

Training on Indigenous Women and Decision Making

**Guwahati, Northeast India
September 4th – 6th, 2007**

Implementing Organizations:

Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact Foundation (AIPP)
Naga Women Union of Manipur (NWUM)

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Day 1: September 4, 2007

INTRODUCTION SESSION

Grace Shatsang, President NWUM explained the need of Indigenous women in decision making specially most Indigenous people decision is taken by men. She also expressed how grateful the organization to AIPP for finding and sponsoring such program which is the need of hour. In spite of all the uncertainty in the Northeast she was also happy five States out of seven was able to attend.

Thereafter highlighted expected sessions for the days:

- Session 1: Trends in Decision Making
- Session 2: Herstory- Indigenous Women's Role in Society
- Session 3: Capacity in Decision Making
- Session 4: HIV/AIDS and Decision Making Process
- Session 5: Fields Study
- Session 6: International Instrumental on Indigenous Women and Decision Making
- Session 7: National Laws and Policies on Women and Women's participation on Decision Making at the National Level
- Session 8: Strategies for placing women in Decision Making Positions
- Session 9: Follow Up Plan
- Session 10: Evaluation

After which facilitator asked the participants to write the following in the pink colour paper distributed to each participants.

- What is your name
- Origin
- Who gave you your name
- What is the meaning

Next green colour paper each to participants to write their expectations:

- What do you expect to learn from the course
- What do you expect of your co-participants?
- What do you expect to attain after the training:

Participants' Expectations

Expect to Learn	Expect of your Co-participants	Expect to Attain after the Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The process of Decision Making▪ To learn the skill of TOT▪ Strategies for	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Learning the culture and traditional/sharing▪ Good interaction▪ Friendly, participation▪ To know more of her place,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Will give whatever I learnt to the locality▪ To give training or awareness to my people on Decision Making

<p>Placing Women in Decision Making Position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To get more knowledge about how to be a Decision Maker in future ▪ To give good decision in family or society ▪ The Rights of women and above all in making the right decision ▪ To learn of Decision Making good ▪ Learn about women's empowerment through decision making in family, society, political field ▪ To learn more about Indigenous women, role and empowerment ▪ Role and power of women in decision making ▪ To learn how to make decision ▪ - Process and Strategies to be in Decision Making 	<p>culture, caste, environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To get good idea from them ▪ Learn more about our fellow friends, deal with their problem and share our problem ▪ Learning the culture and traditional to get good things ▪ Friendly, out spoken and informative about themselves and their social system ▪ To know each other idea, share our problem and help each other ▪ To be open and build a strong bond ▪ To get good idea from our participant ▪ Sharing their roles and status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To share my knowledge/skill ▪ To be a good decision maker ▪ I expect to mould myself and also my society in the social activities of a woman ▪ Whatever I learn to the locality ▪ Keep contact with each other and make a platform for the N.E Indigenous women for better development of each culture, traditional etc. ▪ Confidence and dignity of being a woman ▪ After training I must be a good decision maker in our family, society ▪ To impart the gain knowledge and skills to others
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Each participant shared what is written in the paper to the group. Facilitator further explained how important is our name related to self and how has given. It is very clear in most cases given by father/grandfather male member of the family. So the decision is in the hand of men. Another thing she said is as many participants expect from their co-participants to be friendly and open we must be very expressive to share our feelings so that we learn from each other.

SESSION 1: TRENDS IN DECISION MAKING

The facilitator asked to name some of the famous women who had taking decision

1. Indira Gandhi: One time Prime Minister of India
2. Rani Gaiduiliu: A commoner from Tamenglong District, Manipur led to fight against British Rule to protect the land.
3. Hingha: Only living Naga Queen in Manipur ruling her village presently
4. Margareth Thatcher: Prime Minister of UK
5. Mother Teresa: Non Political, religious
6. Banerji Bhuto: Daughter of Former Prime Minister, Pakistan
7. Pratibha Patil: Present President of India
8. Hasina: Daughter of Former Prime Minister, Bangladesh
9. Rice: One of the top 10 powerful women of the world from USA
10. Mamoni: Assamese Writer and mediator between Govt. of India and ULFA (Assam's Insurgent)
11. Mulaqbaru: 1942 freedom fighter, protect the land of Assam, General Civilian and women leader

From the above mention name there are different trends in decision making. We also take decision for the countries or at the very local level like men take. But we also see the trend of the decision making by women is also like men decision and Indigenous women seems to have more confident in male decision which is the great challenge for all of us.

TEA BREAK

Participants were divided into 4 groups and were given two questions to work:

1. What kinds of decisions do women/men make in the household?
2. What kinds of decisions can women/men make for the community?

Group I

Household		Community	
Women	Men	Women	Men
Kitchen management	Financial decision	Women representation is in significant in the village council	Men's representation is higher and more dominant in the village council
Marketing	Education for children	Women as peace makers in disputes	Settlement of land dispute
Interior designing	Budgeting (monthly expenditure)	Women preserves the culture and tradition	Religious decision and performance
Dress code	Rules and regulation (family administration)		Laws of marriage
Marriage (50%)	Buying and construction of houses and properties		Laws of divorce
Up bringing of children	Marriage (50%)		Indigenous practices
Number of kids (50%)	Divorce		Belief done by men
Keeping maids	Number of kids (50%)		Developmental decision for the society
Family worship	Distribution of		Crime and punishment
Adoption (Child 50%)			Corruption
Division of works			

Charity/sharing	properties Adoption child (50%) Naming		Number of male employees higher both in Govt. and private sector Laws of inheritance and maintenance
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Group II

Household		Community	
Women	Men	Women	Men
Financial matter (less) Guiding children education Retaining tradition dress Women/mother decide dress for children Property matter (less) Marriage	Financial matter Children education Sex and number of children Giving property to children Marriage Household maintenance	Development program Divorce Leadership E.g. Poumai Naga Tribe has resolution for marriage	Land dispute solution Development of community Divorce Leadership Community land System of marriage (dowry, feast)

Group III

Household		Community	
Women	Men	Women	Men
Taking up child Designing/decoration Naming of child Selling of pet animals Shopping/marketing Holding money Dressing of child	Building house Buying land Selling land Education Voting right own decision	Corruption to bring peace in the society Helping the poor/others	Leadership Marriage

Analysis:

From the group presentation we find that inside the household the decision is with the women-cooking, washing, cleaning, taking care of children, caring domestic animals, weaving where as the men take all the decision that is outside like- leadership, development policy making, security/protection of the land.

Participants were pair into two for discussion in the given topic and asked 2 volunteer to come and facilitate and write in the board- Why women are not willing to take part in the Decision Making in household/community?

- Patriarchy society
- Discriminatory treatment
- Stereotype
- Less participants

- Unequal treatment
- Lack of exposure
- Physical/mentally weakness
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of confidence
- Very busy
- Inferiority complex
- Lack of education
- Stigma/social phobia
- Women voice not heard
- Domination
- To maintain physical beauty
- Socially, politically economically deprive
- Marginalized
- Back biting
- Comfortable life
- Jealousy
- State suppression (Black Law) risk
- Restriction of movement

Analysis:

All the given points are because of the patriarchal system that's how we are brought up, practice and take up roles and responsibilities given by the society also in Northeast there are Black laws which make women difficult to participate.

TEA BREAK

SESSION 2: HERSTORY- INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ROLE IN SOCIETY

Participants were asked to write "HERSTORY" in decision making within 1 hour time.

1. There was a time when I did not know Christ. I was very young and energetic, just enjoying never had a deep concern about life. But there was a friend of mine, who introduced me to Christ. Though my parents were Non-Christian they never discourage me going to church. But my problem arose when my parents put restriction upon my movement because villagers, especially my uncle call me to his house where mass were gathered. They start telling me, not to go to church. I was made to sit in the middle of the crowd. My uncle started persuading me that what ever I asked he would give as he was a rich person in our village, if I do not accept Christ. Whole night I remain restless but decided to be Christian. My uncle got angry and he began to hate me for 6 years I suffered as a lone Christian in my family. But miraculously after the passing 6 years my parents with all my family member became a Christian. So when I look back my life today I feel I had taken right decision in choosing Christ, and initiating my family to know Christ. I praise God for my journey till today He is leading my life. _ Nyame

2. The story is about a woman who was a very prayerful, she never got satisfy to praying alone. She would want every body's participation in the prayer. Although she was illiterate she decided to start Women's Fellowship since 1964. Because of her initiative in the fellowship people came together to share good news and have good relationship with God. Also to led the society know women have the role to mould and shape their families, churches and societies. Till today the fellowship continues.

Through her wise decision making most of our tribe came to know the love of God. Though she is not here but we remembering her now and forever. _ Mrs. Niholi T. Achumi

3. Mrs. Ayenla belongs to the Chang Tribe in Tuensang District, Nagaland. She became a widow in the year 1980 with 6 children. She had never received any formal education but she became the founder of the Tuensang District Mother's Association. She dreamt a dream and gave life to her dream on the 11th of October 2005. She always wanted to bring about development in Tuensang and for this Tuensang District Mother's Association (TDMA) was her dream, her instrument of change. Thus, TDMA was born due to her tireless efforts.

As a result, women's identity and position has become more prominent. She was a dedicated servant for the community, particularly women. In spite of the disadvantages she faced, she took up great challenges and won them. Since then, TDMA has growth into a full-fledged body and is now functioning smoothly and successfully. Today Mrs. Ayenla Chang is 76 years old but still serving her community as the advisor of TDMA. She may grow older with time both her story will never be too old to be told and re-told again. _ Y. Serila Sangtam

4. A beloved and legendary lady popularly known as 'Mani' meaning 'Mother' was born in Borok family and married to non Borok, who was a pilot. Though she married outside her community she decided to serve her own people and eventually formed an organization with the "Tripura Adivasi Mahila Samity". By the year 1970 she was widely known by the people and became quite famous for her welfare work and upliftment of Borok women she did.

There are endless stories to tell about her achievements, however most remarkable of all was setting up of Residential School for girl drop out students who are from poor family especially who comes from interior places.

And the result was excellent. The drop out students have pass with good marks and made there future secure. Thus the rate of percentage of passing girl child gone higher in the State as a whole and does she proved that if given opportunity even person from small village having no educational background can be successful person.

Thus Anurapa Makharee (Deb Barma) who served Borok women, who has spent time mostly for the upliftment of the Borok women will be remembered by us till we live; she is no more but still lives in our hearts. _ Sunita Deb Barma

5. My mother passed away while I was very young, I didn't want to stop my schooling. So I dicided to earn by working in making sweets at home and sell them in the school to make up for my tuition fees till class X. After that I gave up to support my younger brother

today I am happy that my brother could have master of divinity for what I have decided.
_ Lallozam

6. Her name was Riichiingolii meaning “The lady who sees only joy”. She belongs to Pholami Village, a Chakhesang Village in Phek District, Nagaland. She was the wife of then Village Chief.

During the First World War, the Japanese Army along with the Indian Army resided in our village. Many houses were burnt down and properties ransacked. It was at this time that my grandmother helped the soldiers who were in distress. She turned her granary into a place for the injured soldiers and took care of them until they were fit enough. In this process, my grandpa was forced to go into hiding for five long years. However, my grandma never gave up her work. She shifted the hiding place from the granary to the fields. Everyday, she carries a basket loaded with foods, medicines and other necessities and goes to the field and tends the injured soldiers. She was the messenger of help and hope to those in distress. By God’s abundant grace she was never caught although my grandpa was caught. She lived a life remembering and honouring. Today, I honour her by writing her story. _ Ruukulii Kezo

7. There was a conflict between my room mate and another room. We were going for short term course training about 6 months in that place. The conflict between them becomes worse day by day. The reason was nothing but saying bad things to each other. After 3 days they were not in talking term. At that moment, I took a great challenge to be a mediator. At first I spoke to my room mate about how it started, after hearing her side of story again I talked to the other person. I realize both did not want to have conflict. The first step was bring them together in one place, give them a chance to share in front of me. When they realize I was not taking side they were free and open. At last we came to peace with consensus. We understood that caring and loving among human being is very important. _ Nengcha

Analysis:

From the stories we could see that women were and are agents of change in various areas like, taking decision, in forming organization, taking initiative in social reformation and taking roles for peace and harmony within society, helping the needy and mediator role in the conflict etc.

SESSION 3: CAPABILITY IN DECISION MAKING

On the given topic “Men are more intelligent, so they can make better decision” participants were group into two for debate.

Feedback from observers:

- Because there are more men doctor we cannot say that men are more intelligent, it is only through the opportunity or favour given
- Both men and women are equally intelligent biblically and scientifically. Some statement are very biased but should be logical and rational
- Feedback from participants:

- Feel hurt
- Must be serious, presentable, have presence of mind
- Enhance knowledge
- Both men and women are equally intelligent when she speak.
- Felt is it really like that?
- Nice to pretend, find points for argument although in reality disagree in heart
- Men and women are intelligent in different field

Exercise: How wise decision is made? What are the principles of wise decision-making?

- Wise decision can be made after getting feedback from the members
- Consensus
- With a clear mind, understanding and an un biased heart
- With a good personality and I.Q.
- Confidence in themselves and with others
- Good knowledge of the situation/issue
- Knowledge of the consequences and effects of the decision and analyzing
- Accepting differences and understanding
- Sound health and mind
- Positive altitude
- Acceptable strategy
- Take advised and consult from respectable people
- Presence of mind
- Respect, understand, accept and attention on what others say
- Economically, physically, mentally and socially sound

What are the conditions that are necessary for Indigenous Women to make good decision

- Convincing power
- More awareness on decision making
- Reasoning power
- Empowerment
- To interest
- Space be given
- Exposure tour
- Orientation, training in the community
- Awareness on customary laws,
- Justice/non discriminatory
- Economically, physically, mentally and socially sound

SESSION 4: HIV/AIDS AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Being Teacher's Day facilitator asked the participants write message to Teachers' as a tribute. Everyone took great interest in writing wonderful messages and took pride in reading out the message.

The facilitator then asked two volunteers to write the full form of HIV - Human Immune Virus & AIDS - Acquire Immune Deficiency Syndrome. In plenary the following were discuss.

How HIV is transmitted?	How HIV is not transmitted?
<p>Only 4 fluids in the body can transmit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blood ▪ Semen ▪ Vaginal Fluids ▪ Breastfeeding milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sweat ▪ Saliva ▪ Tears ▪ Urine ▪ Feces and ▪ Vomit

How/where can we get response?

- Get tested
- We can get tested in Govt. Hospital, Private Clinic
- After confirming we can get into with medication

A sharing from participant:

There is Ayurvedic Doctor from Shillong who claimed to have cured HIV+ve patient and he has being recognized by the worldwide. Example: HIV patient who was brought to Nazareth Hospital, Shillong and refused to be treated was cured.

What are our altitudes towards living with HIV/AIDS +ve

- Stigmatized
- Discrimination in social spare
- Considered them as sinner
- Curse by God for parental or personal sin

What are Indigenous Women decisions on HIV/AIDS +ve

- Awareness on HIV/AIDS
- Opening Rehab, Trauma and Counseling Centre
- Acceptance starting from the family, to the society/community
- Involvement of Church

Is important to tell/not to tell that he/she is HIV/AIDS +ve

Not to tell because:

- Discriminated (Family, Society, Community)
- Stigma
- Non Co-operation/support from all sides

To tell because:

- Can get counseling
- Aware on how to avoid transmission to others
- To prevent risk factor
- Information on treatment

The facilitator said Indigenous People have own culture but today Indigenous People are imitating other culture and disease like HIV/AIDS are getting into our culture and the problem are rising each day where Indigenous People need to take up preventive steps. Northeast specially Manipur has the highest number of HIV/AIDS cases in ratio to population.

Tea Break

SESSION 5: FIELD STUDY

(Exposure to Assamese traditional food)

SESSION 6: INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENT ON INDEGINOUS WOMEN AND DECISION MAKING

Facilitator started with globalization. She stressed on how globalization has make indigenous women difficult to compete with scientifically develop high yielding products. Today in our areas our indigenous products/food may not look so good but they sustain example we can preserve our seeds but high yielding foods we can not either get the seeds or preserve them for long. So we keep buying and increased dependency and deprived the value of our sustainability practices/system. High yielding seeds used chemical fertilizer who spoils our indigenous way of preserving seed and land. Chemically fertilized food products are injurious to health. Whereas our Indigenous people use organic fertilizer which is good for both health and environment. Indigenous Women are the preserver and sustainer of our livelihood.

Some of the international instruments that hampers women and decision making

- Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)
- IMPWB starts giving loan by signing an agreement with the property/land of the loanee.
- Liberalization
- Ecology-construction of dams, mining

We must be aware of our own issues and situation and present to the central for taking up any action.

CEDAW

While explaining on CEDAW facilitator mention that in India article on Customary Law is not rectified. For better understanding indigenous women in international arena participants were asked to divide into two groups to debate on “Indigenous Women can have voice and participate in international arena”

Participants Reflected on the Debate as:

- It is not easy for the agreed group speak and more easy for the disagreed group as they are speaking from the ground reality or fact. It is still difficult to participate and voice in our own society and state because we are-
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of Confidence
- No space
- Discriminated
- Ignorance of our issues
- Husband control
- Cannot follow others
- Require time
- Women have lots of dilemma

Next, the facilitator gave 2 minutes to the participants to think on “How women can overcome their dilemma” Comments are:

- Women should be given not just formal education but also informal and non formal
- Giving awareness programs, lobbying
- Participation in all level
- Create more employment opportunities for women
- Boldness, courage, determination can overcome this dilemma
- Women must know the international instrument to take up
- Women in the decision making body
- Exposure
- She should know the technique to control man
- Should be adjustable
- Aware of their rights and empowered, demand space for participation/opportunity
- We should learn how to penetrate in UN system and know its mechanism
- Lessen women’s daily chores

Day 3: September 6th, 2007

SESSION 7: NATIONAL LAW & POLICIES ON WOMEN AND WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION ON DECISION MAKING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Ms. Sunita and Ms. Sounai were asked to facilitate the session. The participants contributed various points on policies and laws and then asked the participants to write on the given 2 colour papers the advantage and limitation of the prevailing policies and laws.

Policy/Law	Advantage	Limitation
1. Policy on Compulsory and Free Education	- Increased women literacy rate	- Not reach to local people - Not proper implementation
2. National Commission for Women	- Encourage women - Submission of our grievances - Take up grievances	- Lack of implementation - Lack of money - Political appointment
3. Property Inheritance	- Equal status/ sharing	- Lack of awareness, not to grassroot - Bound by Customary Law
4. Violence Against Women	- Sati, dowry abolished and widow remarriage - Reduced domestic violence - Sex worker, rape	- Lack of proper awareness & implementation - Misused of power - State Black Law (AFSPA)
5. Maternity Benefit Act	- Limited number of children, maternity leave, lots of awareness program on birth control treatment - Some of us doesn't know which is good for us	- Less number of children - Misused of the act
6. Medical Treatment Program Act	- Decreased still birth - Free medication and treatment	- Pregnant rate due to lack of information in the rural area - Not getting the facility due to lack of awareness
7. Customary Law	- Convenient for local people - Economically viable - Speedy disposal/judgment	- Limited, good laws are missing - Not written law - Patriarchal system

Facilitators asked when we are given responsibilities how do we feel and dilemmas we find at different levels. Asked the participants to share 2 by 2

When given responsibility what dilemmas you see

- Co-operation from colleague/public/members
- How do we manage two places?
- Fund enough/financial
- Will be able to implemented properly
- Program will be successful?
- Criticism able to cope
- Competent enough
- Trust for confident gain
- Fulfill expectation, Time management
- Militarization

SESSION 8: STRATEGIES FOR PLACING WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS

Who do we put Indigenous Women in Decision-Making

Indigenous Women in Decision Making	Influence in Indigenous Women in Decision Making
Determination Change of attitude Acceptance of change Assertive Not bother about negative criticism Knowledge on laws and policies Ability to bring change in law and policies Encourage/support Confident Economically, socially, mentally and physically sound	Organized women bodies Lobbying Art of argument Awareness program Women organization objective/vision be clear Talk about Indigenous Women in Decision Making Body Her stories/role model Networking Vision Mission of organization.

SESSION 9: FOLLOW UP PLAN

For follow up plan the participants were asked to discuss State wise, think of one activity and find out when, where, who is responsible for what

State	Activities	When	Where	Responsibilities
Manipur	Peace Building Workshop for 3 Days	November 2007	Imphal	Marigold, Sounai, Nengcha, Lampui
Arunachal Pradesh	Management on Handloom	End of December 2007	Tezu	Nyame, Niholi
Tripura	Legal Awareness Program on Women	December 2007	Agartala	Elizabeth and Sunita
Nagaland	Awareness cum Seminar on Women Rights	November 2007	Kohima	Ruukulii Kezo, Y. Serila

SESSION 10: EVALUATION

Overall Evaluation of the Program:

1. The training as a whole = Good
2. Contents of the program = Good
3. Methodology = Very Good
4. Group exercises = Very Good
5. Course Manual = Good
6. Training materials = Very Good
7. Your opportunity for active participation = Very Good
8. The training facilities = Good

9. Accommodation = Very Good
10. Food = Very Good
11. Field visit = Not Good
12. Organization of the course = Very Good
13. Administrative and logistical assistance = Good
14. Length of the training = Good
15. Relevance/usefulness of the contents = Very Good
16. Style of Presentation/usefulness = Good
17. Comprehensiveness of facilitation and training kit = Good

Additional comments:

1. The content is much in comparing with the number of days
2. Less time for IMF & globalization
3. Number of days of the program should not be changed but confirmed
4. The trainer is very efficient and capable. It really inspired
5. Gain more new ideas
6. Impressed by the trainers words
7. Training methodology is interesting and easy to understand

Most useful Session and why?

1. Strategies for placing women in decision making position was very useful, because it is the most challenging step for women to organize the people and work among them
2. HIV/AIDS and decision making process is very important because it is one of the common problem face in the state and with the knowledge learned we can give awareness and counseling at community level
3. National laws and policies on women and women's participation in decision making position because it is an eye open for women folk to fight for justice at National Level.
4. Capability in decision making is useful because women have to take decision for the betterment

Session of the training needs to be improved:

1. Trend in decision making
2. Herstory- Indigenous women's role in society
3. International instrument on Indigenous women and decision making
4. National laws and policies on women and decision making

Other ideas for improving the program

1. Awareness on HIV/AIDS
2. Feedback every after session
3. Formation of network
4. Every after session there should be an energizer

Suggestion for topics of next program

1. Natural Resources Management
2. Decision Making in Peace Building

3. Women in Decision Making at Village Level
4. Judiciary Law
5. Indigenous Women and Decision Making at International Level

The most important learning in this training for me is:

1. Trends in Decision Making
2. Herstory- Indigenous Women's Role in Society
3. Decision Making
4. Indigenous Women
5. Nation Policies and Law on Women and Women's Participation in Decision Making at the National Level
6. Examining the merit and demerit of each National Policies on Women
7. Training Methodology
8. Blood Test on AIDS and exercise on field study, making good decision and its principle
9. Debate and field visiting
10. Story writing
11. The important of exposure
12. Provisions and policies on women

I will use what I learn in this training to or for:

1. Workplace and at my community and village level
2. My people in the grass root level
3. Give awareness at village level to have clear vision in every walks of live
4. The people/Indigenous women of Arunachal State
5. I will impart women's right to my community and make them aware of the capabilities in demanding for the rightful positions and status
6. To give awareness on women to be in decision making
7. My community women in the ruler and uneducated minority and Indigenous women
8. In the District, State and National Level