information and resources in support of their registration, low capacity to understand the national language and discrimination by the mainstream population.

• The Thomson Reuters Foundation survey puts India as the most dangerous place for women, in 2016, based on incidences of “sexual violence and harassment, cultural and traditional practices, human trafficking including forced labour, sex slavery and domestic servitude.” Myanmar comes third in the ranking (Becher, 2016). This echoes a 2013 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) citing around 70,000 women and children trafficked in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand. Aside from working a domestic helpers and sex workers, the report also surfaced forced surrogacy as a new form of exploitation where young women are “turned into baby-making machines” and their babies sold from 1-4 lahks Indian rupees. Surrogacy is legal in India since 2002 and has been a lucrative business hence. There are also increasing reports of this illicit but lucrative activity from Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Nepal.
(note : bulleted items - lifted from: Situation of Indigenous Women in Asia in the Context of the Beijing Platform 25 Years review)

We hope this will substantially contribute to the current EMRIP study.

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