



CSO FORUM  
ON SOCIAL  
FORESTRY  
IN ASEAN

# Key Messages and Recommendations Developed by the CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN for Regional and International Climate Change and Land Processes





We, the members, participating organizations, and representatives of civil society organizations and community-based organizations, Indigenous People's networks, and membership organizations of the Civil Society Organizations Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN, or CSO Forum, have come together for our 9th Annual Meeting from 18-20 September 2022.

Our vision is for *“Empowered and resilient Indigenous Peoples/ethics groups and local communities in forested landscapes in ASEAN with secured equal rights and well-being through an institutionalized CSO platform working towards recognition and promotion of indigenous/ethnic groups knowledge and local wisdom, tenure and access rights, community economy and livelihood, international and regional standards and safeguards, and inclusive governance mechanisms.”*

The meeting acknowledged that while several gains are observed at the regional and national levels, perennial challenges remain. Some of these challenges were identified as follows:

**Community Economy and Livelihoods.** Some Community Forestry Enterprises (CFEs) are still operating in isolation. There is a market, but lack the links and capacity between producer and market remain. Capacity building and follow-up post-training are limited. Permitting process is often a disincentive, and equitable partnership between CFEs and larger enterprises is still weak. In most cases, the livelihood of communities in forested landscapes continues to suffer from minimal support despite its potential and actual contribution to building sustainable and resilient communities. Traditional livelihood and food security of Indigenous Peoples/ethnic groups are often at risk due to the criminalization of their traditional shifting cultivation.

**Tenure and Access Rights.** Customary tenure recognition and forest access rights remain constrained in many communities and can also be expensive and tedious.

Ownership rights are still conditional and restricted in many cases. Apart from that, there are still overlaps between the customary territories and other management areas such as forest reserves, parks, and forest concessions. The rapid and unsustainable development in the community and indigenous forest encroachment will threaten the customary forest, including their customary rights.

#### **International and Regional Standards and Safeguards.**

The inconsistency of interpretations and understanding of the standards and safeguards leads to a lack of clear guidance from various stakeholders on the implementation and practice of the FPIC reporting system, including the grievance mechanisms. Further, there are still gaps in the level of awareness, knowledge, and capacity of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and ethnic groups, even within CSOs, private sector, and government representatives on various national, regional, and international and regional mechanisms and commitments that their countries have signed, especially regarding IP rights and safeguards. These results in many cases of criminalization, loss of land, threats to Indigenous Women, and insecure customary tenure of Indigenous People.

**Governance Mechanisms.** Although there is improvement in forestry policy and governance, some government processes (e.g., customary tenure recognition, mapping) are still very tedious, costly, and complicated for IPLCs. It is still insufficient, if not lacking, in inclusive mechanisms to engage effectively with CSOs and IPLCs. On the other hand, IPLCs still have limited access to government services and are often absent or have very limited participation, such as, but not limited to, climate discourses.

Thus, during its 9th annual meeting, we discussed, agreed, and put together the following key messages and recommendations on the thematic areas of Community Economy and Livelihood, Tenure and Access Rights, International-Regional Standards and Safeguards, and Governance Mechanisms.



<sup>1</sup> during its 9th Annual Meeting 18-20 September 2022 in Chiang Mai, Thailand

<sup>2</sup> The CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN was established in 2012 and is participated in by over 40 civil society organizations, composed of non-government organizations and

membership-based organizations of local forest communities, Indigenous Peoples, and family farmers in forested landscapes operating in the Southeast Asian region.



Traditional food of Akha Indigenous Peoples in Aye Village, Chiang Mai  
Photo: AIIPP

**We call on governments, regional and international platforms, and institutions working on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development to:**

#### **For Community Economy and Livelihoods**

- Recognize, promote, and protect Indigenous Peoples and ethnic groups' knowledge of the human-nature relationship
- Provide direct funding to support and promote Indigenous Women's and Indigenous Youth's initiatives and leadership
- Improve policy dialogue and strengthen collaboration between CSOs and government
- Facilitate the one-stop processing center for Community Forestry Enterprises (CFEs) registration and support
- Support sharing technical expertise on Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) across ASEAN; Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) support for community products; and acceptance of alternative certification
- Ensure connectivity and continuity to facilitate equitable partnership between CFEs and larger enterprises, activate the ASEAN Trust Fund for CFEs, and explore diverse national funding mechanisms

#### **For Tenure and Access Rights**

- Recognize and uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and ethnic groups over their territories, customary land, and forest tenure based on their customary practices, including relevant national and international legal frameworks
- Simplify and fast-track customary tenure recognition processes without taking away their autonomy in the governance of their customary tenure
- Provide the resources to support IPLCs for its capacity building, documentation, and mapping, and the construction of effective networks and cooperation to address gaps in customary tenure recognition
- Promote local conservation initiatives and policy reforms on land and forestry and harmonize existing overlapping policies on land, forest, and biodiversity
- Set up a national and regional funding mechanism for Customary Tenure (CT) recognition that the IPLCs can directly access

- Support intergenerational knowledge transfer among Indigenous Peoples' elders, women, and youth

#### **For Governance Mechanisms**

- Ensure integrative governance when local solutions also have sustainable impacts across scales, places, issues, and sectors
- Recognize different knowledge and governance systems for sustainability
- Recognize the contribution of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and ethnic groups in sustainably managing their territories
- Develop and fully implement a binding agreement at the regional and national level to support customary tenure recognition and implementation of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)
- Support the documentation of good practices of IPLCs in forest and land governance
- Establish inclusive consultative mechanisms at the sub-national, national, and regional levels that enable active and meaningful participation of IPLCs and CSOs, particularly in essential decision-making processes that can affect them
- Continue to support trust building and transparency between community and government, recognize and promote the indigenous and traditional knowledge in forest management, and strengthen the role of women and youth in forest governance
- Promote adaptive, enabling learning, experimentation, and reflexivity by the IPLCs to cope with the complexity of changes

#### **For International and Regional Commitments, Standards, and Safeguards on Climate - Biodiversity - Human Wellbeing**

- Recognize the role of IPLCs and CSOs in translating international targets and national commitments on climate and biodiversity (such as the race to net-zero or the 30 by 30 campaign) into actions
- Ensure that Indigenous Peoples, ethnic groups, and local communities fully understand the regional and international commitments of the countries, including updates on relevant policies, so that they can meaningfully engage.
- Develop and fully implement FPIC policy at all levels following the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- Provide resources to set up independent and operational grievance mechanisms for the environmental defenders
- Integrate and mainstream relevant International Standards and Safeguards into laws and policies in the country

The CSO Forum affirms to continue to do more, discuss more, and collaborate with governments and key stakeholders in keeping the productive interface to advance social forestry and customary tenure recognition to contribute to the achievement of national climate and sustainable development goals. We are accountable to our future generation in our decisions and actions today. Our knowledge, practices, role, and contribution are crucial in ensuring ASEAN natural resources and prosperity. We need each other, and therefore we need to work together.



# Participating Organizations

1. Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme Asia (NTFP-EP Asia)
2. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
3. The NGO Forum on Cambodia
4. Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO)
5. Institute for the Development of Educational and Ecological Alternatives, Inc. (IDEAS)
6. Macatumbalen Community Based Forest and Coastal Management Association
7. KKI Warsi – Indonesian Conservation Community
8. Perkumpulan HuMa Indonesia
9. Gender Development Association (GDA)
10. Lao Development Human Resources in Rural Area Association (Lao DHRRA)
11. Green Community Alliance
12. Sarawak Dayak Iban Association
13. NTFP-EP – Malaysia
14. NTFP-EP – Cambodia
15. NTFP-EP – Viet Nam
16. NTFP-EP – Philippines
17. Partners of Community Organisations (PACOS Trust)
18. Promotion of Indigenous and Nature Together (POINT)
19. Health Livelihood Association (HLA)
20. Center for Highland Natural Resource Governance Research (CEGORN)
21. Tropenbos Viet Nam
22. Center for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas (CSDM)
23. Center for People and Nature Reconciliation (PanNature)
24. Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand (IWNT)
25. Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD)
26. Tonkia Network (TKN)
27. Karen Network for Culture and Environment (KNCE)



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