

# Governance and sustainable development in a gender and indigenous perspective

(M2AS309)

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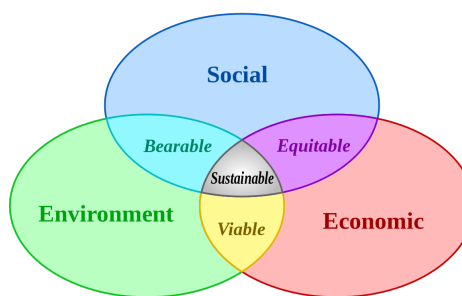
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## Introduction: sustainable development, governance and gender

The 2015 21<sup>st</sup> Conference Of the Parties in Paris gave rise to a huge mobilization among governments and civil societies (especially NGO’s). The intense global media coverage of the event in Western Europe may be a sign as well as a cause of it. On the whole, it evinces how climate change is now globally considered as a problem to tackle — even if the modalities of the tackling are of course still highly discussed and disputed.

Beneath the question of climate change, that of sustainable development pervades. Perhaps even more than climate change, sustainable development seems to be a consensual cause, widely inscribed in governmental and media wording. However, once again the concept of sustainable development covers a lot of debates and conflicts. This is may be seen in the famous representation of the concept as a three overlapping circles symbolizing the pillars of social, economic and environmental development. At the intersection of the three would be sustainability. This depiction has to be understood as the pedagogic simplification is is meant to be. No economy could exist out of social aspects, just as societies cannot exist out of an environment. The intersection of the three domains is therefore not as self-evident and univocal as this irenic depiction suggests; one may just think about the social conflicts over the notion and implementation of “equitability” to realize it.



Therefore, we may take into account these potential conflicts when dealing with the notion of “sustainable development”. The notion itself has been harshly debated since its most famous definition in the Brundtland report (*Our Common Future*, 1987): development is sustainable when it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Among the great issues raised since the Brundtland report was issued are those of gender inequalities and indigenous peoples’ inclusion in the process. They were absent, at large, from the 1987 report: the term “gender” is not mentioned, and “women” are only evoked in the report through family perspective — and more precisely through their role as birthgivers. Indigenous peoples, apart from annex remarks, are only considered as potential victims of unsustainable development, and therefore people who have to be taken care of, rather than subject capable of decision and action.

The United Nations has recognized since the importance of including women and indigenous peoples in the scope of decision and the process of decision-making. In institutional terms, UN Women is an organization “in charge of dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women”<sup>1</sup>. This entity enjoys a relative autonomy, under the scope of the General Assembly, the

<sup>1</sup><http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us>

Economic and Social Council Commission and the Status of Women. On Indigenous people there is a Permanent Forum whose secretariat is based in a sub-section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. However, sustainable development, gender equality and fair sharing of the resources are still far from being reached — even if indisputable progress has been made in the last decades. Women and indigenous peoples are still deprived from effective equal inclusion in the decision-making processes all around the world — at a global as well as the most local levels.

Through an analysis of the Indigenous 2015 Conference in UNESCO headquarters in Paris, I will discuss this importance of taking into account effective governance to assess the inclusiveness of sustainable development projects through focusing on gender. The definition of gender itself is disputed, the UN treaties sometimes limiting it to the point of men/ women relationships, while I will highlight the importance of widening its scope: gender as a whole system of bi-categorization between men and woman and the values and principles attached to them (masculine/ feminine). Indeed, one of the main point to focus on is the potential variability of such a categorization, especially among indigenous societies.

Women and indigenous people, even if in different ways, have been marginalized for ages, symbolically and materially, by Western male development patterns. Their inclusion in more sustainable development paths is far from being achieved. I would like to study how a glance at the intersection between gender and indigenous being might question the adequate governance — that is, all the ways and institutions through which power, whether formal or informal, is exercised — for reaching sustainable development trends. Interviews of two indigenous women helped me understand the subtleties of the intersectionality between gender and indigenous being and may suggest some directions to follow — or not to follow — for a sustainable future, especially within the scope of international governance and projects.

## **1 Indigenous peoples facing climate change: gendered aspects of an international conference**

### **1.1 The taking into account of gender at Indigenous 2015**

The international conference “Resilience in a time of uncertainty: indigenous people and climate change” was held in UNESCO headquarters in Paris on November 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 2015. It was co-organized by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the National Museum of Natural History of France (NMNH), in partnership with the organisation Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples’ International Centre for Policy Research and Education). UNESCO has been for long time a driving force promoting inclusive sustainable development among international institutions. UNESCO projects, conferences and agreements often focus on including minorities and marginalized peoples all around the world. Meanwhile, the support of the NMNH is a landmark for this institution, which has recently made climate change and all its consequences a subject of focus. In the “Climate change and biodiversity” brochure offered to all conference speakers and attendees [14], a director of the NMNH pleads for

this focus and the involvement of the Museum in research regarding global current trends. This is worth noting since the NMNH is an important place for multidisciplinary research in France, combining natural sciences as well as social sciences through history. Tebtebba is an indigenous peoples' organization committed to advocate for their rights especially among the UN frameworks. Its very name refers to "a process of collectively discussing issues and presenting diverse views with the aim of reaching agreements, common positions, and concerted actions"[15]. It places at its "core values" sustainable development through intergenerational justice, with an explicit focus on gender justice.

Gender was not explicitly a main subject at the first day of the conference. Few speakers have chosen to focus on gender as an important aspect of the way climate change might impact or be dealt with by indigenous people — least to focus on gender as a key to understand how climate change is perceived and experienced by indigenous people around the world. However, some female speakers did, especially Yasmin Romero Epiayu who was talking about her experience in a Wayuu women's movement opposing mining societies, and Tsechu Dolma, a Tibetan women whose Mountain Resiliency project focuses on taking into account the needs and strengths of women. Gunn-Britt Retter also picked up the subject when summing up a panel she chaired. On this first day, half the speakers and moderators were females. The UN leads a voluntaristic action on including women at all stages of decision-making processes, and this choice of receiving half female speakers is a concrete implementation of this policy. On the contrary, women are still under-represented at large from UN instances where delegates are chosen by a third party, such as at the General Assembly or the EcoSoc, since many countries send men instead. The gender-balanced composition of the panelists was reflected in the mixed assembly assisting to the debate — I could take note of it through distributing conference brochures at the entrance.

## **1.2 Interviews: two indigenous women's glances and experiences the governance of sustainable development**

I had previously chosen to interview Denise Michels, from the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), and to talk with her about local and global governance and sustainable development —in regard to her former role as an Alaskan major and female leader of the ICC. However, she could not make it to Paris due to severe weather conditions in the end. I chose to make two interviews with Tsechu Dolma and Gunn-Britt Retter instead. I was interested in interviewing female speakers in order to have their point of view on different elements regarding governance and sustainable development in a gender perspective. I knew some of my fellow students from the Arctic Studies master also had chosen to interview these two speakers, therefore I decided not to question them about their presentations but rather to focus on the subject of gender. The interviews took the form of informal discussions about their own experiences and career — that of women getting involved in the governance of sustainable development at different levels.

The first interview (see p.14) was made with T. Dolma. She explained me more the benefits from doing gender-separated focus groups in her Mountain resiliency project and talked about

the importance of empowering women in Nepal in order for them to decide for the governance of their livelihood. The second interview (see p.16) was made with G-B. Retter. She talked about her growing up in a Sami society less gender-hierarchical than foreign governance institutions where she experienced discrimination. She also described the way including Indigenous people and women in Arctic international discussions might help reducing the male- and Western-bias she sees, which she deems to be strongly interlinked and inherently unsustainable.

## 2 Indigenous women: “outliers” in the Western and male development trends

### 2.1 The western masculine unsustainable development

It is useful to recall shortly that “development” historically points at a Western and male process of resource exploitation and wealth increasing. It was first due to Western European exploitation of the soil and colonization of non-Western territories. R. Connell, in a 2005 chapter [2], highlights the fact that a line can be drawn from XVII<sup>th</sup> century Western conquests and inventions to XXI<sup>st</sup> century focus on economic growth. Development and globalization depend on the exploitation of fossil resources and the will to consume ever-greater amount of goods and services. They are driven by a specific type of masculinity, that is, the valuing of certain aspects associated with male beings: that of accumulating power and wealth through ruthless conquest and domination of others — be they indigenous peoples abroad or women. To this extent, the exploitation of natural resources goes hand-in-hand with a univocal exploitation of human resources. It is clear then that at least two categories of people are excluded at large from the benefits of this type of development. Indigenous peoples on the first hand, whose exclusion and subjection was made the most clear along the process of colonization. Women on the other hand, who have been confined to unrecognized home work and excluded from the decision-making sphere for centuries in Western societies.

Western and male values have therefore set a material and symbolic frameworks anchored in institutions and which still pervades in today’s discussions. G-B. Retter made it clear during the interview, explaining from her experience that “on the whole, recent Arctic discussions are mainly masculine values and male-dominant.” This is particularly seeable in the topics deemed the most legitimate to be discussed in those conferences: “when [in international and local panels] you have the focus on these values like mining, oil and gas, and coal, it’s all happened on indigenous peoples’ land”, insisting those are male values as well as Western ones, excluding the sphere most often attributed to women and not less important: that of small-scale development, subsistence farming, management of sustainable resources. It is worth noting that is was not the case at the Indigenous 2015 conference, where a wider broad of subjects were evoked, even though they were explicitly treated under the scope of female viewpoint.

## 2.2 Indigenous women at the forefront of risks and vulnerability, and the risks of objectification

When discussing the necessity for a more sustainable development, indigenous women are often taken into account of as potential victims of standard development. Standard development and climate change enhance their vulnerability — defined by Adger [1] as “the state of susceptibility to harm from exposure to stresses associated with environmental and social change and from the absence of capacity to adapt”. Reports to the UN have thus underlined how negative effects of being a women and belonging to an indigenous group might be cumulative in an unsustainable development context. When combined, those two identities make indigenous women a population highly vulnerable to unsustainable development’s effects, and especially climate change and dramatic events. T. Dolma stated it in during the interview, calling Nepali women “outliers” in their own societies; “they live in the extreme of inequality.”. The IFAD 2004 report [8] explains it, p.1: “Within indigenous communities [which account for one third of the rural poor globally], women often represent the most disadvantaged category due to their lack of or limited access to assets such as land, literacy and credit or participation in decision-making processes.”

However, stressing these cumulative aspects of being a women and indigenous without questioning the mechanisms at work, even if they correspond to effective realities which have to be taken into account, fails short of assessing the *combined* effects of gendered and indigenous identities. If those are the only aspects taken into account, it may lead to a paternalistic approach requiring women to be protected by males — Western males and indigenous ones. Indigenous women therefore may then be the objects of development policies rather than their subjects. In other terms, they may benefit from protective policies but not access governance resources on their own. They may then be consulted, but may not decide for their own future. The two aspects of potential victims and potential helpers, as well as the need to put women in a position where they can really exercise agency, are strongly interlinked, as it T. Dolma put it: “often [women] are the ones who are victimized, and often we see that women come up with better ideas, smarter ideas in sustaining projects. And then also [we have to give] them space to build their own capacity.”

To avoid this effect, gender and indigenous have to be conspicuously studied and treated as specific categories. They do not constitute “just another inequality”, as N. Kabeer puts it in her 2015 article [5] about the treatment of gender within UN institutions. Even though I mean to analyse them in parallel and show the similarities emerging from their simultaneous exclusion from standard development, the particularities of both categories have to be assessed. They also have not to be separated and least prioritize in order to be able to deal with inequalities — and especially regarding indigenous women; otherwise, as T. Dolma said it, some development agencies may display “a lack of attention on women issues [. . .]. [People] think it’s not even like a problem.”

### 3 Bringing gender and indigenous patterns into governance for more sustainability

#### 3.1 Indigenous specificities: spurs for gender fairness and sustainable development

At the Indigenous 2015 conference, opportunities were given for developing an indigenous approach to sustainable development, avoiding the pitfall of objectification. Yasmin Romero Epiayu explained how indigenous cultural systems might help building up sustainable and more resilient societies through a necessary opposition to natural resources over-exploitations. Her focus on the role of indigenous women in sustainable development, through her movement “Movimiento Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu”, finds its roots in indigenous cosmology. She talked about her opposition to mining companies who drill into what the Wayuu deem to be “Mother Earth”. Symbolically, it is a woman and a mother who is attacked through overexploitation — her internal organs removed by mining societies. Therefore it is indigenous women who seem to be in a most adequate position to oppose fossil resources overexploitation.

This is a telling example of how an indigenous women’s point of view might help shaping development into a sustainable way. However, this idea is simplistic and may lay open to criticism for reifying cultural traits. Wayuu’s thought on development is of course subtler than that, and not all indigenous peoples have such categories — one may even question here to what extent the “indigenous” category is relevant, since it has often been defined institutionally from a Western gaze. I hold the category to be relevant to characterize peoples who have been to some extent deprived of the governance on their own environment and resources through Western standard development, since peoples have appropriated the notion themselves as a relevant element of their identity.

Another idea emerged in the interview with G-B. Retter: indigenous cultures may be characterized by less-imbalanced gender relations. Thinking development through indigenous categories may therefore imply a reconsideration of the dominant place of males in Western standard development trends. G-B. Retter explains that in the Sami culture, gender roles are less hierarchical than in modern Western societies. She gives her testimony of growing up in a Sami society where she never felt discriminated against. It is only when leaving the frame of her indigenous group that she was for the first time discriminated against as a women. She explains that an apparent imbalance between men and women actually hides a more balanced reality: “the women is really the decision-maker, but she just facilitates the man to take the right decision. And this is our trick!”. This is confirmed by Dowley’s 2010 article [4] in which she explains that among the Canadian Inuit, the “sexual division of labour did not mean the privileging of one gender over the other. Instead, it was similar to team work — tasks were divided up and assigned in order that all parties could together perform them efficiently, effectively, and safely.”

### 3.2 Indigenous women as “sustainability saviours”

Several reports highlighted the potential benefits which may result from taking into account indigenous women for framing sustainable development (see for instance IFAD, 2004 [8] or UN Women, 2014 [13]). Indeed several local experiments have enhanced more sustainable results when women were in charge of managing the resources. Indigenous woman knowledge of local development may be a good standpoint for taking long-term view decisions; due to the fact that they are often in charge of home management, they may often have more resource management responsibilities than indigenous men. They also emigrate less often than men and may keep a better knowledge of local environmental-ecological systems. Then this is linked to their exclusion from the male gaze framing standard development.

This is especially visible in resilience, which was the main subject of the conference. Resilience is a widely-used concept, extending from its original field — that of risk management — to many other contexts. Nowadays, it is commonly used to talk about the aptitude of people to confront extreme events and to recover after important stresses. The IPCC defined resilience in its 2007 [9] report as the ability of a system (whether social or ecological) to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organization, and the ability to adapt to stress and change. The *Weathering uncertainty* report [10] insists that “indigenous livelihoods are resilient because they rely upon multiple resources [...] whereas specialization on single resources and mono-cultures with high capital investment render ‘modern’ systems particularly vulnerable”. This is especially true of women activities, which have more often than men remained diversified. Indigenous women having been largely kept aside of main liberal globalization trends (especially through not migrating or commuting) may have kept a better knowledge of how to rely on multiple activities (whether artisanal or agricultural) and especially crops.

### 3.3 Governance and sustainability: the example of indigenous ecological knowledge in a gendered perspective

This brings us to the question of “traditional (ecological) knowledge”, a subject which has grown major in the recent years. The aforementioned *Weathering uncertainty* report [10] recalls that the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report [9] noted that “indigenous [or traditional] knowledge is an invaluable basis for developing adaptation and natural resource management strategies in response to environmental and other forms of change”. However, as noted before, traditional knowledge is often gendered. The *Weathering uncertainty* report explains it, p.30: men and women often share distinct and complimentary knowledge. Quoting from Rocheleau (1991), the authors state that “indigenous ecological science has been obscured by the prevailing ‘invisibility’ of women, their work, their interests and their knowledge”.



G-B. Retter insisted on this point during the interview: “When we [in Arctic discussions] started to address TK [traditional knowledge] we started with the male ones” — and as noted before, those are often tied to Western ones, industrial mining for instance. International discussions thus present the risk of reproducing the delegitimisation of feminine and indigenous values and interests. What may be noted through this example is that it reflects a more general divide in the symbolic hierarchy of knowledge and symbolic legitimacy. Dowsley 2010 ([4], p.157), puts forward that this women knowledge which is often despised resorts to a social aspect. Indeed, she explains that women are often the ones gathering and sharing information in social groups — in her case study, women share not only first-hand information they constructed, but also second-hand information their hunter husbands collected about climate indicators. She notes that this social aspect is often neglected in the literature. This evokes the greater divide between two systems of knowledge: natural and social sciences. Indigenous knowledge is often rejected towards social sciences which are deemed to be “less scientific” and therefore less legitimate than natural ones — and this is what the recent taking into account of traditional knowledge opposes. And it is not purely fortuitous if those two ranges of knowledge (actually far closer than what may be thought at first) are colloquially called “hard” and “soft” science, that is, framed within categories associated with masculine and feminine characteristics. Exact sciences and their exploitative techniques are associated with Western masculine development and symbolically dominate — and effectively marginalize — social sciences, often associated (in common representations) with feminine values, closer to indigenous cultural patterns than Western male ones. This is what G-B. Retter deplors when talking about Arctic discussions failing to take into account proper indigenous standpoints through the exclusion of “female” subjects : “the focus on “hard” issues, like oil, gas, mining, maybe even climate change — even the way we, ourselves, address traditional knowledge... on the whole, recent Arctic discussions are mainly masculine values and male-dominant.”

All this taken into consideration, UN Women report [13] warns against the dangers that may raise when seeing women as “sustainability saviours”. There is a risk to consider them only through this aspect and “entrenching gender stereotypes and inequalities.” (p.12). Indeed, “women-environment connections, especially in domestic and subsistence activities such as collecting fuelwood, hauling water and cultivating food, [are] often presented as if they were natural and universal, rather than as the product of particular social and cultural norms and expectations.” (p.27). Therefore one has to take good care of not just projecting stereotypes but respecting women diversity and complex roles, and understanding the social construction of certain situations. This is even truer for indigenous women since the “indigenous” category is itself sometimes blindly associated with the natural world in a sort of savage mystique. Moreover, the report warns against the danger of just adding to women’s unpaid work while handing them new responsibilities in local resources management. This questions the possibility for indigenous women *effective* access to governance which constitutes the last focus of this paper.

## 4 The questioning of effective governance in sustainable development

### 4.1 Effective governance and access to resources for indigenous women

I have tried to show so far how the taking into account of indigenous women standpoint for sustainable development is not only a matter of equity (that is, being fair towards disadvantaged populations) but also efficiency (that is, they may help setting a successful frame for sustainable development). At the crossroads of being indigenous and gender-dominated on a global level, how can indigenous women be included out of an unequal and exclusive situation? This questions the governance of sustainable development<sup>2</sup>

One question raised here is that of translating the growing awareness of the importance of women's indigenous knowledge into action. F. Denton in her 2002 article [3] deplores that “while a great deal of lip-service has been paid to women's indigenous knowledge of environmental management and soil preservation, little is being done to integrate this local knowledge into mainstream policy”. Since 2002, the situation has evolved (see for instance the publishing of *Weathering uncertainty*). However, T. Dolma and G-B. Retter insisted on the fact that to some extent this statement still applied and efforts still needed to be done in order to close the gap between the formal acknowledgment of indigenous women importance in sustainable development and their effective exclusion from the decisions taken. This gap may be closed when attaining indigenous women “effective governance” in decision-making and -implementing processes. The term “effective governance” (used for instance in UNDP 2014 [12], chapter 4) means two things; first, the fact that a way of making decisions is successful and effectively attains its objectives — here, getting closer to a sustainable trend for development. Second, it means that indigenous women may exercise *actual* power. In this regard, it is close to the “capabilities” approach, which insists on the fact that formal equality or recognition does not automatically translates into actual equality or power, since formal rules take effect in concrete (and potentially imbalanced) environment which may affect their results. Thinking in terms of “effective governance” should therefore lead us to discern the obstacles to women empowerment on all scales.

Concretely, attention has to be brought on the “the structural constraints that curtail women's access to control and ownership of resources”, which development policies do not take sufficiently into account, according to Denton [3]. Those resources may be material, for instance ownership of the land, which is still often monopolized by men. The UN Women report [13] points out the fact that short-term projects often prove women management of forest resources, for instance, to be more sustainable than men's, but that the question of men effectively owning those forest is hardly ever asked; then, as Denton said it, “too often [...] environmental and other benefits end when the project finishes”. Those resources not owned by women may also be symbolic — and this by no means imply a smaller importance. Symbolic and material determinations

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<sup>2</sup>“Governance” is an old French word meaning “the way one governs”, and it has come back forward in the 1990's among international institution in order to promote a new way of taking and implementing decisions in relation with civil societies at all levels.

are intertwined, and the former affects the latter. Indigenous women's exclusion from actual decision-making power — from the home to the international institutions level — has a lot to do with their symbolic demeaning. G. Terry, in her 2009 article [7] coined it, p.7: though “poor women's greater vulnerability compared with men is partly due to their relatively limited access to resources and their resulting poverty, this is not the whole story. It also arises from social and cultural norms about, for instance, gendered divisions of labour, physical mobility, and who is entitled to take part in decision making at household and community levels.” This question of effective governance — who effectively governs and decide for development modalities, and not only in the short-term — echoes the preoccupations of T. Dolma and G-B. Retter when they talk about decision-making processes which necessarily take place on a Western- and male-biased footing, biases which have to be taken into account in order to be overturned.

## 4.2 Gendered interactions in policy-making

The necessity of taking good care of how theoretical principles apply in reality are especially true for policy-makers and development-workers at all levels. They have to take into account the unequal situation which is the very ground on which they are operating. For instance, T. Dolma puts forward how her Mountain resiliency project could not just put men and women on an equal footing in meetings, because “men are the ones who are participating all the time” and the meetings may only reproduce the domination structure observed elsewhere. The projects thus framed are doomed to benefit males more than women. This is why the Mountain resiliency project has led female-only projects, and is led by a whole-female team. G-B. Retter also underlines the dangers of taking gender and indigenous perspectives into account only on a superficial level. If indigenous women are only invited to discuss subjects they do not feel at ease with, they are likely to exercise self-censorship. The agenda for discussion may be framing not only the contents of the debate but also who attends the debate: “the organizers of the [Arctic development] conferences say ‘Oh yeah we ask women, but they don't want to come!’. But we in the group of women we have said ‘Yes, but it's the questions you're asking that is not interesting for women. It's not that they don't have expertise or they don't bother about Arctic issues! It's the questions that you're asking!’ ”.

In this regard, the action of T. Dolma and G-B. Retter are themselves good examples of women effective governance for sustainable development. These two indigenous women are in a position of not only be consulted but have initiative in formulating development policies. G-B. Retter has elevated herself from the consultee position in Arctic development projects meetings to the formulation of a criticism of the way the consultations were done : “So I've been publicly calling for example Arctic Conferences to have more social science perspective [...] the Arctic agenda is promoting masculine values. So we try to ... I have tried to address that in the past. [...] Now I'm talking about the discussion, and what is the subject.” Therefore she was able to shape the very modalities of governing Arctic development for the inclusion of indigenous perspectives, especially through the inclusion of women, in order “to give a human face to the discussions”. Through the projects led by her Mountain resilience project, T. Dolma also tried

not only to consult women just as men are, but to frame a new way of consulting women, taking into account the gendered unequal footing present in the society. Women therefore may not only follow external rules to give their opinion, but they may also have a say on the way they are taken into account — and once more, this is an example of *effective governance* implementation. This governmental empowerment of women is necessary since the domination structure is pervasive in societies. T. Dolma insists on the fact that among Nepali indigenous women, there is a “lack of confidence, lack of like. . . resources, they’ve just never thought of how to change it, they know it’s a problem, but they just don’t know ‘how can I change this’. Because they’ve never seen an example of it before.”. The problem here is not only a lack of material resources (such as economic ones, ownership rights, etc.) but it is combined with a symbolic discrepancy: in this masculine domination structure, women do not even *consider the possibility* to change it. This is what standard inclusive project (through formal consultation) formal may stumble upon. And this is what has to be overturned in order to achieve empower women into effective governance. To this extent, one of the great advantages of the Mountain resiliency project is that through its all-female leadership, it also provides female role models which are lacking in today’s Nepal, according to T. Dolma. It may then help change the considerations restraining women from thinking about breaking the domination frame.

## Conclusion

Through an analysis of the Indigenous 2015 conference and of the interviews made with two indigenous women in a position of not only getting involved in policy-making regarding sustainable development but also shaping this policy-making, I have tried to acknowledge the importance and benefits of introducing an indigenous and gender perspective in sustainable development. It may be equitable and efficient to do it through helping indigenous women to access effective governance of this development, against the backdrop of Western and male standard development patterns. In this respect, it is important to take into account gender and indigenous issues as intertwined, and not just cumulative or exclusive. Only in this respect it is possible to take into account the fact that deprived material conditions articulate with social domination structures which have to be assessed as such in order not to be reproduced. Indigenous women’s participation to sustainable development governance cannot only take the form of classic consultation, but also has to empower them through providing them with voice and effective capacity to set a new frame for the taking into account of their specific needs and standpoints.

Of course, those changes have to take place within a more global shift revaluing the position of indigenous people and women in general. This process is actually probably happening at present, in a long-term view. We may be assisting to what T. Kuhn [6] coined a “paradigm shift” in the development framework — that is, a shift not only in theories and policies, but also in the whole framework which sets the ground for it, including the predominance of the Western male gaze. However, the shift is far from being assured, and obstacles still remains —

even inside the UN institutions, as Denton's 2002 critical article depicts it. Such conferences as Indigenous 2015, which not only include non-standard reflexions, but also puts forward indigenous women's initiatives and offer a space for advocating and demonstrating their stance on effective governance, seem to be essential steps and spurs towards a fairer future.

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## 5 Annex: transcripts of the interviews

### Annex 1. Transcript of the interview with Tsechu Dolma

**Ms. Tsechu DOLMA** (source: <http://www.echoinggreen.org/fellows/tsechu-dolma>)

Coming from Tibet and Nepal, Tsechu is director of the Mountain Resiliency Project (MRP), a Himalayan nonprofit she co-founded. MRP brings innovation to food and energy securing process, as a key step in an ongoing struggle to build climate change resilience. Prior to that, Tsechu co-founded and developed women and girls' economic and social empowerment for ACHA Himalayan Sisterhood in New York. She has also advised UNDP in Colombia on natural resource management and impact on indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. An environmental scientist and anthropologist by training, Tsechu received her MPA from Columbia School of International and Public Affairs and a BS from Barnard College, where she led an alternative service break trip to Nepal.

- J.P. – *Do you think that, as a women, you've met some obstacles, or was it sometimes more difficult for you?*
- T.D. – Yeah. Yeah, it's definitely more difficult. Especially in Nepal, where a majority of the women are still not educated, like... the gender and diversity gap is *huge*. All the leadership places are taken up by men in all our villages. There's a lack of attention on women issues and people just brush it off immediately. They think it's not even like a problem.
- J.P. – *Okay. And is it because you went to the US that perhaps you were more able to reflect on that problem, or was it already a concern for you?*
- T.D. – Ahem... I think even growing up in Nepal I knew it was a concern... especially things like high rates of domestic violence and... I knew it was a big problem, and I think even the women within the community who haven't left — who have never been exposed to, like, Western communities, they realize that it's also a problem. It's just that they question their own capacity to be able to do something, to change it...
- J.P. – *Oh, like a lack of confidence, or?...*
- T.D. – Lack of confidence, lack of like... resources, they've just never thought of how to change it, they know it's a problem, but they just don't know "how can I change this". Because they've never seen an example of it before.
- J.P. – *Okay. And when you said that you do some talks with men on the one side, women on the other one, do you observe different things? Do people behave differently?*
- T.D. – [*nodding*] Hum-hum. Oh yeah. When we do men and women together we see that men are the ones who are participating all the time. And then when we ask women to even say something — when we try to push them to say something, we see that what they say is very... they shy away from talking too much in front of men, and they feel less confident when it's in front of men. But when you fo it *separately*, then women are bringing up all these problems that we've never even heard about! Because these women are so insightful! Because they live in the — they're *outliers* to the community, so they have the more insightful information. Because they live in the extreme of inequality.
- J.P. – *Okay. And do you think they have perhaps a special role to play if you want to bring sustainable development —*
- T.D. – Yeah! I think that women and youth are the most... they're *key* in sustaining sustainable development. Because... when you leave it up to men, the men leadership is quite — from my personal experience, I've seen that men leadership is not really accountable and not very transparent. But when you have women with savings' groups, women's health groups, or any type of women's groups in general, you see a lot more accountability and a lot more transparency. A lot more wholesome view on thinking about the community's well-being, and thinking about longevity. Because I think these women are mothers, and sisters, and they have more sense of responsibility to save for the future and to... do long-term planning.

- J.P. – *And when you do your research — the groups organizing it, are there women? Men and women?*
- T.D. – No. My team in Mountain resiliency project were entirely made of women. It just happened to be like that. We have a few men volunteers, but... we see the importance of having more women in visible leadership positions. Because we know women are leaders in their home but not in public-visible places. So... sorry, your question was?
- J.P. – *Actually the question was, does this create a problem? When you come, as a team of women, and you want to do, like, for example... “man group”?...*
- T.D. – Yeah... yeah, it’s problematic when we do the genders together. But when we do them separately and we tell them it’s for health concerns, or some peculiar concerns, then it’s safe. As long as we keep the information we gather confidential. And separate. Then it’s most important! And then I think because my team is all *Himalayan* women, and we’re working beyond Himalayan communities, the women feel much safer sharing the information with us instead of... foreigner women or foreigner men coming in, asking questions... Because we’re insiders in the community — while we still have outsider perspective — they see that as an asset and they feel more safe, sharing their...
- J.P. – *Yeah, I guess. And do you think your organisation has a specific message to deliver to women?*
- T.D. – Hum yeah, I think... our theory of change and our vision is more about climate change. Communities that are climate-change resilient, right? But we see climate change in the form of social issues that it’s bringing up, and we see that women have to be in the forefront of mitigating the social issues because... often they are the ones who are victimized, and often we see that women come up with better ideas, smarter ideas in sustaining projects. And then also giving them space to build their own capacity.
- J.P. – *Last question, what are your perspectives? I mean, what do you think you’ll do, like, make your organization grow, or... do you have other projects?*
- T.D. – Right now, I think we would want to... because we are in the middle in founding, we want to really develop it in the four villages we’re already present in, and then for us it’s so important to keep following up with our communities and to keep monitoring and evaluating our projects, because the ones we have we want to make them as strong as possible. So instead of growing — instead of expanding our branches we want to expand our roots.
- J.P. – *Well that’s a nice image! ... And just, how has the earthquake changed things for you?*
- T.D. – Oh, it’s changed everything.
- J.P. – *Oh, really... I just don’t realize...*
- T.D. – For us it’s changed everything because hum... in the earthquake, half a million houses were destroyed and the majority of them were in the villages we work in. And even now we keep feeling traumas and we keep seeing houses falling apart. But I would also like to see opportunity in tragedy, in that we’re starting from a clean slate. Literally and figuratively *laughs*. But it’s also been an awakening for our communities, in that they see natural disasters — climate disasters that will keep happening more and more. Now they see the need to really be resilient. And really take advantage of this global spotlight. Because right now funding is coming in. So we take advantage of this to... to rebuild a new resilient country.

## Annex 2. Transcript of the interview with Gunn-Britt RETTER

**Ms. Gunn-Britt RETTER** (source: [11])

Gunn-Britt Retter is a Saami from Unjárga/Nesseby in Varanger, North-East Norway. She is a teacher by training and holds an M.A. in bilingual studies from the University of Wales.

She is chair of the local Saami association, a former advisor to the Arctic Council's Indigenous Peoples Secretariat in Copenhagen, and since 2005 she has been the head of the Arctic and Environmental Unit of the Saami Council. She is an active spokes-person on issues related to indigenous peoples in the Arctic. Her interests include the role of traditional knowledge in adapting to climate change, as well as biodiversity, language, pollution and management of natural resources, also from a gender perspective.

- J.P. – *I'm working on sustainable development, governance and gender, so those are gender-related questions. The first one is a very basic one... as a women, have you had to face difficulties, perhaps more than a man would have had?*
- GB.R. – No, personally... Actually, from childhood until now, I think... I can remember only once having faced some kind of challenge — or twice — for being a woman. From childhood and onwards, I felt empowered by the teachers we had in school, by the family. I think Sami cultural tradition is very balanced, in the sense that you have different roles, but they are equally valued. It doesn't always mean that you do the same things, bG-B. Retterut the value of what you do is equal. So I didn't feel any kind of discrimination in any way for being a women. Until I was in my thirties and I had then my first job — abroad. I don't recall right now what it was about. *[she pauses, thinking]* But it was an international... in the office where I kind of started to think, "Hum, this is probably due to gender issues". And the last thing is, I feel — and this is maybe interesting — I think the Arctic discourse is very masculine. Because I have taken part in the Arctic discussions since 2001, which is now thirteen years, and the focus on "hard" issues, like oil, gas, mining, maybe even climate change — even the way we, ourselves, address traditional knowledge... on the whole, recent Arctic discussions are mainly masculine values and male-dominant. So I've been publicly calling for example Arctic Conferences to have more social science perspective, and... because the organizers of the conferences say "oh yeah we ask women, but they don't want to come!". But we in the group of women we have said "yes, but it's the questions you're asking that is not interesting for women. It's not that they don't have expertise or they don't bother about Arctic issues! It's the questions that you're asking". So the agenda — the Arctic agenda is promoting masculine values. So we try to... I have tried to address that in the past. And I think also the indigenous discourse is maybe more... or Indigenous in the Arctic discussions manage to give a human face to the discussions — which are a bit softer. And when I say "masculine", when women are included they are also because they are talking the masculine things. It's those woman who are. So I'm not talking about... like, gender. Now I'm talking about the discussion, and what is the subject.
- J.P. – *Yeah. And do you think that this Sami balance may be endangered, as an indigenous feature, by the current developments?*
- GB.R. – Yeah, because when you have the focus on these values like mining, oil and gas, and coal, it's all happened on indigenous peoples' land. So indigenous peoples' participation in the Arctic discussion will both — I don't know if it's true, but it *might* add a human face to it, and also may give softer values to the discussion. I don't know if it's true, but it's a question: *will it?*
- J.P. – *... But it might be a role for indigenous people as well as...*



- GB.R. – Yeah. But also I made note to my colleague once that when we started to be in a position to address traditional knowledge, we also started to talk about the *male* traditional knowledge. And not to address the women’s knowledge last. And so I had to question myself, “why is that?”. But also, on gender issues in the small Arctic communities, the opposite of what people normally think when we talk gender is that concern about boys, young men who drop out of schools. So it’s girls and women that take part of education [more] than a lot of young men who drop out of school, because they prefer hunting, fishing, etc.
- J.P. – *And from your point of view, is that true more or less everywhere in the Arctic, or ?...*
- GB.R. – Well, this is not Sami, but Scandinavian. I don’t know about other Arctic places.
- J.P. – *And say, what are your thoughts about this conference, because I think... it was perhaps more social-science-orientated, and so, so...*
- GR. – Yeah, often when it’s indigenous question it can become sort of social science questions, maybe.
- J.P. – *And do you think that there may be a link, more precisely perhaps, between climate change and the fact that we focus on male values and forget about their consequences in terms of climate change...*
- GB.R. – Well I think, from... I know the Arctic discussions best, because my organization — I serve as an organizations’ coordinator for the Arctic Council matters, and France is observer to Arctic Council. But on indigenous issues, I think, when I work globally on commercial diversity mainly — I don’t go so often to this climate convention, because it’s all these — I think in indigenous caucuses there’s a good gender balance. And I see, globally, we often address like... the women’s role. I think we have managed to address both roles from... Like Tebtebba – the Asian indigenous organisation often talks about rice-farming and so on, which is indigenous values, and in Africa... I know a lot of indigenous women from all over the world that addresses the gender issues. and you have this is CBD also the women’s network which is also particularly focusing on the women and women’s roles in different discussions.
- J.P. – *Okay so they might be more orientated towards an inclusive development for instance, or?...*
- GB.R. – Yeah, hmmm. And there are also examples in the cases we see are often from women’s activities, I think.
- J.P. – *And so, on the whole, have you seen some kind of change since you said “I have tried to bear more women’s questions” etc.?*
- GB.R. – Yes. But that was when I was... from the Sami perspective. When we started to address TK [Traditional knowledge] we started with the male ones — which I was criticizing internally. But I haven’t seen the same at the international level — that’s what I was trying to say. *[laughs]*.
- J.P. – *And so on the whole, would you be rather optimistic, or ?...*
- GB.R. – Yeah, well, I’m rather positive... as far as I can see, it’s a good balance!
- [A woman interrupts]*
- J.P. – *Okay so I don’t know if there was something else you wanted to say...*
- GB.R. – Oh well... it’s interesting that the Arctic discussions are so masculine. The agenda is defined outside the Arctic I think. By people outside having interests in the Arctic. — Now I talk about the Scandinavian Arctic, because I think the Sami culture, as I know it, is very matriarchic. So that’s why I’ve never felt gender-balanced issues when I grew up. And I’ve learnt the techniques from my mum, that she has inherited from her mum I think. So, we... well, I can’t reveal the secrets, but often it’s like... the women is really the decision-maker, but she just facilitates the man to take the right decision. And this is our trick! We don’t always take the honor for it. So, on the surface, on the outside it might seem that the men are in charge and they might think it themselves, but we know that we made them make the right decision. *[laughs]* So, as long as we’re happy we don’t protest! But they will hear it when we don’t agree.