



Deepening Roots, Strengthening Branches, Amplifying Our Collective Voice
BERSAMA 2023: NTFP-EP ANNUAL REGIONAL NETWORK GATHERING

The NTFP-EP Declaration for Peoples and Forests

Preamble

We, the Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Programme, are a collective of 30 members and over 120 partner organizations in Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam dedicated to the vision of "Linking Peoples and Forests: Rights, Health, and Livelihood"

Our mission is to empower Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)¹, women, elders, and youth to secure their rights, tenure, and livelihoods while conserving and revitalizing their territories and forests. We stand for the recognition and respect of indigenous and local cultures, languages, and knowledge, as well as the empowerment and equal rights of women within communities and society at large.

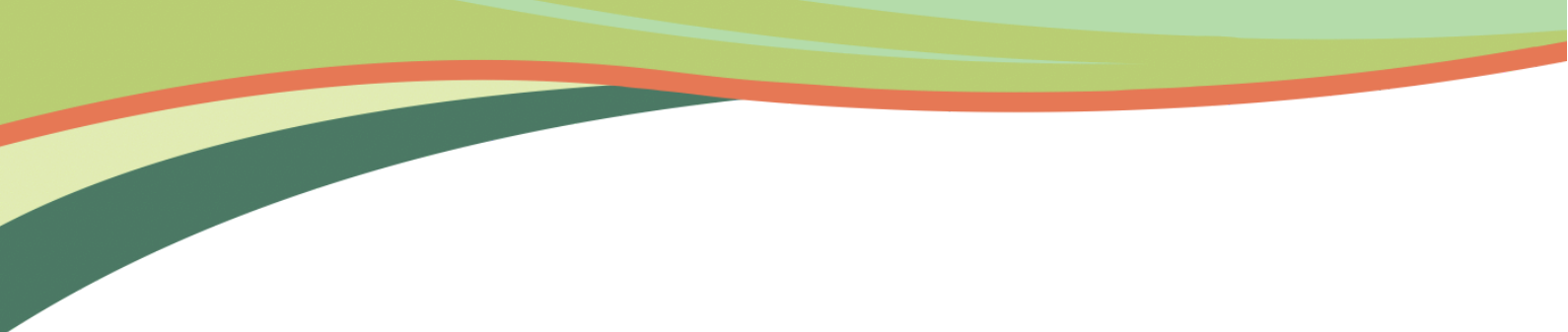
We believe in the intrinsic link between livelihoods, land tenure, and environmental conservation. We are catalysts for change who advocate for the rights and well-being of IPLCs, women, elders, and youth. We support and nurture partners engaging in advocacy efforts and constructive dialogue with policymakers and other stakeholders.

For over two and a half decades, we have earnestly worked towards establishing sustainable livelihoods and community-based enterprises, protecting and conserving community forests, amplifying women's voices, and upholding cultural diversity. We have worked with thousands of communities across South and Southeast Asia to preserve tens of thousands of hectares of forests and establish hundreds of community-based livelihood enterprises. We acknowledge the difficulties in our work, but remain steadfast in our hope for a better future. Our advocacy is what inspires us everyday, keeps our resolve strong, and ultimately shapes our collective stance and character.

The context of our work

In the face of countless global challenges to environmental and human rights, IPLCs stand as key contributors to the development of innovative solutions. It is evident that conventional top-down solutions, often originating from authoritative entities, have proven ineffective in addressing these challenges. Hence, we offer alternative solutions to challenge this status quo where community

¹ Including ethnic minorities, tribal groups, Scheduled Tribes, hill tribes, upland groups, aboriginals, and other related terms.



voices are excluded from the global stage and their participation hindered by institutional barriers that obstruct meaningful IPLC involvement in crafting solutions for all.

We recognize the pivotal role that forest peoples play in maintaining and protecting natural ecosystems. Recent reports have revealed that indigenous peoples and local communities safeguard and manage more than half of all of the world's forest and critical biodiversity areas, but their efforts often go unappreciated by the world at large who benefit from their work.

We firmly believe that IPLCs, particularly with the inclusion of women, elders, and youth, possess invaluable knowledge and wisdom that could help overcome some of the current crises that humanity faces. This knowledge can guide the world towards positive local solutions for the global biodiversity and climate crises, drawing upon traditional ecological wisdom, institutions, and norms.

Our world, as a whole, has been profoundly affected by global crises. Nevertheless, there is a wealth of wisdom and knowledge that NTFP-EP endeavors to highlight and emphasize.

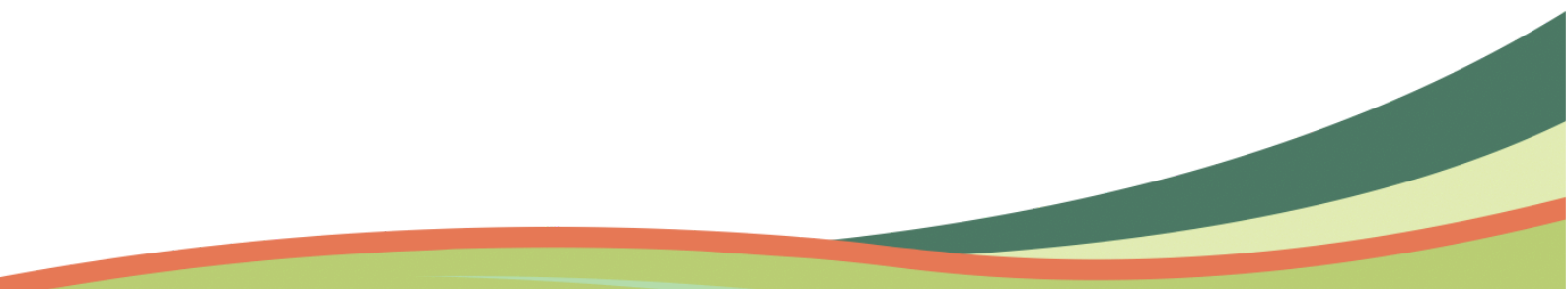
Our affirmations and pledges

We pledge to stand with and advocate for the territorial and customary rights of IPLCs. In doing so, we firmly support these communities in asserting their fundamental rights – the right to withhold consent and the right to perpetuate their traditional livelihoods. Our support remains firm even when faced with the challenges posed by extractive industries, uncooperative governments, and self-interested entities.

We pledge to nurture the strengths that lie within our communities, fostering a culture of knowledge-sharing and mutual growth. We recognize the value of what we have learned on our journey and are wholeheartedly dedicated to passing on this wisdom to future generations.

We express our wholehearted support for community-based forestry programs aligned with our strategic directions. These programs will play a pivotal role in forging pathways that bolster the well-being of communities, promote sustainable livelihoods, foster conservation, celebrate culture, and champion gender equity.

Our distinctive niche within the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) sector remains our primary focus. We understand the value of this unique specialization and the profound impact it can have on the betterment of our communities and the preservation of our natural world. Thus, we pledge to maintain our resolve and dedication in this undertaking.



Our actions and approaches

At NTFP-EP, we are not only committed to our vision but actively engage in a range of diverse and inclusive actions to address pressing issues, foster collective strength and promote sustainability.

- **Alliance-building:** We recognize the power of alliances, and we actively work to build connections and join coalitions to amplify our collective impact.
- **Capacity building:** We invest in enhancing the capabilities of our partner communities, emphasizing leadership development, self-determination, and meaningful representation.
- **Collaboration:** We understand that the challenges we face are multifaceted, and we actively seek collaboration on all-encompassing and integrated issues to find effective solutions.
- **Collective Care:** We emphasize the importance of emotional well-being, communal welfare, and trust-building in our roles as environmental human rights defenders.
- **Engagement:** We engage in constructive dialogues with governments, the private sector, academia, the media, and other sectors, ensuring that our voices are heard and our concerns are addressed.
- **Free, Prior and Informed Consent:** We advocate for the right to self-determination, ensuring that our partner communities can make informed decisions about their futures and withhold consent when necessary.
- **Platforming:** We act as a conduit for grassroots voices, collecting messages from the communities and ensuring direct representation to sub-national, national, regional, and global platforms.
- **Linking Peoples and Forests:** We foster meaningful connections and recognize the interdependence between peoples and forests
- **Lobby and Advocacy:** We engage in lobbying and advocacy efforts to promote policies and practices that protect the rights of our communities and safeguard the natural world.
- **Protection of Environmental Defenders:** We stand firmly with those who are on the front lines, defending human rights and the environment. We protect those who protect our natural world.
- **Sustainability:** We are committed to practices and actions that promote the sustainability of our environment and communities.
- **Restoration and Revitalization:** We actively work towards restoring and revitalizing our landscapes, cultures, and traditions to ensure a better future for all.

It is our greatest hope that these actions embody our dedication to creating a more just, sustainable, and harmonious world where people and nature thrive together.

Signed and approved by the members, trustees, staff, and partner organizations of the Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Programme.