

*Our Stories,
One Journey*

EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN IN ASIA ON
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY



PHILIPPINES
JUN 2014-FEB 2015

BANGLADESH
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INDIA
NOV 2014-DEC 2014

INDONESIA
AUG 2014-SEPT 2014

NEPAL
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PAKISTAN
NOV 2014-JAN 2015

PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (PANAP)
ASIAN RURAL WOMEN'S COALITION (ARWC)
OXFAM'S GROW CAMPAIGN IN ASIA

Our Stories, One Journey: Empowering Rural Women in Asia on Food Sovereignty

Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific
Asian Rural Women's Coalition
Oxfam's GROW Campaign in Asia
March 2015

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2015

Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific
Asian Rural Women's Coalition
OXFAM's GROW Campaign in Asia

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Foreword

This booklet is the latest life-stories of 50 rural women from six countries across the Asia Pacific region who took part in the Women's Travelling Journal (WTJ) on Food Sovereignty. We are proud to present these stories from the women themselves, of their challenges and struggles as they survive in the face of increased marginalisation and disempowerment of their communities and their families.

Since the first travelling journal in 2013 and the WTJ on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights last year, women's stories from the grassroots that provide an accurate picture of the situation of rural women has become even more necessary. This third WTJ, a joint initiative of the Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC), Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP), Oxfam's GROW Campaign in Asia, and our partner organisations, is a continuing response to that need.

The WTJ on Food Sovereignty comes at a time when Asian rural women continue to bear the brunt of the onslaught of neo-liberal policies that privatised and has taken away land and other resources on which majority of communities depend upon. Already marginalised in terms of access to land, resources, and social services, rural women's burdens are doubled by traditional and patriarchal relations that make them vulnerable to gender discrimination and sexual violence, and prevent their full participation in society. On top of these challenges, changing climate patterns and fast-depleting natural resources impact more heavily than ever on rural communities. Most of the time, it is the women—the tillers, the seed savers, and the household managers—who suffer the worst.

But as the stories in this journal reveal, rural women are becoming increasingly aware of their rights as women and as food producers. In everyday efforts to educate, organise, train and mobilise, they have shown that they are indeed, struggling against landlessness, marginalisation and food insecurity. They have shown their determination to face old and new challenges, as they emerge as community leaders and front liners in the struggle for land rights, social and gender justice, and biodiverse ecological agriculture. Indeed, through raising the levels of consciousness and political action in their own communities and countries, rural women are showing the way forward in our long-term struggle to achieve food sovereignty.

We thank the women writers who participated in this journal for providing a wealth of inspiration and insight. We hope to echo these stories, so that their voices can be heard resoundingly in platforms that bring about meaningful interventions, and in places that need more rural women to get inspired, aroused and organised. We believe that the stories contained in this booklet have the power to forge solidarity and put forth a rural women's agenda which can no longer be ignored by policymakers and which can serve as a guiding principle for our future collective actions.

Sarojeni V. Rengam

Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP)
Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC)

The Journey



'Women hold up half the sky'

At a time when the world's rural folk are increasingly deprived of livelihood and resources through structural oppression, land grabbing, environmental plunder and climate disasters, rural women are the first to suffer and the last to receive necessary interventions. Ignored by governments and marginalised within their own communities while bearing the brunt of food production and the nurturing of farming families, rural women have long been victims of persistent social injustice.

Yet more and more rural women have responded to this injustice by taking on the challenging roles of community leaders and organisers, on top of their roles as mothers, farmers and workers. Many of them are at the forefront of the struggle for food sovereignty, or the right of peoples, communities and countries to define their own agricultural, food and land policies. Food sovereignty is a growing demand that is intrinsically linked to women's empowerment. Without it, there can be no development, environmental, and gender justice in rural communities that make up the majority of the Asia Pacific region. Without food sovereignty, rural women will continue to suffer invisibly and in silence, while big corporations and landlords steer the course of agricultural production towards greater plunder of resources and exploitation of the toiling class of food producers.

The third Women's Travelling Journal (WTJ) themed "Our Stories, One Journey: Empowering Rural Women in Asia on Food Sovereignty," is a brave endeavor in steering rural women towards the direction of visibility and empowerment. No longer should we be content with impassive data gathered from interviews, research and surveys on rural women. Instead, we need stories that portray the realities of rural women in the most accurate, vivid, and instructive manner, so as to become useful in educating the many others who face the same threats and wage similar struggles.

The WTJ is a one-of-a-kind initiative where rural women express themselves through their own writing. A rural woman, chosen by a partner organisation, keeps the journal for at least three days and writes, draws or puts into illustrations her thoughts and experiences in her home, community, and organisation. She may

tell her story through the help of a partner group who transcribes her thoughts on paper. The journal is then passed on to the next rural woman, onto the next community or to another country, until the pages of the journal are filled with their stories.

The concept of a travelling journal was inspired by rural women's lively participation in various leadership trainings led by grassroots organisations in the Asia Pacific region. It was realised that part of developing women to become community leaders is to conduct a personal documentation of their life and struggles. Personal documentation builds their confidence, and also enables them to share their unique story with other women in the region. The journal was seen as a chance for rural women to be empowered and heard through storytelling.

The Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC), PAN Asia and the Pacific (PANAP) and Oxfam's East Asia GROW Campaign collaborated on the first Women's Travelling Journal on land rights and food security. Eight rural women wrote their stories in one journal which travelled to eight countries for six months from March to August 2013. The stories produced were testaments of their hardships and strengths, and their assertions to achieve food security through a more

equitable and sustainable system of producing food. In October 2013, the journal was brought forward to policymakers in Rome during the 40th Session of the Food and Agriculture Organization's Committee on World Food Security where the agenda included a discussion on the rights of small food producers in agriculture. That first journey inspired many women to express their own life's battles and collective victories as a community.

A year after, in 2014, a total of 17 rural women from 11 countries in Asia-Pacific and three countries in Africa wrote in the second travelling journal on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). A collaborative effort by the ARWC and the Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW) and its partner groups, the journal of SRHR travelled for eight months from February to September 2014. In September 2014 in New York, the stories culled from the journal were brought to the Special Session of the UN's General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The demands brought forward by grassroots women who participated in the journal detailed interventions needed to uphold rural women's SRHR, as a right that is inextricably linked with food sovereignty, women's empowerment and

social justice. The journal was testimonial evidence to the widespread lack of attainment of SRHR, and proved useful in lobbying governments and institutions to include rural women's SRHR in the Post-2015 development agenda.

This year, PANAP, ARWC and Oxfam's GROW Campaign in Asia collaborate anew on the third Women's Travelling Journal on food sovereignty. The journal collected stories from an overwhelming 50 rural women from six countries -- Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Started in June 2014, the journal travelled for nine months to more than 50 communities, including those from the deepest rural interiors. This journal, having the biggest number of writers, articulated from the women's own point-of-view the most pressing issues they currently face--land grabbing and displacement, forced eviction from ancestral lands, exploitation of farmworkers, survival in the aftermath of destructive typhoons and floods, worsening food insecurity and poverty, gender inequality, discrimination against caste and ethnicities, and sexual and political harassment and violence.

From the Philippines, nine rural women wrote of their hand-to-mouth existence as a result of widespread land injustice. Florida Sibayan is a survivor of the

infamous massacre of farm workers in the Hacienda Luisita estate, which is controlled by one of the biggest landlord families in the country, to which the Philippine President belongs. She tells of how the lack of land reform and justice impacts farming families. Typhoon Haiyan survivors, meanwhile, describes in heart-wrenching detail how the extremely destructive impact of climate disasters and crisis, coupled with government neglect and corruption of aid, has made women's struggle for survival even harder.

Through journal entries, ten rural women from Bangladesh narrate the difficulties and struggles of women engaged in food production. For instance, the story of Mayaboti is a reminder of how "development" imperils the culture and traditional farming knowledge of indigenous peoples. Mayaboti is from the "Coach" people, an indigenous group displaced by the local Forest Department. Knowing no other means of survival but from resources available in the forest, the Coach people now suffer from extreme poverty and hunger.

The WTJ in Indonesia was passed around to 15 rural women facing varied life situations. The women told of their lives as mothers, farmers, and women leaders battling a range of issues: from domestic violence to

market access to violence arising from land disputes. Amid these challenges, women in Indonesia—such as the Paal Merah vegetable growers and Sampalan Land small-scale farmers—chose to rise above adversities and work for land rights.

The journey in India provides us with a clear view of the social burdens that rural women in India have to bear. Feudal social relations reinforce a patriarchal view of women, limiting their rights and making them vulnerable to extreme poverty and violence even inside their own homes. Nonetheless, the narratives of the five women contributors reveal their unwavering commitment to collectively break free from an oppressive situation. Manna, Geeta, Shanti, Shakunti and Seema fight back through active leadership, spearheading collective and sustainable farming methods that help them cope with the impacts of climate change, as well as transform their own status in the community, from that of women oppressed to women empowered.

In Pakistan, six rural women told of how they have restricted access to land and resources, and are also deprived of education and employment opportunities. Moreover, they are subject to various forms of sexual violence such as rape, harassment, and wife battery.

As Kausar of South Punjab wrote, “In this society, men are (treated as) superior to women.” But through education, organising, and training efforts, these Pakistani women show us that resistance to sexual violence, as well as food policies detrimental to their well-being, such as the use of chemical inputs and the entry of genetically-modified crops, is possible.

In Nepal, gender and caste discrimination and land grabbing are the main concerns of the five rural women who participated in the journal. They articulated their dream of equal land distribution and land ownership, and shared the steps that they and their communities have taken to bring them closer to that dream: these include health and literacy trainings, organising around land rights, and protests to increase the village budget for women.

The entire journey exposed how economic exploitation and gender violence are in tandem with the programmes and policies being implemented across the Asia Pacific region in the name of neoliberal globalisation. But it also revealed that women are now playing crucial roles in the struggle for food sovereignty, in the struggle for safe food and biodiverse ecological agriculture, and in the struggle for genuine land reform, as pillars of a just and equitable society wherein food-producing

communities can thrive and rural women can truly enjoy their rights.

As governments and institutions continue to deliberate on a new set of Sustainable Development Goals and a Post-2015 development framework, it is crucial that the voices of rural women are heard, their situation accurately revealed, and their demands met through policy interventions. Alarming though, during the March 2015 59th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women in New York on the historical 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the issues of rural women in the Asia Pacific region were left out. This indicates that a much higher level of awareness and political action is needed to address the continuing lack of meaningful participation of rural women in determining policies that impact their lives and livelihoods.

The series of travelling journals affirm the need to have rural women's stories written and read, told and retold by more and more people. These stories should resonate not just with policymakers, but with communities where there are worsening conditions for women, and escalating struggles against resource and land grabs and against social and gender inequality. It is said that 'Women hold up half the sky'— in the

case of rural women, they produce half of the world's food. It is unacceptable that most of them remain hungry, invisible, unheard, and without justice. Let the stories of the bravest among them inform, inspire, and transform us—as they have informed, inspired, and transformed entire communities across the region.



Feature Stories



PAKISTAN

NOVEMBER 2014 - JANUARY 2015

NEPAL

SEPTEMBER 2014 - JANUARY 2015

BANGLADESH

OCTOBER 2014 - DECEMBER 2014

INDIA

NOVEMBER 2014 - DECEMBER 2014

PHILIPPINES

JUNE 2014 - FEBRUARY 2015

WOMEN'S TRAVELLING JOURNAL

OUR JOURNEY

2014-2015

INDONESIA

AUGUST 2014 - SEPTEMBER 2014

A woman wearing a vibrant blue, red, and yellow patterned sari is focused on her work. She is surrounded by several large, shallow terracotta pots filled with dark soil. Some of the pots contain small green seedlings. The background shows a rustic outdoor setting with some foliage and a concrete wall.

BANGLADESH:

WOMEN PLANT THE SEEDS

OF CHANGE

The Women's Travelling Journal in Bangladesh journeyed through the hands of ten (10) Bangladeshi women farmers from October to December 2014. Each time a woman inscribes her story on its pages, the travelling journal becomes as lush as the land they faithfully cultivate.

Stories of rural women's struggle with poverty, structural exclusion, landgrabbing and displacement reveal to us these women's persistence, courage, creativity and concern for their communities. The stories yield so much hope and inspiration.

Common to the landscape of their narratives are structural barriers that cut off Bangladeshi women from accessing agricultural services provided by government. **Aleya Begum** is one of them. Hailing from Ayla Chandkhali village in Kajirabad Union of Betagi Upazila, she had to bear the responsibility of feeding a household of five, including her husband who is a person with disability. "I tried to avail some sort of government services, but I couldn't as these services were only given to male farmers in our area," writes Aleya. She eventually received help from the NGO Jago Nari, to buy a boat and a net. With fishing and cultivating vegetables, Aleya now yields enough income to support her family.

Cultural biases against women in agriculture aggravate the difficult situation of women farmers in rural Bangladesh. According to **Josna Begum** from Akhilpur village, Kulaura Thana, Moulvibazar Zila,

discrimination against women farmers is justified by this superstition: "If women go to agricultural fields, the crops will get damaged."

The failure of the government to make their services accessible to women, along with gender-based social discrimination, makes for a burdensome existence for the writers. **Ruma Begum's** story reveals the same struggle for recognition and access to services. "I am not counted as a farmer by my society like all other female farmers all through rural Bangladesh." She adds that the lack of agricultural facilities for women has made her life difficult. Ruma is from Talpara village of Damkura Union in Poba Upazila of Rajshahi District. Like most of the writers, poverty is the major reason why Ruma began cultivating their little piece of land and serving as a farm worker. A man's labour, however, is worth more than a woman's.

Shakila Khatun from Lebutola, Jessore Sadar also receives less than what a male farm worker gets as work compensation. Aside from planting in her homestead and sharecropping, she also works in other people's land. To avoid mocking and criticism, she does not go to the market to sell her crops. Brokers even devalue the price of her harvest. Through her

persistence, she was able to attend various trainings on agriculture from the NGO, Ullashi Srijoni Songho and Ahsania Mission. She has inspired women in her neighbourhood to be involved in agriculture.

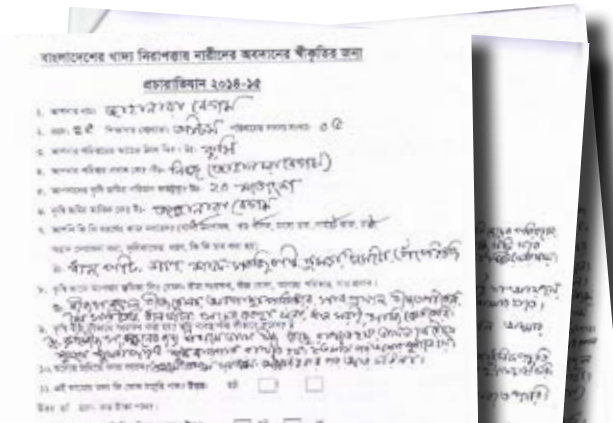
Sahera Begum is a 52-year old widow who manages a family of nine. She cultivates the land that her husband left behind and also works as a sharecropper. When she first began to cultivate their land, their neighbours were critical of her.

With her perseverance, many wholesale buyers now come to their home to purchase her crops. She stores her own vegetable seeds and makes seed beds using her own techniques. She took part in several trainings arranged by the Union Agricultural Office which



helped improve her skills in agricultural production. However, she has yet to receive any agricultural tools, or any kind of incentive or cooperation from the government.

Landgrabbing has displaced **Mayaboti Coach**, a writer from the indigenous group "Coach". The Coach people have been surviving with enough sustenance from the surrounding forests until the government's Forest Department began to take over their land. She said "it makes us feel like an outsider in our own community". Displacement has pushed her and



many of her people to deeper poverty. She now has to make do with only 1.5 acres of land. She has accumulated so much debt, she now works as mere farm hand in other people's lands. Mayaboti also makes handicrafts to sell for extra income. Because of the Bangladeshi government's development programmes, she fears losing their indigenous tradition, culture and identity.



Zahera Begum had little knowledge about farming. The quality of seeds she used to get from sellers are often inferior, prompting her to study indigenous seed preservation techniques in order to have a supply of good quality seeds. Through the help of the Government Food Security Project, she was trained under the Farmer Access to Agricultural Services Campaign in 2013. Zahera makes a living now by selling good quality seeds. The demand for her rice, peas, gourd, and different types of beans seeds is also steadily growing.

Another story that is brimming with inspiration

is that of **Hasen Banu** from the village of Anandipur in Mymensing Sadar Upazila. Orphaned by her father as an infant, she was raised in her brother's home and consequently helped in agricultural work. She married a landless farmer who supported her foray into agriculture. With their little savings, they bought a 10-decimal area of agricultural



land (.09 acre) which she planted with a variety of vegetables. Later, they purchased an additional 15 decimal of land (.14 acre), two cows and an ox.

Now, she leads a group of thirty women farmers. She also succeeded in obtaining government subsidy for fertilisers because of her involvement in the "Agricultural Right" program of the NGO, Development Wheel.



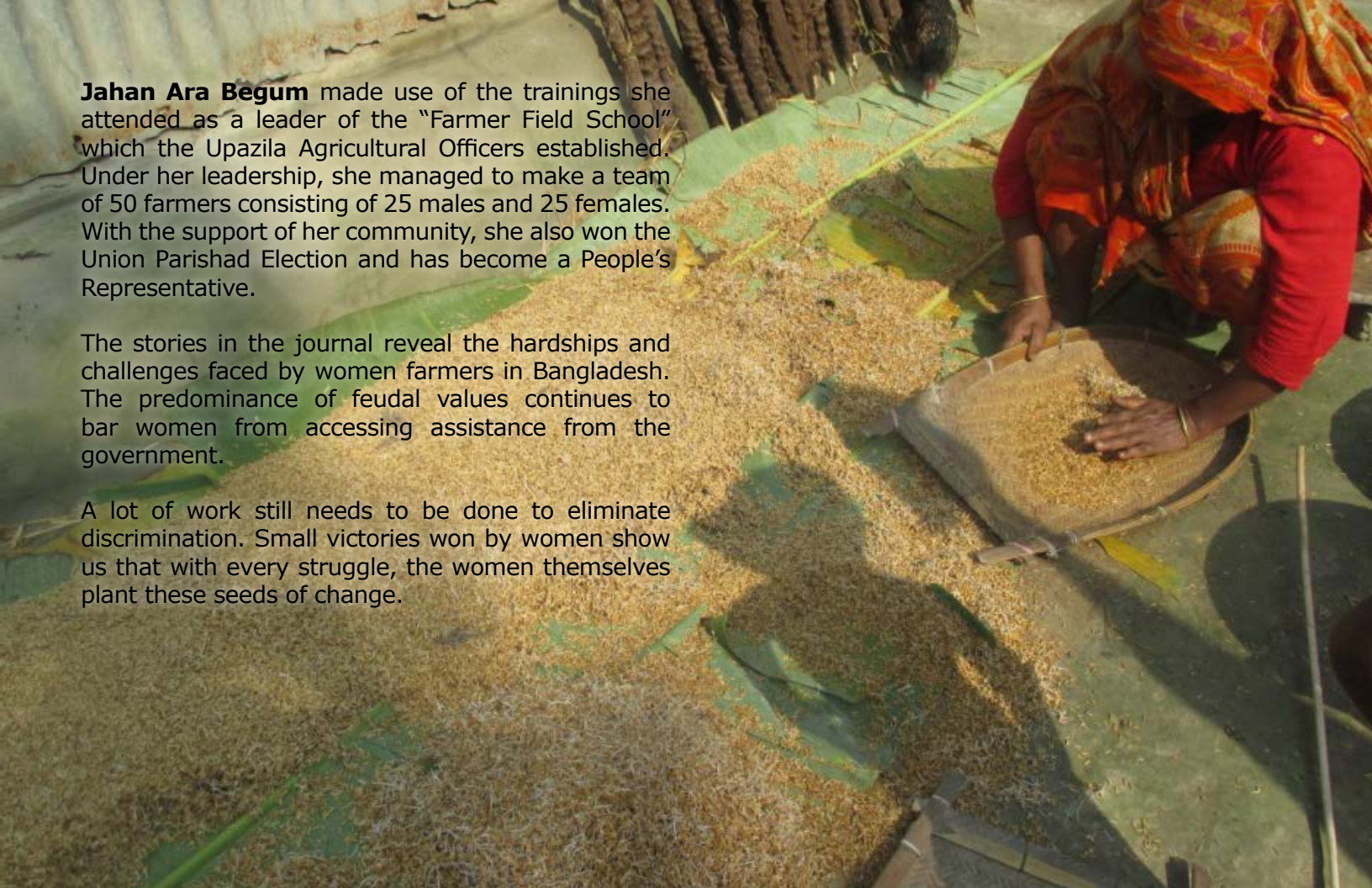
Purnima Raj knew nothing about agriculture when she first began planting gourd and beans in her husband's family's homestead. When she learned of the benefits of organic fertilisers, she did not stop until she was able to learn the process. Now, Purnima is a successful organic (earthworm) fertiliser producer. She decided to teach the techniques to the women in her community. She organised these women. Their group, now a sixty five (65)-member strong organization, encourages members to do house visits in their village to promote organic farming. They hold meetings and discussions about financial independence. She wrote, "I dream of the day when women farmers would be recognised and respected in their families and in society."



Jahan Ara Begum made use of the trainings she attended as a leader of the “Farmer Field School” which the Upazila Agricultural Officers established. Under her leadership, she managed to make a team of 50 farmers consisting of 25 males and 25 females. With the support of her community, she also won the Union Parishad Election and has become a People’s Representative.

The stories in the journal reveal the hardships and challenges faced by women farmers in Bangladesh. The predominance of feudal values continues to bar women from accessing assistance from the government.

A lot of work still needs to be done to eliminate discrimination. Small victories won by women show us that with every struggle, the women themselves plant these seeds of change.





INDIA

WOMEN COLLECTIVELY BREAK FREE

Five (5) women from India unfolded personal tales of resilience and heroism through the Women's Travelling Journal. Their stories shed light on a social structure which subjects them to violence and denies them of land access, productive assets and financial resources.

Grave effects of climate change bear heavily on farmers. Erratic weather, the extremes of drought and flood, and the change in temperature make it difficult for crops to grow. **Geeta**, who lives in Phalenda Village in Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, notes signs of climate change in their village:

“Before, we got rainfall on time, good fodder which grew nearby and less hail. Summer used to be less hot and winters less cold. Now we don’t get rain on time, we get a lot of hail which destroys our crops. Summers are hotter and there is a lot of fog in the winters.” As a way to adapt to the changes in the weather, Geeta began to practice the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), a rice-planting method that requires minimal water and seed. This method has made their farm work easier and faster while yielding more harvest. Geeta also noted that the Mount Valley Development Action (MVDA) helped them form a Self Help Group (SHG). According to Geeta, the SHG helped them handle their finances. Apart from that she said, “Earlier we never used to step outside of the village but now we go to Dehradun and Delhi for our trainings.”

Like many rural women in India who rely solely on farming for subsistence, **Shanti** of Dhaulangi



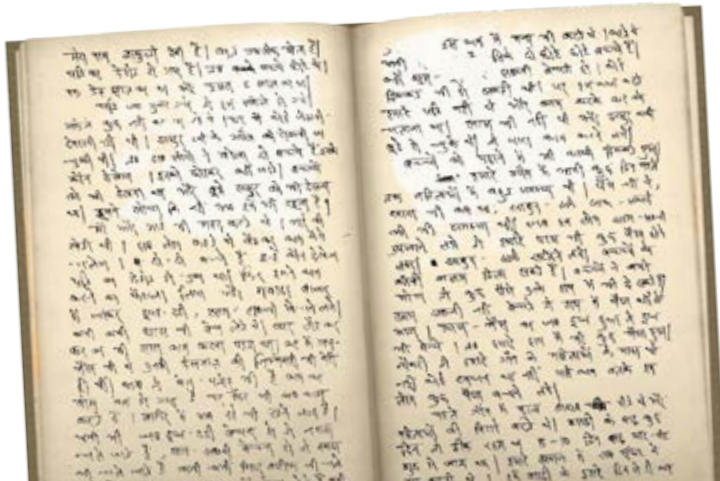
village has to work doubly hard to produce sufficient crops. Despite prolonged hours of working in the field, producing the same yield as they used to is now impossible. What used to be a decent harvest of mahua, jhagora (millet), rice, and wheat became elusive. Due to frequent heavy rainfall, their crops often get damaged.

Fortunately, organisations like the Daliyonka Dagariya (DKD) - a non-government organisation working on climate change - helped Shanti and her fellow villagers to cope with the changes in weather. They

built a rainwater-harvesting tank which provides a steady supply of water for the vegetable fields and the animals. DKD also constructed a nursery for their vegetable cultivation called "poly-houses". Poly-houses protect saplings from hail and wild animals and shorten the saplings' maturation from four months down to three.

In Beyare Village, Khalilabad, **Manna** shares her story of fighting back against a treacherous land grabber who duped her husband into signing a forged contract that declares the sale of her house. The incident resulted to a full-blown legal battle. This tedious and costly battle led to the detention of her husband, while threats, harassment and

surveillance of her family continued. Manna does not consider backing down as an option. "We may run out of money to keep the case going but we affirm that the land is ours and I will fight for it until my last breath," said Manna. The case has yet to be resolved up to this day.



Shakunti's entry in the travelling journal exposes the sordid reality of violence against women in India. Shakunti is from Kandipur village, Bihar. It is part of their custom to cover their head by wearing a purdah (veil). Back then, her husband would threaten to kill her if she mingled with men while wearing her purdah. Shakunti is not alone. Women in her village are constantly subjected to threat and physical abuse by their

husbands and other men. Going out of the house is also a security threat for women. When Shakunti's husband died, she chose to brave these risks in order to provide for her children. "What choice do I have? My husband is dead. If I don't work, my children will die of starvation," she said.

Organizing amongst women has empowered many to step out of their homes and join community life. Thus, they began to participate in food production and practice collective farming. Now, they grow different types of vegetables. They now eat what they grow.



This resulted to the women's self-reliance. Women now have more freedom to roam freely in their village. They also have their own savings accounts and are able to provide food and income for their family.

Extreme poverty due to landlessness was the central theme in **Seema's** journal entry. Coming from village Baruhi, Bhojpur, Bihar, Seema describes the dismal living conditions that she and her family had to endure. She would go to sleep hungry and freeze in cold, winter nights. She and her family had to make do with one set of clothes that were so ragged and dirty because they could not afford to buy new ones.



Vikas Sansthan, helped build a women's organization in Seema's village. Seema has since become one of its most active members. The organization helped women develop their skills in farming and finance management. Through the acquisition of a small piece of land, women have established a communal farm which now serves as their source of livelihood.

The stories provide us with a clear view of the myriad struggles and challenges that rural women in India face. The feudalistic social relations maintain the patriarchal view of women, limiting their rights and making them vulnerable to violence.

Desperate to provide for her family, Seema worked as an agricultural worker for several employers who all treated her horribly, as they did all women workers like her. They were deprived of decent meals and forced to work longer hours without compensation. Their salaries are often either delayed or not paid in full, and if they would ask to get paid, they get beaten up.

Seema got the chance to turn her life around when the organization Ekta Parishad came to their village. Ekta Parishad, a sister organization of Pragati Grameen



Landlessness and the impact of climate change perennially threaten women's right to food, access to land and resources, and the fulfilment of a life of dignity. These women's unwavering commitment to collectively break free from oppressive conditions enable them to enrich and transform their own lives, as well as the lives of the people around them.



A group of people, including four women and one man, are sitting on the ground in front of a wooden structure. The women are wearing colorful clothing and headscarves. The man is wearing a white cap and a patterned shirt. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a wooden structure and some greenery.

INDONESIA

WOMEN REALIZE DREAMS

THROUGH STRUGGLE

The Women's Travelling Journal voyaged through Indonesia from August to September 2014. In the country, 61% of Indonesian women are engaged in farm work, contributing to 75% of agricultural labor. Here, fifteen (15) Indonesian women bravely tell us stories of how they fight for their rights one step at a time.

First destination of the Indonesian travelling journal is Paal Merah Community in South Jambi, Indonesia. **Sariah** is a teacher who educates children about farming. She is driven by her mission to “continue an early education that is cheap, transparent and democratic.” She is now involved in a women’s health campaign against cervical cancer wherein they conduct medical missions and awareness raising programmes. She ended her journal entry with this message: “Nothing is impossible if we get organised and if we dare to struggle.”

Ade’s story tells of the difficulties faced by farmers in their community. Ade has been living in poverty and hunger since she was young, forcing her to mature early and help out in her family’s main source of livelihood, farming. One of the major problems of farmers in their community is the middlemen who profit from exploiting farmers. These middlemen purchase farmer’s crops at dirt cheap prices and sell these to the market for thrice as much. Ade observes that middlemen are emboldened by the lack of government intervention.

Dede Suhenda is also a witness to injustices that farmers face. A small-scale farmer who wants to contribute to her husband’s meager income, Dede was

also subjected to “tricks” of middlemen who bought her crops at really cheap prices and then tripled the price when the crops were sold to the market.

Landlessness is a major barrier to her agricultural work. Dede recalls how one day, the land owners had her in-laws’ house demolished to make way for a housing estate. Her crops, which were only several days shy of harvest, were destroyed. Now, without having any land to till, she works as a teacher who makes barely enough for her family’s needs, including for a daughter who is ill. Despite her hardships, she strives hard to be strong for her family. Dede says: “If I give in to sadness, my problems won’t end.”

The displacement caused by the construction of residential estates in the Paal Merah Community likewise affected **Ngatlise**. She narrates that garbage from the houses have piled up, causing floods that damage the few crops that they managed to plant. She says that the government remains deaf to their cries. “Our heart-voice as farmers is screaming, begging the government to provide land to small farmers like us and to not to build luxurious buildings that are meaningless: Please, we really need land for farming!” she says.

Herlina also laments the government's lack of services for people in her village. She lives in Kuala Karang, Kuburaya Regency, West Kalimantan Province, an isolated coastal village considered as one of the poorest in the area. The village lacks roads, clean water, health facilities and health care providers such as midwives. Many babies get sick. Herlina asks: "Is it proper for the people in our village to be treated like this? What is our fault that we have been abandoned?"

In Dusun Bukit, farmers have also been displaced from their land.

Arnawati and her family bought four (4) hectares of land in the village, which they faithfully cultivated with vegetables and other crops until the day they were evicted by the company, PT. Raka. Arnawati joined the women's group under the organization Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI). "My fellow women and I are resolute to continue the struggle to reclaim our land rights."



Kasmini also joined the SPI and performs the tasks of coordination, providing technical assistance and lobbying for land rights with stakeholders and government. She wrote that "women must go beyond their kitchen and take action, foster change." She hopes to continue the struggle until no woman, no child, and no family will ever be stripped of their rights to land and homes again.

In the travelling journal's trip to East Java, the women farmworkers Kati, Siti Juma' ah, Sri, Sumamik, Tasmi and Winayah wrote about the difficulties they face because of the land conflict caused by a state-owned forestry company Perhutani.

Winayah is an underpaid farmworker. She receives only 30 IDR (USD 2) per day, which is insufficient for her children's needs. She plants crops like corn, cassava, and rice, until the foreman coerced her to plant teak trees. "I have been threatened to be shot at in the ears if I didn't plant the teak trees quickly," she said. Teak grows into big trees; it shadows over and affects the growth of other crops. Her harvest has since become minimal.



Sumamit is from Tumpak Pucung Wonogoro. She has yet to see the government help her and farmers like her, arguing that farmers make very important contributions to the country. "Farmers are the backbone of any country and we are the foundations of Indonesia. We bring food to the tables," she maintains.

Organising amongst farmers has brought hope that otherwise seemed elusive. **Siti Juma'njah** from Tumpak Reja in Gedang Municipality, shares that meeting people from the Aliansi Gerakan Reforma

In the case of **Kati**, the ethnic war between the Dayak and Madura tribes displaced her from Central Kalimantan where she used grow rice and corn for her family's needs. She was relocated by the government to Java, where she was given ration of food for the first month. When the rations stopped, she became desperate to find food. She wrote, "I have nothing in the village. It is difficult to look for food so I tried my luck in the forest. But that land is owned by the government and I know some people who tried to enter were harassed and beaten by the police."

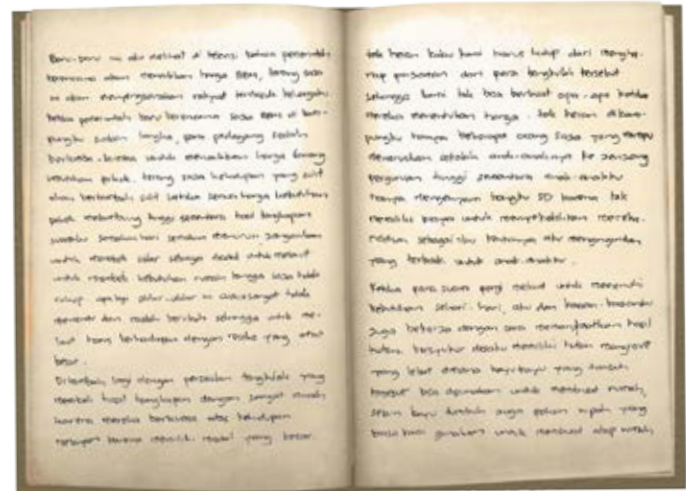


Agraria (AGRA), a national peasant organisation in Indonesia, has empowered farmers like her to fight for their rights and has enabled them to gain victories.

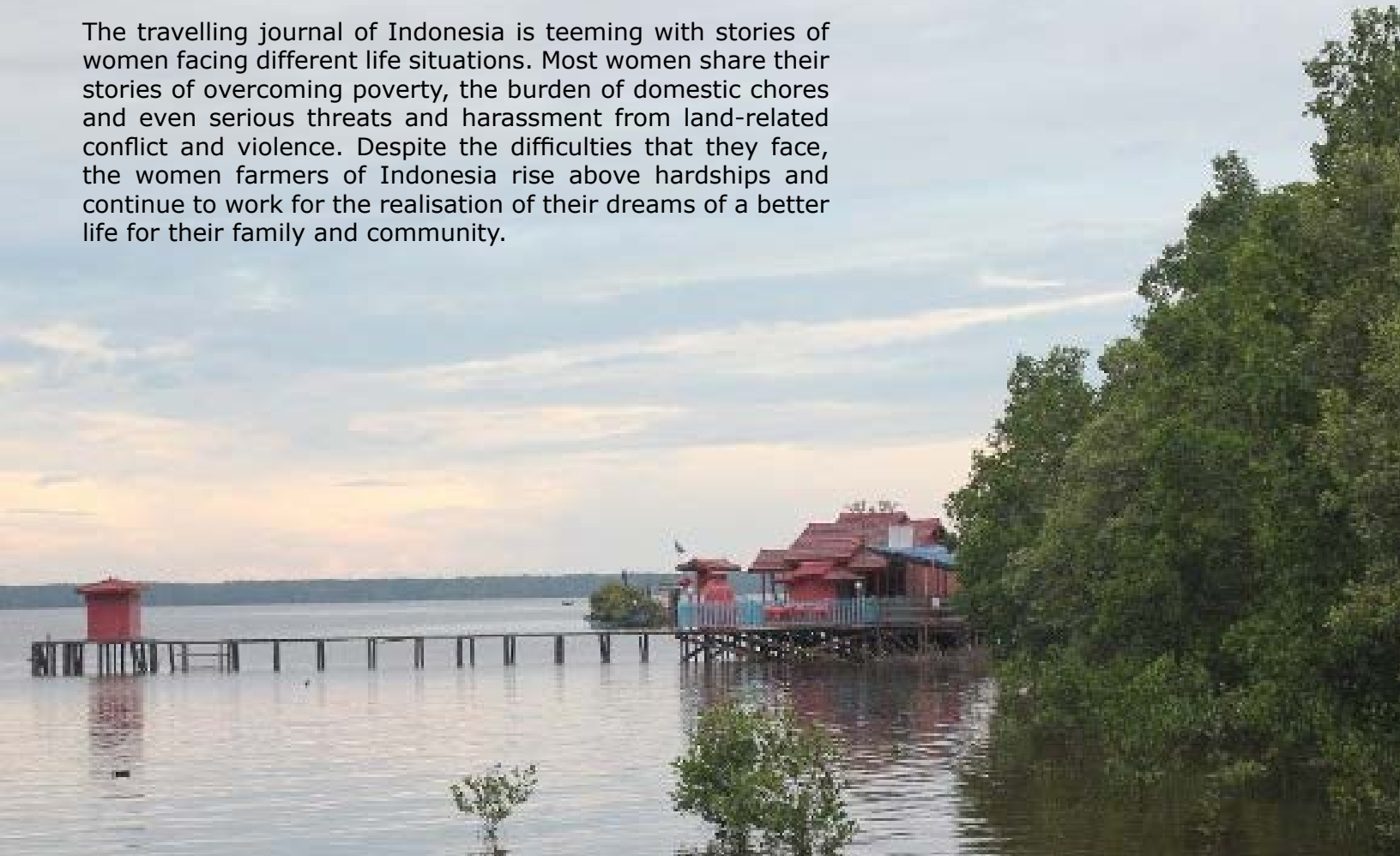
Tasmi and **Sri** echo this. They used to be harassed by the men of Perhutani for planting in the forest land. But since AGRA started organising in their area, harassment lessened: "Perhutani people rarely came to this forest now and hopefully, the ownership of this land will be transferred to us soon," says Tasmi. Sri affirms, "I am happy that a peasant organisation like AGRA has been helping us organise here in the forest. We developed courage and confidence to deal with the foreman and Perhutani. We no longer get scolded or yelled at since then."

Meanwhile, **Iis** is a 45 year-old woman from Sakumanah Village, West Java. She is a mother and a housewife before joining the peasant movement in Indonesia. Like other women, Iis worries about continuing the education of her daughter. Farm inputs are expensive and debts have to be paid. Upon joining AGRA, Iis became aware of the issues faced by her fellow farmers as well as their land rights. She wrote in her journal, "As women, we should not surrender. We should continue to struggle until society sees us equal with men."

Another writer from West Java is **Atih**. She is a 60-year old single parent and a small-scale farmer. For ten years, she worked as a farmworker for a landlord for a measly amount, just enough to get by. Atih is one of those who joined AGRA. She led a successful campaign to reclaim their land rights over Sampalan Land, in Margamekar village in 2004. She wrote, "I am old and getting weak. I hope the government can subsidise our farming inputs so farming will be less tiring and expensive for us, poor farmers. The government should listen to the voice of the common folks."



The travelling journal of Indonesia is teeming with stories of women facing different life situations. Most women share their stories of overcoming poverty, the burden of domestic chores and even serious threats and harassment from land-related conflict and violence. Despite the difficulties that they face, the women farmers of Indonesia rise above hardships and continue to work for the realisation of their dreams of a better life for their family and community.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright pink sweater and a dark blue shawl, stands in profile facing left. She is holding a long, thin plant stem. The background is a lush field of tall green plants, possibly bamboo or reeds, with some purple flowers visible. The overall scene is outdoors in a rural setting.

NEPAL:

WOMEN DEFEND LAND AND LIFE

The Women's Travelling Journal was carried along the hills of Nepal to document the struggles of rural women in the country. In Nepal, rural women still struggle with poverty, landlessness and unjust social structures.

Mira Syangtan was the first one to share her story. Mira used to live in the capital, Kathmandu, but she was unhappy and felt that she needed to pursue her purpose in life so she decided to move back to her hometown in Makwanpur. Her participation in a Womens' Leadership Development training was instrumental to her growth as a woman leader. From the training, she realised the important role that women like her play in society. Hungry for more knowledge, she attended a training held by the District Agriculture Development in her village. This convinced her what she wanted to do – to venture in agriculture.

It is not easy for men to accept the fact that women can be leaders too. Mira recalls being mocked and laughed at when she invited men to a farmers' group called "Siyon" which she helped establish. However, Mira persevered. The gossiping and mocking subsided after she brought in health and literacy trainings, and even water source and electricity in her village. Now, she continues to advocate for land rights and resources. Mira ended her journal entry by sharing her "dream of a prosperous Nepal through the means of farming. I hope Nepali youth would realise that and join me in my journey."

Landlessness is a major problem for **Harimaya** and her fellow villagers in Hariban, Sarlahi district. Most public lands remain uncultivated as the government refuses to distribute land to farmers. As a result, many choose to migrate to India in search of better opportunities.

Majority of the migrant workers are men, leaving behind their wives and daughters to do farming. Harimaya's husband was one of them. At first she had a difficult time because she didn't know much about agriculture. Eventually she was able to attend trainings on farming provided by OXFAM. Now, she is the president of the local self-help group. Harimaya believes that people can gain so much power through organising. "Organisations make it evident that you can accomplish different tasks ranging from community development to social transformation," she said.

In Khoriya Tole, Belbari, Morang District, male family members have also migrated to look for better job opportunities. Like Harimaya, **Tankamaya Magar** suddenly found herself having to manage the small plot of land that her husband left behind. Because customs dictate men as necessary figureheads in

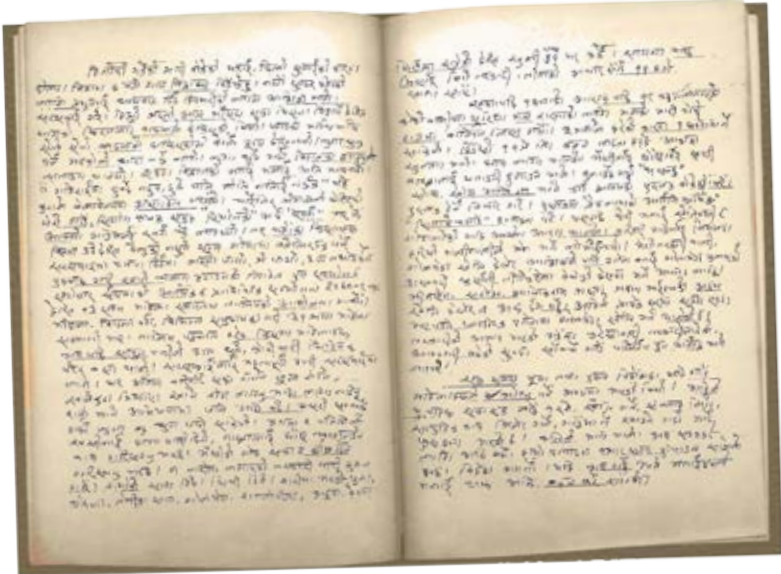
households, Tankamaya is harrowed by the fact that there are no males in her family. Farmers also hold superstitions against women, believing that women's participation in farming brings drought. However, Tankamaya persevered in learning how to farm and is now able to earn money for her family.

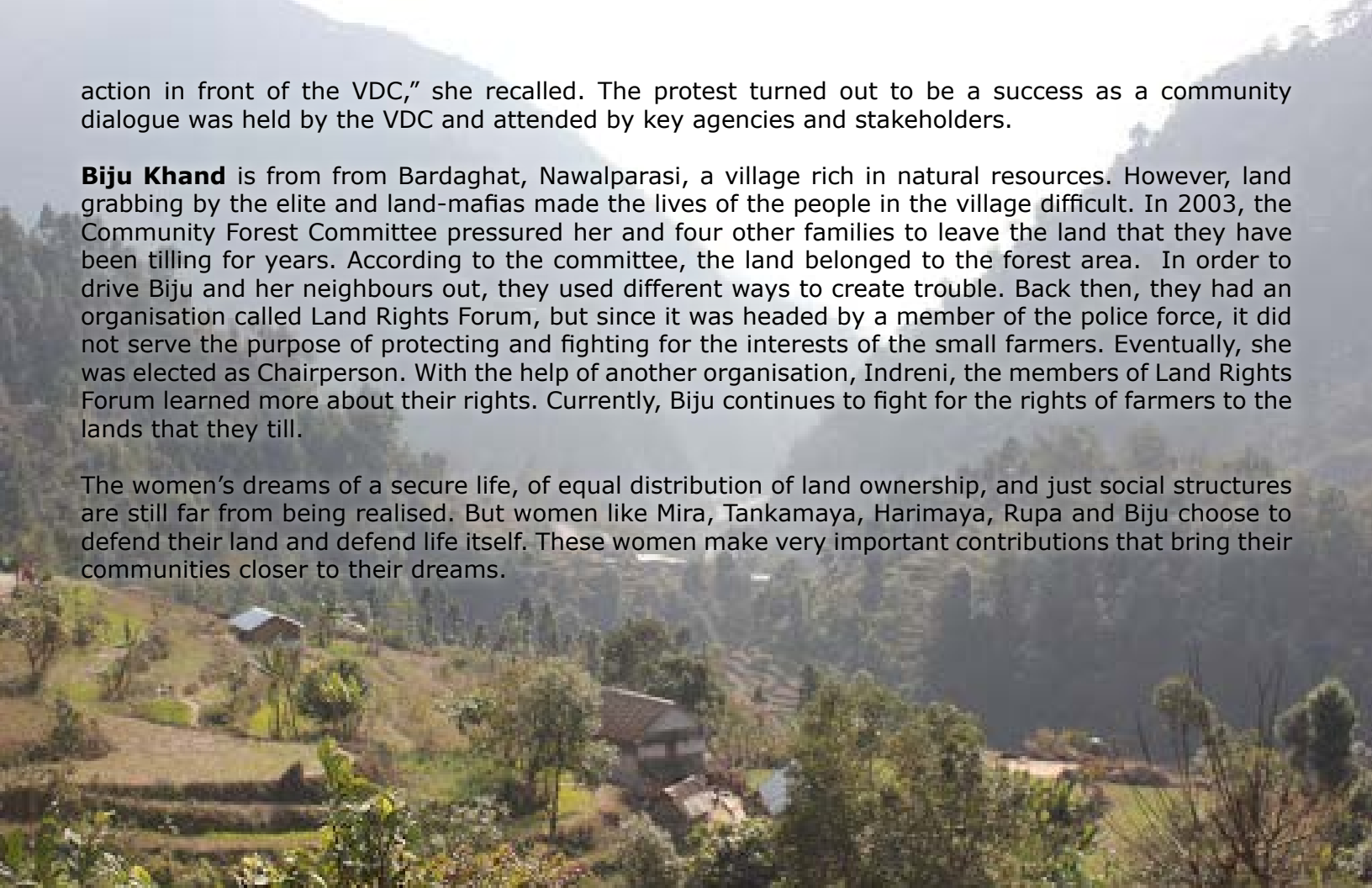
Gender and caste discrimination were the main concerns as revealed in **Rupa Bishwokarma's** journal entries. She shares how she used to



wonder how she could help the Dalits and women, the poorest sectors in her community, by proposing agricultural projects to the Agricultural Development Office.

Rupa traces back the early stirrings of what would turn out to be an enduring passion for land and social justice to the time when she and many others demanded that the Village Development Committee (VDC) allot a budget for marginalised women. "Around 70 women from different organisations and stakeholders held a protest





action in front of the VDC,” she recalled. The protest turned out to be a success as a community dialogue was held by the VDC and attended by key agencies and stakeholders.

Biju Khand is from Bardaghat, Nawalparasi, a village rich in natural resources. However, land grabbing by the elite and land-mafias made the lives of the people in the village difficult. In 2003, the Community Forest Committee pressured her and four other families to leave the land that they have been tilling for years. According to the committee, the land belonged to the forest area. In order to drive Biju and her neighbours out, they used different ways to create trouble. Back then, they had an organisation called Land Rights Forum, but since it was headed by a member of the police force, it did not serve the purpose of protecting and fighting for the interests of the small farmers. Eventually, she was elected as Chairperson. With the help of another organisation, Indreni, the members of Land Rights Forum learned more about their rights. Currently, Biju continues to fight for the rights of farmers to the lands that they till.

The women’s dreams of a secure life, of equal distribution of land ownership, and just social structures are still far from being realised. But women like Mira, Tankamaya, Harimaya, Rupa and Biju choose to defend their land and defend life itself. These women make very important contributions that bring their communities closer to their dreams.

PAKISTAN

WOMEN CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Women in Pakistan, particularly rural women, have to confront various challenges such as societal pressure and economic hardship. They have restricted access to land rights and resources. The majority of women are deprived of education, health care and employment. Women are often subjected to various forms of violence including rape, harassment, and battering.



However, the hope for a better future still emanates from the resilience women show in the face of such adversities. The stories of six (6) women from different parts of Pakistan mark this tremendous resilience. Hailing from a highly patriarchal Pakistani society, these courageous women earnestly share stories of their struggle for a better tomorrow.

The first entry was written by **Aisha Bibi** from the village Wahid Bakhsh in District Rajanpur. Aisha left her native village as a young woman to seek opportunities as a domestic worker. She spent nineteen (19) long years of her life as a domestic helper only to earn a meager 5-6 thousand PKR (Approx. USD 60) per month.

The aftermath of the 2010 Pakistan massive flooding compounded her misery. Aisha was left with no other choice but to rely on the aid provided by humanitarian organizations. The HELP Foundation was one of these organisations which assisted to establish a women's community-based organisation called 'Indus Forum' where Aisha was selected as chairperson. By availing of this opportunity, she led a campaign in her village against gender-based

violence, sexual harassment and rape and lobbied before the Pakistan Human Rights Commission to address these sensitive issues. Her advocacy for the rights of girls to education resulted in the establishment of a primary school in her community.

Kausar Bibi, also from the Southern part of the Punjab province of Pakistan, staunchly believes in the rights of girls to go to school. However, she always fears for the safety of her own daughters in a society where women are considered 'less human' compared to men. In her own community, women suffer from domestic violence, sexual assault and rape, as a matter of 'routine.'

Women in her community are also unaware of reproductive health or related services. Amid societal pressures and economic hardship brought about by the 2010 flooding, Kausar emerged as a daring woman leader. She managed to rise from these challenges with the help of Doaba Foundation, a civil society organisation. Kausar now works as vice-president of a local women's organisation comprised of forty-five (45) members. "We work continually to improve the source of nutritious food and to enhance livelihood opportunities for

women. To achieve this, we train and organise women to become more empowered while pushing the boundaries of a patriarchal society a little bit further," she proudly noted.

Jethi Bheel plays an active role in the cause of food security despite being afflicted with polio and a crippled right foot. She expresses her firm resolve and says that her disability cannot stop her from helping people. "Despite this handicap, I am able to pick more than 40 kg of cotton within a day. I prefer to work despite this disability to support and help my family rather than sitting idly," she proclaimed.

Jethi believes that life stems from the availability of food. Tradition dictates that males should be in charge of dispensing loans for farm inputs. Dependence on such loans for various agricultural inputs has buried many small-scale farmers in debt. In order to address this issue, Jethi and other women from her community



decided to venture into organic farming. According to Jethi, "Pesticides and chemical fertilisers are not only costly but also hazardous to our health and to the environment." She is of view that farmers should use natural alternatives such as cow manure in order to have better harvest.

Apart from their role in food production, women serve as loyal stewards of the land and its yield. **Zarina** is one of the rare cases where women are able to inherit land from her parents. She is highly interested to grow grains and fodder crops instead of cash crops to make sure that their food is safe. Her family has refused to sow genetically modified (GM) seeds and uses their own collected seeds. Zarina said, "We know that the excessive use of pesticides and fertiliser makes food unsafe, it is extremely risky to human health. We have already campaigned and lobbied this issue to government offices."

Ameena Somro resides in the Village Wali Mohammed Rind in Umerkot District of Sindh

province of Pakistan. Her own initiatives motivated her to learn despite her lack of formal education. Married life taught her farming skills, from picking their harvest to collecting fodder for animals. "I learned from experience and taught myself skills that women in agriculture should possess. Men and women should work together to till the land to have a good harvest and achieve food security in life."

Aside from being a farmer, Ameena is also a skilled midwife. She was inspired by her aunt, also a midwife who had never refused to help women in their village. Ameena carried and advanced her aunt's legacy. Through this service to the community, she gained the trust of her fellow villagers. People constantly seek her advice on issues related to women's health.

It is challenging for women to perform roles as community leaders, mothers and food providers. **Hakim Mai** from Basti Ghalu Tehsil Multan was elected by the people in her community as a member of the local committee founded by Doaba Foundation. She wrote: "[That time] was difficult; I tried to balance my time as a woman leader and as a mother to my three-month old daughter." Hakim was unemployed then and could barely feed her family, but the foundation provided her with livelihood opportunities. Soon, Hakim thrived from this small opportunity and she finally was able to buy food and clothes for herself and her children.

These brave women have clearly shown us their ingenuity and persistence in resisting socio-economic hardship and structural violence against women. These women's stories remind us that no oppression is insurmountable— that even those who are seen as vulnerable or weak hold the power to change the course of history.





PHILIPPINES

WOMEN SURGE FORTH

TOWARDS SURVIVAL

Nine (9) peasant women leaders from the Philippines shared stories about their lives marked by deadly disasters, most notably Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and by their unceasing struggle for land and justice.

First stop of the Women's Travelling Journal in the Philippines is Palo, Leyte. Palo is one of the areas heavily hit by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, with recorded casualties reaching up to 376 residents. **Cornelia Pedrosa** lost almost everything: property, livelihood, and sixty-five (65) family members. Connie says that hunger, helplessness and despair were her dominant feelings every day, since "no help from the government came despite the billions of aid coming from international donors." Since then, she has been active in protest actions to denounce corruption and the blatant disregard of Haiyan victims by the Philippine government.

From Connie, the journal was passed onto another Haiyan victim, **Minerva Lacbayen** who lives in Pinabacdao, Western Samar. In the face of hardship, Minerva and other women in the community displayed resourcefulness by collecting all the donations they received from NGOs to develop communal animal husbandry, organic farming and seed preservation activities. The harvest and the income from the sale of their crops are centralised to benefit everyone in the community. Minerva ends her story with courage and conviction: "We will protect the lands we till as we continue to demand genuine land rights for women."

From Leyte and Samar, the journal went up to Northern Philippines to Pinili, Ilocos Norte, an area deeply affected by erratic weather as a result of climate change. **Elizabeth Alfiler**, who describes herself as "a mother, a farmer and an activist", narrates her daily rounds within and outside her community to hold meetings, and attend conferences and trainings on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Elizabeth says this is the very reason why "...it's essential to train, educate and organise farmers to encourage them to collectively resolve the issues we are facing."

From Ilocos, the journal moved on to Gabut, Amulung, Cagayan, in the home of **Jacqueline Ratin**. Jacqueline says that the lack of genuine support for farmers by the government forced many, including her, to incur loans that charge high interest rates. "Our incomes are all used up to pay loans instead of providing for the needs of our family," she protested.

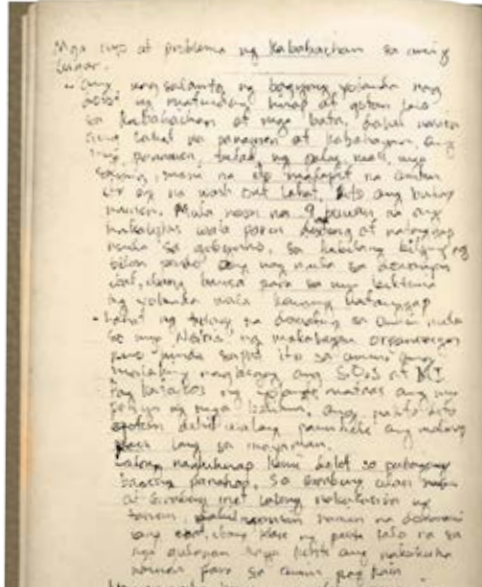
From Cagayan, the journal found its way to the hands of **Rosana Masagnay** of Mascap, Rodriguez, Rizal, a mountainous area subjected to landgrabbing by government leaders. Rosana's family is one of the beneficiaries of the first land reform program

implemented by the Marcos government in 1973. In 2006, they found out that the land has been sold to the rich and landed Araneta clan, the relatives



of a Presidential aspirant. Rosana became one of the leaders of AMIHAN, a national alliance of rural women, and has since fought for their claims to the land. She wrote: "Our organisation strengthens and binds us women together to continue our fight for land rights."

Razel Bayotas, who hails from Hacienda Ilimnan, Murcia, Negros Occidental, is also a victim of landgrabbing by no less than the provincial government. "Development" and "food security" are keywords used by a government unit headed by a local landlord as license to evict Razel and hundreds of other farmers. The land that they have been tilling for decades is to be converted into a cattle farm. Ironically, this promise of food security resulted to hunger and poverty for the farmers of Hacienda Ilimnan. "Land is life. If this land is taken away from us, this is like killing us," she wrote. For Razel, the answer to landlessness is the enactment and implementation of a genuine agrarian reform law that would truly end land monopoly and distribute land to the tillers.



The complicity of government officials in landgrabbing is a common thread among these stories. Laguna Lake is the largest freshwater lake in the Philippines, the third largest in Asia. It is a source of livelihood to 400,000 families including **Julieta Manzanero Elsinque** and her family in Brgy. Look, Calamba, Laguna. Her community faces eviction due to a public-private partnership project to build the Laguna Lake Expressway Dike. Due to the negative impact on their livelihood and

residences, Julieta and the fishermen in their community became active in a network formed to resist the project, the Save Laguna Lake Movement. "Instead of caring for the welfare of the poor, the government would rather build infrastructure that will destroy our homes and livelihood," she expressed.

From Laguna, the journal went to Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac where **Florida "Pong" Sibayan** resides. Hacienda Luisita, the 6,453-hectare sugarcane plantation controlled by the family of the Philippine President Aquino, is widely-known for its long, bitter history of agrarian unrest. Pong vividly recalls the Hacienda Luisita Massacre of 2004, when an otherwise peaceful strike against low wages (\$.21/week) was met with bullets, leaving seven farmworkers dead, hundreds wounded and an indefinite number of people missing. Ten



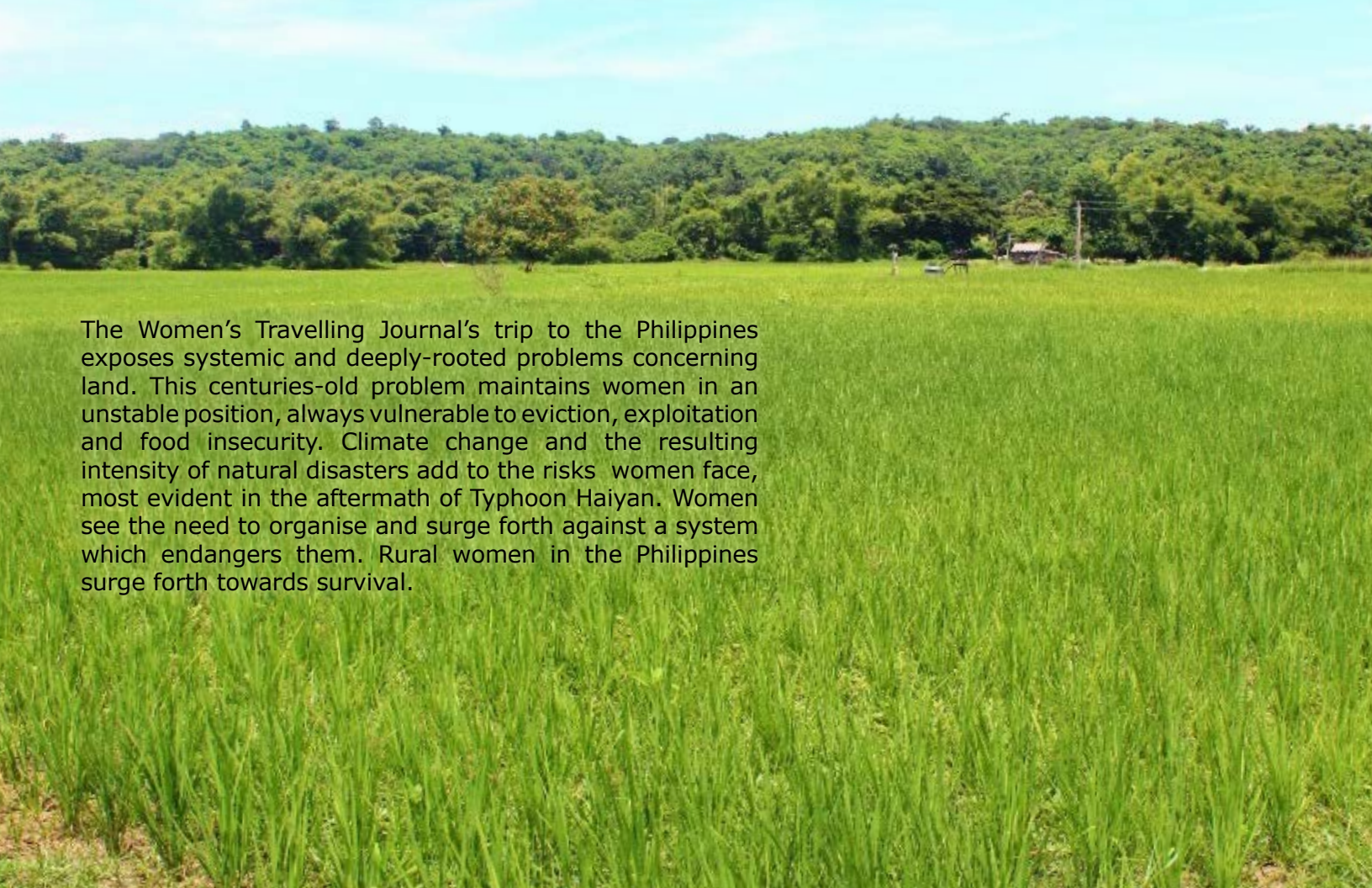


wrote that her family has been tilling their land even before the Japanese occupation in the early 1940s. Teresita was surprised when one day, they received a summon from the Municipal Trial Court accusing her of theft. Behind the complaint was a relative of their municipality's mayor, who claims ownership of the land. "We are poor farmers and not well educated. They took advantage of our ignorance of the law," she bemoaned.

years after the massacre, justice remains elusive to Pong's fallen comrades. In 2012, the Philippine Supreme Court ordered total land distribution in Hacienda Luisita. However, not a single parcel of land has been rightfully distributed. Pong remains defiant: "Land and justice have been elusive to us. But we will see to it that the sacrifices of those who have shed blood and sweat to this struggle will not go to waste."

Finally, the journal travelled to San Jose, Negros Oriental in the hands of **Teresita Ecat**. Teresita



A wide-angle photograph of a vibrant green rice field. The foreground is filled with tall, healthy rice stalks. In the middle ground, a small, simple structure, possibly a farm building or a shrine, is visible among the trees. The background is a dense, continuous line of lush green trees under a clear, bright blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

The Women's Travelling Journal's trip to the Philippines exposes systemic and deeply-rooted problems concerning land. This centuries-old problem maintains women in an unstable position, always vulnerable to eviction, exploitation and food insecurity. Climate change and the resulting intensity of natural disasters add to the risks women face, most evident in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. Women see the need to organise and surge forth against a system which endangers them. Rural women in the Philippines surge forth towards survival.

kasar

lakim

jahan

ama wati

purnima



geeta



sahera

tami



Snapshot



zarina

winaya

ruma



teresita

sahera

herlina



sumamik

manna

jethi

kamini

mayabo



aiti elizabeth

joanna seena devi
rosana



aiti
aleya



aiti
cornelia

hasen
bijuameena



aysha

zarina
mira
shakila

Collaborating Groups





ARWC

The Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC) is a growing movement of women peasants, agricultural women workers, indigenous women, Dalit women, nomads, fisherfolk, informal and formal workers, migrants and advocates calling for rural women's rights, empowerment and liberation. It was established in March 2008 in Tamil Nadu, India with more than 700 women from grassroots organizations and support NGOs coming from 21 countries in Asia.

One of ARWC's core strategies is to consolidate rural women's organizations and movements to defend the economic, social and cultural rights of communities - from rights to food, land, water, territories, productive resources, traditional knowledge, health and nutrition, education, to decent income and jobs as well as civil and political rights including right to self-determination. It continues to build solidarity and unity through exchanges, leadership building, use of information tools, coordinated campaigns and policy advocacy work. It continues to consolidate rural women in Asia to resist imperialist globalisation towards ending exploitation, discrimination, oppression and violence in all forms.

ARWC is represented by a Steering Committee of national women's alliances and regional women's organizations in Asia: Society for Rural Education and Development (SRED) and Tamil Nadu Women's Forum (TNWF), India; Tenaganita, Malaysia; Human Development Organization (HDO), Sri Lanka; INNABUYOG and GABRIELA National Alliance of Women's Organization, Philippines; All Nepal Women's Alliance (ANWA), Nepal; Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD); Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW); Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM ASIA); International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR); and Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP, and as Secretariat to the ARWC)

www.asianruralwomen.net



PAN ASIA PACIFIC

PANAP envisions a society that is truly democratic and culturally diverse, based on the principles of food sovereignty, gender justice and environmental sustainability. It has developed strong partnerships with peasants, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, rural women movements and other small food producers in the Asia Pacific region. Guided by the strong leadership of these grassroots groups, PANAP has become a strong advocacy network with a firm Asian perspective.

Its mission lies in strengthening people's movements to advance and assert food sovereignty, promote biodiversity-based ecological agriculture and the empowerment of rural women; protect people and the environment from highly hazardous pesticides; defend the rice heritage of Asia and resist the threats of corporate agriculture and neo-liberal globalisation.

PAN Asia Pacific is one of the five regional centres of Pesticide Action Network, a global network dedicated primarily towards the elimination of harm caused to humans and the environment by pesticides and towards promoting biodiversity-based ecological agriculture. Currently PANAP comprises 108 network partner organizations in the Asia-Pacific region and links with other civil society and grassroots organizations, regionally and globally.

www.panap.net



OXFAM

Oxfam is a global movement for change - a network that empowers individuals, communities and organizations to build a future free from injustice and poverty.

An international confederation of 17 organizations working in approximately 90 countries worldwide to find solutions to poverty and related injustice, Oxfam truly believes that a world without poverty is possible; that everyone has a right to a life worth living; and that with the right support, people can take control, solve their own problems, and become self-reliant and independent. In all Oxfam's actions, the ultimate goal is to enable people to exercise their rights and manage their own lives. Oxfam works directly with communities and seeks to influence the powerful, to ensure that poor people can improve their lives and livelihoods and have a say in decisions that affect them.

www.oxfam.org



THE GROW CAMPAIGN

The GROW campaign aims to transform the food system by establishing sustainable - and environmentally sound - agricultural production that will be able to feed the world population of 9 billion by 2050.

It also aims to address the huge inequalities that exist in the food system. Currently the world produces more food than we need, but nearly 1 billion people go without. And smallholder farmers, who comprise the majority of food producers, are denied the resources they need to thrive - water, land, technology and investment.

It is a campaign that seeks to bring about a shift in global government attitudes to food trade and finance. It focuses on small-scale farming in developing countries, and changing the attitudes to the world's scarce resources for a fairer future.

www.oxfam.org/en/grow

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

BANGLADESH

Jago Nari (jago_nari@yahoo.com); Prochesta (prochesta.hldp@gmail.com); Development Wheel (dewsalam@gmail.com); AVAS (rskazal@yahoo.com, avascls@yahoo.com); Society for Bio-diversity Conservation (SBC) (nilipmrong@yahoo.com); AFNAN (afnan_jsr@yahoo.com); Barendra Unnayan Prochesta (BUP) (buprochesta@yahoo.com); Chandradip Development Society (CDS) (cdsbsl@gmail.com); ZIBIKA (zibikafstp@gmail.com); Ulashi Srijoni Shangstha (USS) (uss.jessore@gmail.com)

INDIA

Daliyon Ka Dagariya (DKD)was established as a youth force of CHIPKO movement in Garhwal. It is indentified as a focal NGO to advance scientific knowledge to evolve integrated management strategies, demonstrate their efficiency for conservation of natural and cultural resources and to ensure environmentally sound sustainable development in the central Himalaya. DKD believes in empowering the people in ways such that they can take their development decisions themselves and build a stable society that is free of social, economic and gender inequity.

mohanpanwar310@yahoo.in

Pragati Grameen Vikas Sansthan (PGVS) is focused on people's institutions and strengthening the institutions for demanding rights over land and livelihood. In the guidance of PGVS, members of Mahila Kisan Samiti organized themselves as an institution and started collective farming on leased land to overcome the challenges of hunger and unemployment.

pragatigvs@gmail.com

INDONESIA

Seruni (Indonesian Women's Organization) is a grassroots based women's organization, where majority of its members are rural women. Seruni was established on September 2006 through a national women's conference in Bandung.

Seruni believes that patriarchy is a system of oppression that makes women more vulnerable, more oppressed and exploited. Seruni takes part in strengthening people's movements by demanding gender equality and asserting for better life for the people in terms of economic, social, cultural and political spheres, as well as taking part in people's movement and intensifying women's organizing and participation. Seruni challenges the oppressive and

exploitative systems, particularly of women by doing campaign and advocacy strategies and providing alternative framework and solutions. Seruni believes that with a democratic legal movement, women's rights can be advanced along with the rights of other sectors and movements.

seruni@seruni.org

NEPAL

Founded in 1993, Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC) has been continuously facilitating land and agrarian rights campaign in Nepal. CSRC has been educating and organizing people who are deprived of their basic rights to land and decent livelihoods. Its programmes have focused on strengthening community organizations, developing human rights defenders, promoting land and agrarian reform on behalf of land-poor farmers. CSRC's mission is to enhance the power of land-poor farmers leading land and agrarian reforms for a dignified life. Since its establishment, CSRC, a social development organization, has been working for the cause of, as the name suggests, 'community self-reliance' through educating, empowering, organizing and transforming processes.

CSRC believes in strong non-violent social movements led by land-poor farmers following non-violent methods and democratic and human rights principles. It is essential to encourage and make politicians and policy actors accountable towards pro land-poor farmers' land and agrarian reforms. CSRC believes in the power of people and collaborates with National Land Rights Forum (NLRF), a people's organization of landless tenants, smallholders, and its branches at districts and community level. Currently, in collaboration with CSRC, NLRF has been facilitating the land and agrarian rights campaign in 53 districts, with a total membership of 96,530 including 34,045 women.

www.csrcnepal.org

landrights@csrcnepal.org

PAKISTAN

HELP Foundation is a nonprofit humanitarian and development organization working in the southern part of the Punjab province of Pakistan. It was established in 1976 and currently, its head office is located at District Rajanpur. The organization was registered under the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration & Control) Ordinance, 1961. For over

38 years HELP Foundation has been committed to overcoming poverty and sufferings in southern Punjab.

www.helpfoundation.pk

Doaba works with disaster-prone communities for their self-reliance in pursuit of their common interests. Doaba Foundation works to improve the quality of life among disaster-prone communities through optimal utilization of resources. Using a rights-based approach, DF seeks to build capacity of communities, focusing on vulnerable groups, for community-led disaster risk management, incorporating the same in programmes of sustainable development intervention. DF expands its influence through strategic partnerships and policy interventions.

www.doaba.org.pk

PHILIPPINES

AMIHAN (National Federation of Peasant Women in the Philippines) aims to empower peasant women through alternative development policies and strategies. It advocates equal opportunities and justice for all and strongly condemns human rights violations committed particularly against peasant women. AMIHAN carries forward the demands of grassroots women in the

rural areas as priority issues to be taken up by the government, institutions and agencies involved in policy changes and seeking development alternatives, and by people's organizations seeking empowerment for men and women.

The term AMIHAN describes the northeastern wind during harvest season that characterizes peasant women as "gentle but tough, tender but tenacious." It has 35 chapters nationwide.

www.amihanwomen.org

amihan_psntwmn@yahoo.com



STOP
LAND GRABBING

Women
Assert our Rights to Land and Resources

**NO LAND
LIFE!**

**WOMEN, ASSERT OUR RIGHTS
TO LAND AND RESOURCES!**

Women are important players in food security and agricultural development - as seed savers and land tillers, as community leaders and family managers. Yet, women remain marginalised and their roles continuously being eroded. The phenomenon of land and resource grabbing aggravates the oppression and exploitation of women in agriculture. Their physical and economic displacement due to land and resource grabbing further increases the strain on their rights as food producers.

As we commemorate Rural Women's Day on October 15 and World Food (less) Day on October 16, we join rural women and all rural folk to the rallying call: Women, Assert Our Rights to Land and Resources! No Land, No Life!

16 DAYS OF WOMEN'S GLOBAL ACTION

OCTOBER 1 TO 16

Join us for the 16 Days of Women's Global Action to give recognition and highlight rural women's rights, roles, victories and leadership in improving food security and enhancing agricultural development.

From October 1 to 16, various women and rural women's groups will participate through different activities from awareness raising events to lobbying governments of rural women's demands and agenda.

For more information visit www.panap.net/campaigns/women-assert-our-rights



Our Stories, One Journey

EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN IN ASIA ON
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
JUNE 2014 - FEBRUARY 2015

From the first Travelling Journal, where 8 women from 8 countries shared their stories and the second journey on SRHR with participation of 17 women from 14 countries, this year, 50 women coming from six countries- Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan - expressed the most pressing issues including those from the deepest interiors of their rural communities. The Women's Travelling Journal on Food Sovereignty shows how women rise above difficulties.

Rural women need to be heard. Their voices need to be amplified. Their stories need to be written and read, told and retold. Women hold up half the sky - women cannot be invisible or ignored. These brave but humble women definitely hold the power to change the course of history.

<http://travellingjournal.asianruralwomen.net>

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