

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Alternative Report on Violations of the Rights of Indigenous Women in Nepal

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Reporting organizations:



Cultural Survival is an Indigenous-led NGO and U.S. registered non-profit, advocating for Indigenous Peoples' rights and supporting Indigenous communities' self-determination, cultures, and political resilience since 1972. For 51 years, Cultural Survival has partnered with Indigenous communities to advance Indigenous Peoples' rights and cultures worldwide.

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Nepal Tamang Women Association, founded in 2000, empowers indigenous Tamang women by preserving their language, culture, and traditions while fostering leadership and financial independence to improve their community status.

Newa Misa Daboo, founded in 2016 and based in Buddhabari, Teku (ward no. 12, Kathmandu Metropolitan City), is an organization championing the progress of Newar Indigenous women. They are dedicated to fostering leadership skills and driving financial and social empowerment within this community.

Sunuwar Women Society, founded in 2000 in Kathmandu, empowers Sunuwar women by promoting and preserving their language, culture, and traditions for future generations through leadership development and social empowerment.



Indigenous Women's League Nepal (IWL Nepal) is a human rights feminist organization founded in 2009. It envisioned a society where Indigenous women and girls enjoy and lead equal lives as others.

National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Association Nepal (NIDWAN), founded in 2015, works on the intersections of gender, disability, indigeneity, and marginalized issues focusing on Indigenous persons with disabilities for a fair, just, and equitable society.

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1. Executive Summary

In Nepal, significant challenges persist in achieving true gender equality as frameworks often fail to recognize the diverse experiences and unequal social, economic, cultural, and political standing among women, particularly those from marginalized communities like Indigenous Peoples.

Human trafficking and sexual exploitation disproportionately affect Indigenous women and girls in Nepal, particularly those from the Tamang community. Among the victims, Indigenous women, girls, and women from other marginalized groups make up the majority.¹ This vulnerability stems from a complex interplay of factors, including historical injustices, systemic discrimination, poverty, a lack of education, and limited access to information.

Education in Nepal continues to exclude the diverse Indigenous cultures, knowledge, and worldviews, leading to poor educational outcomes for many Indigenous girls and all children. The dominance of the Nepali and English languages in education and government administration poses a significant threat to preserving and promoting Indigenous languages despite the constitutional commitment to linguistic diversity.

Indigenous women's traditions are criminalized. Some practices encompass the production of yeast, alcohol, and cuisines, an essential part of life integral to certain ceremonies. The government's strict regulations involve frequent house raids, confiscating and disposing of large quantities of home-brewed liquor, limiting Indigenous women's knowledge-based income and adversely affecting their livelihoods.

Governmental plans to address climate change often overlook the specific vulnerabilities and needs of Indigenous women and fail to recognize them as key stakeholders and agents of change in climate action. Their traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge and practices can offer crucial insights into climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Still, by excluding Indigenous women from decision-making processes, the government misses out on valuable perspectives and undermines the effectiveness of climate change initiatives, denying them their right to participate.

Indigenous women often face a disproportionate burden from so-called development projects that disregard their rights and well-being, as many projects, particularly hydropower and infrastructure, are undertaken on their land, violating their fundamental right to Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

2. Background

Nepal is a diverse country, home to 142 ethnic/caste and Indigenous nationalities speaking over 124 languages and practicing various religions. The 2021 National Population and Housing Census by the Central Bureau of Statistics revealed a population of 29,192,480, with a slight majority (51.04%) being female.² Indigenous women represent a significant portion of this population, comprising 36% of all Nepali women. Despite the numbers, they face triple discrimination: as women, as Indigenous people, and as Indigenous women specifically. This intersecting discrimination is perpetuated by existing laws and policies related to women, which fail to recognize the distinct identity and status of Indigenous women and girls. These policies also neglect the rights afforded them by international agreements that Nepal has endorsed, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the ILO Convention No. 169, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Yet Indigenous women, girls and Indigenous women with disabilities are invisible in the constitution, laws, plans, policies, and programs and are victims of historical injustices and structural violence.

3. Concluding Observations from Previous CEDAW Review

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women made a series of recommendations on Indigenous women in Nepal in its last review in 2018. Nevertheless, Nepal still has not fully implemented these recommendations.

Amend the Constitution to explicitly recognize the rights of Indigenous women, in particular their right to self-determination, in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Raise public officials' and society's awareness of the importance of the full and equal participation of women from all groups of society, including Dalit and Indigenous women, in decision-making.

Reinforce action to promote equality and inclusion in education, including by enhancing support systems, scholarships, and incentives for girls from poor households, girls living in remote areas, girls belonging to "lower castes," Indigenous groups, religious and linguistic minority groups, and girls with disabilities, by training teachers on inclusive schools and by monitoring the implementation of those measures in the framework of the state party's school sector reform plan.

End discrimination by healthcare providers against Dalit women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, intersex persons, and women in prostitution by raising awareness among providers, with the support of female community health volunteers, of the rights of those groups and encouraging reporting.

Expedite the revision of the bill to amend the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act to bring it into line with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the ratification of the Protocol in line with commitments made in the context of the universal periodic review.

Lift the ban imposed on women workers seeking employment abroad and raise awareness among rural, displaced, indigenous and Dalit women and girls about the risks and criminal nature of trafficking.

4. Violations of Indigenous Women's Rights

While the Nepalese government has taken some steps towards gender equality, such as adopting the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategies and appointing focal persons, these measures often remain superficial and under-implemented. The government's commitment to gender equality is undermined by a lack of political will, inadequate resource allocation, and systemic discrimination. Despite the adoption of international frameworks like UN Security Council Resolutions (no 1325 and 1820), along with subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security (2022-2025)³, women—especially from marginalized communities—continue to face widespread gender-based violence, discrimination, and limited access to justice and opportunities.

Despite advancements, significant challenges persist in achieving true gender equality in Nepal. A critical gap lies in effectively implementing existing policies, plans, strategies, and guidelines. Moreover, these frameworks often fail to recognize the diverse experiences and unequal social, economic, cultural, and political standing among women, particularly those from marginalized communities like Indigenous Peoples. While all women face exclusion and discrimination, the severity and nature of these challenges differ significantly across ethnic groups. Indigenous women, in particular, face intersecting forms of discrimination based on both their gender and their ethnicity, exacerbating more vulnerability and marginalization.

There are widespread protection concerns, including human trafficking, child marriage, gender-based violence, and structural, systemic, and indirect discrimination that often remain unreported and undocumented. These issues disproportionately affect women from marginalized groups, such as Indigenous, disabled, and so-called lower-caste groups, who often reside in remote areas and face systemic barriers to accessing basic services and opportunities.⁴ Indigenous women in Nepal have historically been subjected to systemic discrimination and exclusion. Their concerns and needs often go unaddressed in government policies and plans, which tend to categorize them

broadly as "minorities," "marginalized women," or "culturally backward women," erasing their distinct identity and experiences. This lack of recognition has far-reaching consequences, including their invisibility in national census data and their exclusion from decision-making processes. A recent examination of government policies and plans revealed a concerning trend of grouping Indigenous women with "vulnerable or marginalized women," further denying their unique identity and collective rights. This omission is evident in key documents such as the National Gender Equality Policy 2020, the GESI Strategy 2021-2023, provincial GESI guidelines, and the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy 2021 of the National Human Rights Council.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nepal has highlighted the lack of specific mention of Indigenous women in national policies, raising concerns about their ability to exercise their rights fully.⁵ Indigenous women continue to face constitutional non-recognition and experience various forms of exclusion and discrimination compared to women from dominant caste groups. A recent study emphasized the "invisibility" of Indigenous women as a major obstacle to their participation and representation in decision-making processes. This invisibility stems from the failure of the Constitution, laws, and policies to recognize the diversity among women, often favoring women from dominant castes while neglecting the specific needs and rights of Indigenous women, Dalit women, Indigenous women with disabilities, Madhesi women, and Muslim women.

The NHRC report further highlights the challenges faced by Indigenous women in accessing state budgets, resources, and essential social services, including wages, healthcare, and education. This limited access is attributed to the lack of recognition of their unique vulnerabilities and exclusions and a lack of awareness regarding their rights and entitlements under government social protection programs. Compared to women from dominant groups, Indigenous women encounter greater obstacles in accessing public and social services, justice, education, and productive resources such as land, water, forests, and other natural resources. Furthermore, their traditional knowledge, skills, and practices, which are vital to their livelihoods and cultural identity, have been devalued and even criminalized.⁶

4.1 Disaggregated Data and Access to State Resources

CEDAW arts. 2, 3 and CEDAW/C/GR/39 section A.23(c), A.42(i), CEDAW/C/GR/34 section F.54(d) and UNDRIP art. 22

Indigenous women of Nepal are invisible in the census data, government plans, policies, and strategies and are thus excluded from participation and representation in key decision-making and from addressing the inequality and discrimination they face. The disaggregated data of women across gender, disability, caste, ethnic groups, and Indigenous Peoples must be included in the state's plans, policies, and programs. The constitution, policies, and the government's federal, provincial, and local plans group Indigenous women together with "vulnerable or marginalized

women”, disregarding the identity of Indigenous women as distinct. The government has promoted so-called policies and strategies for gender equality, such as the National Gender Equality Policy 2020,⁷ the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy 2021-2023,⁸ the GESI guidelines of the provincial government, and the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy 2021⁹ of the National Human Rights Commission, none of which mention Indigenous women.

Based on the exclusion of Indigenous women from the data, there are not any programs directly reaching out to them¹⁰ and, compared to other women, Indigenous women face problems in accessing state budget and resources, including receiving essential public and social services such as justice, healthcare, education, and wages.¹¹ The state does not effectively communicate and make information about their rights and entitlements accessible.

4.2 Human Trafficking

CEDAW arts. 6, CEDAW/C/GR/34 section B.27 and UNDRIP art. 22

There is no precise data on human trafficking in Nepal. However, media reports and available data on rescue, relief, and rehabilitation efforts of civil society organizations dedicated to trafficking show that among the victims of human trafficking, Indigenous women and women from other marginalized groups make up the majority.¹² Media reports show that as many as 54 women and girls are being trafficked from Nepal to India or Gulf countries every day as they seek to find jobs as domestic workers.¹³ Between 12,000 to 15,000 Nepalese girls between the ages of 6 and 16 are tragically subjected to human trafficking yearly.¹⁴ A national report on trafficking in persons in Nepal states that the adult entertainment sector is one of the emerging destinations for trafficking.¹⁵ Although there is no exact data, documentation, or study on the caste/ethnic composition of Nepali girls trafficked to India or other countries, the percentage of women and girls rescued by various NGOs in Nepal shows that seven women and girls out of every 10 victims of trafficking in persons are from Indigenous communities.¹⁶ The figure produced by Shakti Samuha, the first and only organization run by women survivors of trafficking in India, shows that 76 percent of survivors who are either members or beneficiaries of their program are Indigenous women. Another 12 percent are Dalits, and another 12 percent are from Bahun and Chhetri communities.¹⁷ Human trafficking and sexual exploitation disproportionately affect Indigenous women and girls in Nepal, particularly those from the Tamang community. This vulnerability stems from a complex interplay of factors, including historical injustices, systemic discrimination, poverty, a lack of education, and limited access to information. These factors make them easy targets for traffickers who exploit their trust and desperation with false promises of employment and a better life. The historical trauma of forced servitude, coupled with ongoing marginalization, leaves Indigenous women and girls particularly susceptible to exploitation, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and support systems to protect their rights, raise awareness, and ensure their safety and well-being. The government of Nepal has the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007, in

place, but the Act does not criminalize all forms of labor and sex trafficking. Moreover, the government of Nepal has not yet created or endorsed any guidelines or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for identifying trafficking victims.

4.3 Education

CEDAW arts. 10, 14(2)(d), CEDAW/C/GR/34 section A.15, section D.43, CEDAW/C/GR/39 section C.48 and UNDRIP arts. 14 and 15

Since the introduction of formal, classroom-based education in Nepal, the government has imposed a monocultural curriculum centered on Hindu values, emphasizing Khas Nepali as the language of instruction, excluding the diverse Indigenous cultures, knowledge, and worldviews of Nepal, leading to poor educational outcomes for many Indigenous girls and all children—a trend that persists today. Through its constitution, the government recognizes that all languages spoken as mother tongues in Nepal are the nation's languages. Still, Khas Nepali in the Devanagari script is Nepal's official language.¹⁸ Besides Nepali, states in Nepal can officially recognize other languages spoken by their majority populations.¹⁹ The constitution also provides that every community in Nepal has the legal right to establish and run schools that teach in their mother tongue, ensuring education that reflects their cultural identity.²⁰ Although Nepal's Constitution champions multilingualism in education and governance, recognizing all mother tongues as national languages and mandating mother tongue instruction in schools, implementation faces challenges. While the government has developed curriculum materials in 26 languages, resource constraints, limited stakeholder engagement, and ideological barriers hinder progress.²¹

Furthermore, the dominance of Nepali and English in education poses a significant threat to preserving and promoting Indigenous languages despite the constitutional commitment to linguistic diversity. Indigenous women face substantial barriers to accessing education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, often leading to extreme poverty. This systemic disadvantage stems from historical policies that have marginalized and discriminated against Indigenous communities. Despite the government's claims of numerous education reforms, marginalized children in Nepal still face significant hurdles in accessing quality primary and secondary education including an enabling intercultural environment. A staggering 18% of primary school-aged children have not completed school, with the situation worsening at the lower secondary level (27%) and escalating to a concerning 73% at the upper secondary level. Data reveals that more than 30% of Indigenous Peoples in several regions are below the national poverty line.²² Across all levels of education, the poorest children, including those from Indigenous nationalities, face higher out-of-school rates.²³ This disparity stems from various factors, including accessibility, accessible formats, the language used for instruction, the children's language background, the curriculum content, and cultural differences. A lack of inclusive curricula, remedial teaching, and other support systems further contributes to this challenge.²⁴ These barriers not only hinder access to education but also contribute to high dropout rates, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and lost potential. This

dire situation highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous women and children, ensuring their fundamental rights and creating a more inclusive society.

4.4 Criminalization of Indigenous Traditions and Livelihoods

CEDAW arts. 5, 11, 13(c), 14(1), CEDAW/C/GR/39 section F.55 and section H.59 and UNDRIP arts. 3, 11, 12 and 20

Indigenous women's knowledge, skills, and traditional practices have been undermined and devalued as "inferior knowledge," leading to their criminalization. Indigenous groups in Nepal, including the Majhi, Sunuwar, Newar, Tamang, Chepang, and Bankaria, hold valuable Indigenous knowledge and serve as educators of these traditions to future generations. Their practices encompass the production of yeast, alcohol, and cuisines used in socio-cultural and religious traditions and during social gatherings like festivals and significant life events such as births and deaths. However, their traditional practices, particularly the Indigenous knowledge of alcohol production, have been criminalized. The government considers the production and sale of home-brewed alcohol without a license illegal.²⁵ For Indigenous communities in Nepal, alcohol is an essential part of life, integral to marriage ceremonies, funeral rites, worship, agricultural harvest seasons, and festivals. Many rituals remain incomplete without the use of alcoholic beverages. This traditional alcohol production has developed over time as a significant livelihood skill and remains a primary source of income for many Indigenous households. Indigenous women are typically responsible for preparing these alcoholic beverages, utilizing knowledge and skills passed down from older female family members. The criminalization of this practice has limited their knowledge-based income, adversely affecting their livelihoods, children's education, and overall family income.

Additionally, this situation has diminished Indigenous women's self-confidence, further perpetuating harmful stereotypes about their knowledge. The government's strict regulations involve frequent house raids in which they confiscate and dispose of large quantities of home-brewed liquor.²⁶ The Liquor Act of 2031 prohibits individuals or families from selling alcohol, effectively preventing communities in Nepal from brewing alcohol for commercial purposes under legal sanctions.

Nepal boasts a rich tradition of crafting diverse alcoholic beverages, deeply intertwined with its cultural, religious, and social fabric. These Indigenous drinks, like Chhyang, Aeylaa, and Tongba, represent a vibrant cultural heritage and provide crucial livelihoods, particularly for women. As the primary producers of these beverages, women gain direct economic empowerment, control over household finances, and the ability to invest in their families' well-being and children's futures. This income is especially vital in the absence of alternative employment opportunities. Despite its cultural and economic significance, the current legal framework criminalizes this

traditional practice, jeopardizing livelihoods and dismissing invaluable Indigenous knowledge. Rather than banning this activity, a more sustainable and just approach would be to legalize and regulate it. This would empower communities, preserve cultural heritage, and provide economic opportunities, particularly for women. By supporting the development of this industry through appropriate policies and programs, Nepal can ensure the sustainable production and consumption of these traditional beverages while promoting economic growth and social equity.

4.5 Climate Change

CEDAW art. 3, CEDAW/C/GR/34 section A.12 and CEDAW/C/GR/39 section I.51

Nepal, with its fragile topography and climate-sensitive livelihoods, is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Recognizing this vulnerability, the Government of Nepal has formulated various programs, plans, and policies to address climate change while integrating gender equality considerations. These include the National Adaptation Program of Action to Climate Change 2010,²⁷ the Climate Change and Gender Action Plan 2019²⁸, and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 2020.²⁹ The government of Nepal has also emphasized Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as a cross-cutting concern in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, which is a positive step. However, this approach often overlooks the specific vulnerabilities and needs of Indigenous women. While the policies acknowledge the importance of GESI, they frequently lack the intersectional approach that considers the compounding effects of gender, caste, and ethnicity. This omission fails to recognize Indigenous women as key stakeholders and agents of change in climate action. Consequently, the resources targeted towards women as part of climate change policies and programs disproportionately reach women from dominant social groups and exclude Indigenous women who face unique barriers due to cultural norms, limited access to resources, capacity, and discrimination.

Indigenous women are often viewed as passive beneficiaries rather than active participants and decision-makers in climate action initiatives. This exclusion is further compounded by the multiple challenges faced by Indigenous women, including poverty, low literacy levels, patriarchal norms, and language barriers. These factors limit their awareness of GESI provisions and hinder their ability to engage meaningfully in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. As a result, the representation and participation of Indigenous women in climate action remain significantly limited, undermining the effectiveness and equity of climate change initiatives in Nepal

Additionally, the government's approach often fails to recognize the valuable knowledge and experiences of Indigenous women in addressing climate change impacts. Their traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge and practices can offer crucial insights into climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Still, by excluding Indigenous women from decision-making processes, the government misses out on valuable perspectives and undermines the effectiveness of climate change initiatives.

Nepal is also reeling from devastating floods of the record-breaking rainfall from 26-29 September 2024, the heaviest ever recorded in Kathmandu, which caused widespread damage, claiming the lives of at least 246 people, including 32 children. Over 10,000 households were displaced,³⁰ primarily in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and its surrounding districts—Kavre, Dhading, Sindhupalchowk and Makwanpur. Seventy-eight people have died in the Kavre district alone following the floods and landslides.³¹

While the specific impact on women, including those from Indigenous communities, is yet to be fully quantified, it is undeniable that they bear a disproportionate burden in such disasters. They face heightened risks to their safety and well-being, including increased domestic violence, displacement, and loss of livelihoods. Furthermore, the destruction of infrastructure and essential services, such as healthcare and sanitation, disproportionately affects women and girls, hindering their access to critical support and opportunities. The destruction of homes and infrastructure places a heavier burden on women, who are often primarily responsible for household management and caregiving. Furthermore, the disruption of agricultural activities and local markets severely impacts women's economic security, as they often rely on these for their livelihoods. In the aftermath of this disaster, as Nepal grapples with the long-term consequences of such disasters, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to prioritize the needs of women, including Indigenous women, and ensure their meaningful participation in recovery and rebuilding efforts.

The impact of climate change is especially adverse for Indigenous women and girls with disabilities, more than half of them face impacts related to livelihoods, food security or mental health and psychosocial wellbeing while 43.2% face impacts due to forced displacement and migration and other forms.³²

4.6 Right to Land and Resources

CEDAW arts. 2, 3, 7, 14(2)(a), CEDAW/C/GR/34 section G.59, G.62(d), section F.54(e), CEDAW/C/GR/39 section G.57 and UNDRIP arts. 3, 8, 10, 25, 26, 32

Indigenous women protect nature and biodiversity and play an indispensable role in their communities. They protect natural resources, ensure sustainable livelihoods, preserve sacred sites, and transmit Indigenous knowledge, skills, and languages across generations. However, they face a disproportionate burden from so-called development projects that often disregard their rights and well-being. In Nepal, many projects, particularly hydropower, and infrastructure, are undertaken on the land and territories of Indigenous Peoples, often violating their fundamental right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

This disregard for Indigenous rights has devastating consequences for Indigenous women. For instance, the construction of seven hydropower projects along the Likhu River, which holds vital resources for Sunuwar Indigenous Peoples, has profoundly impacted their lives, livelihoods, and

socio-cultural rituals linked with the river. Sunuwar women, descendants of the ancient Kirat civilization, have a rich cultural heritage deeply rooted in the historical lands of the Likhu, Tamakoshi, and Sunkoshi rivers. The increasing influence of hydropower projects has had a detrimental impact on their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices. The loss of access to natural resources, such as forests and rivers, has eroded their economic security and socio-cultural rituals on the Likhu River. With over 124 hydropower projects currently in operation and as many as 244 projects planned as they have obtained licenses for construction,³³ Indigenous Peoples, particularly women who rely heavily on rivers for sustenance and cultural practices, face displacement, loss of access to resources, and disruption of their traditional way of life. The areas destined for hydropower development are typically inhabited by Indigenous Peoples, who are often entirely dependent upon rivers for livelihood. Implementation of such projects on or near Indigenous Peoples' territories without their FPIC has become the most pervasive source of human rights violations in Nepal.³⁴

Similarly, the Sunkoshi Marine Diversion Multipurpose Project implemented by the government of Nepal further exemplifies this disregard for Indigenous Peoples' rights. Launched without environmental impact assessment or community consultations, this project threatens to submerge the lands and cultural heritage and settlement of Majhi Indigenous Peoples, jeopardizing their very existence.³⁵

Another example is cement factories operating near Indigenous territories, such as the one in Dhading district impacting the Danuwar Indigenous People, which has had severe environmental and health consequences for them. The pollution from these factories contaminates crops, water sources, and grazing lands, posing significant health risks to communities, particularly women, children, and the elderly, who are more vulnerable to respiratory illnesses and other health complications. The decline in agricultural productivity further exacerbates food insecurity and economic hardship for Indigenous women.³⁶ Particularly, the 55 cement factories that are in operation (of the total 124) with a compiled foreign direct investment of €9.44 billion³⁷ have significant implications for Indigenous communities. The environmental degradation caused by these industries, such as deforestation and water pollution, directly impacts agricultural productivity. These declines in farm yields exacerbate food insecurity and economic hardship, disproportionately affecting Indigenous women, who often rely on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. Even road expansion projects in Kathmandu have led to the displacement and disruption of Newar communities, demonstrating a systemic failure to respect Indigenous land rights and cultural heritage. These infrastructure projects, often undertaken without meaningful consultation or consent, further marginalize Indigenous women, eroding their traditional knowledge systems and undermining their ability to sustain their communities and cultural practices. The cumulative impact of these aggressions is the erosion of Indigenous women's livelihoods, health, and cultural identity. They are often excluded from decision-making processes, their voices silenced, and their contributions to environmental stewardship and community well-

being ignored. This marginalization not only violates their human rights but also undermines the sustainability and resilience of Indigenous communities as a whole.

5. Recommendations

We urge the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women to consider making the following recommendations to Nepal:

- Amend the Census Act to collect disaggregated data on Indigenous women. This will help reveal their well-being status, the extent of exclusion/inclusion, and the degree of discrimination they face in order to reformulate plans, policies, and programs accordingly.
- Recognize Indigenous women as a distinct group within the broader category of “women” in laws and policies to ensure greater equity and justice for all.
- Amend the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act to align with international standards; develop and implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for identifying and helping trafficking victims; and allocate necessary resources for rehabilitation for survivors.
- Fully implement Nepal’s constitutional commitment to multilingual and inclusive education by providing adequate resources and support for mother-tongue instruction and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children, especially those from marginalized Indigenous communities.
- Amend the Liquor Act of 2031 to decriminalize and regulate the production and sale of traditional home-brewed alcohol by Indigenous communities. This amendment should recognize the cultural significance of these beverages, acknowledge their role as a vital source of income for Indigenous women, and provide a legal framework for their sustainable production and sale, promoting economic empowerment and preserving cultural heritage.
- Explicitly recognize Indigenous women as a distinct group in all laws and policies, ensuring their meaningful representation, participation, and targeted measures to address their unique vulnerabilities and exclusions.
- Revise climate change action laws and plans to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous women in developing, implementing, and monitoring all climate change initiatives, recognizing their vital role as custodians of traditional knowledge and agents of change.
- Ensure all development projects on or near Indigenous lands respect affected Indigenous Peoples' right to give or withhold their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), with particular attention to the voices of Indigenous women.

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