

# Voices from the Forest

Issues No. 37 & 38 February 2021

## A World of Honey

PUTTING NATIVE ASIAN BEES IN FOCUS

NTFP  EP

non-timber  
forest products -  
exchange programme

# Voices from the Forest

**Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP)** is a collaborative network of over 100 civil society and community-based organizations whose mission is to catalyze the empowerment of forest-dependent communities in Asia towards the sustainable management of forested landscapes & ecosystems.

Voices from the Forest is the official newsletter of NTFP-EP. It is released bi-annually and contains regional and country updates as well as stories from forests and peoples from the NTFP-EP network.

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Mr. Elmer Polintan handling stingless bees during a live demonstration for Madhu Duniya 2019 in Rizal, Philippines. Cover photo by Jon Robin Bustamante, NTFP-EP Asia.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Few can argue that 2020 has been one of the most challenging years in recent memory. While most years tend to blend into one another, the stark shift in our way of life between 2019 and 2020 represented just how quickly the course of events around the world can change our day to day activities.

The zoonotic origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has put indigenous food sources, specifically wildlife consumption, under the crosshairs of legislators looking to curb a repeat of the pandemic. Such policies could threaten the traditional food systems of indigenous communities who rely on the rich and wonderful world of wild foods for their food, health and economic security (page 12.)

This double issue highlights the diverse opportunities present with wild foods, and the linked relationships between the modern urban world and the natural ecosystem. Our cover story on the conclusion of Madhu Duniya 2019 (next page) is one way how a network of like-minded individuals and organizations can come together for mutual growth and support towards sustainable honey harvest, even after a year has already passed from the last event (page 06.)

As we move forward towards solving the various ecological issues facing our modern world, we must insist on including the voices of the indigenous peoples around the world in the same platform afforded to governments, organizations and businesses (page 07.) The CSO Forum provides good examples of how governance informed by indigenous voices can work towards a more robust and sustainable future (page 14.)

We should also remember that food security and environmental security are not mutually exclusive. The story of one urban employee in Bangalore and his daily lunchtime encounter with a falcon reminds us that the world that wildlife live in is closer to us than we think (page 10.) In the same way, the material and logistical challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic saw how technology can be utilized to benefit indigenous artisans in Indonesia (page 16) as well as unite women environmental human rights defenders in solidarity and struggle (page 18.) Still, we must be mindful of the divides the digital migration of the pandemic has created, and we must ensure that our actions bring peoples and forests closer, not apart.



# Madhu Duniya: A World of Honey

## PUTTING NATIVE ASIAN BEES IN FOCUS

Article by Diana San Jose  
Photos by Jon Robin Bustamante

Harvesting honey from the wild has been a long-standing activity passed on from one generation to another for many indigenous peoples. Honey hunting is a living cultural tradition that is marked by traditional ecological practices and sacred rituals which are still observed to this day. Consumed locally for health and food, and traded as a source of livelihood, honey is essential to the lives of many. Apart from honey, other products like beeswax, royal jelly and propolis are also utilized for consumption and trade.

Forest-dwelling communities have found a way to interact with bees despite the difficulty of the harvest. The search for honey involves climbing great heights, navigating rough terrain, and being exposed to the bee's sting. For all these travails,

the reward of a plentiful harvest always seems to outweigh the risks. People go on hunting quests for a taste of that sweet, natural, 'liquid gold' that only bees can make. Despite this long-standing link however, bees remain a wondrous mystery. The more we know about them, the more we realize that there is so much more to be discovered. This is especially true when we talk about the honeybees of South and Southeast Asia.

### Why a Madhu Duniya?

Since 2007, the NTFP Exchange Programme for South and Southeast Asia (now NTFP-EP Asia) has organized the Madhu Duniya, a conference and festival designed to facilitate learning exchange about forest honey and bees among communities of practice, particularly indigenous peoples, forest communities, research and academic institutions, civil society, government, and the private sector.

The term "Madhu Duniya" means "honey world". Its origin is the Sanskrit word "madhu", which means honey, and the Urdu/Persian word "duniya" which means "world". In this honey world, the unique bees of South and Southeast Asia are given the special attention they deserve.

The idea of creating Madhu Duniya was borne out of a need for stakeholders working on forest bees to have a platform to exchange ideas and learn from each other. Many pioneers of the



Products derived from forest honey and beeswax on display during Madhu Duniya 2019.



Madhu Duniya 2019 participants from nine countries pose for a photo at Tanay, Rizal, Philippines.

Madhu Duniya network first met during an Api Mondia conference in 1997, where the lack of attention being paid to other bee species apart from the European honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, was noticeable. As can be expected from synergies between like-minded individuals, the vision of an alternative space to gather was conceptualized. The idea finally came into fruition during the 1st Madhu Duniya held in 2007 at Andhra Pradesh, India. Since then, successive events have been held in Ujung Kulon National Park, Banten, West Java, Indonesia (2011), Phnom Penh and Mondulkiri, Cambodia (2015) and just recently, in Rizal, Quezon and Manila, Philippines (2019).

By design, Madhu Duniya is a quadrennial gathering that rotates its venue among participating South and Southeast Asian countries. The format of Madhu Duniya is a mix of presentations, workshops and discussions complemented by a field exposure to enhance the learning experience. Information and technology exchange on old and new practices are discussed along with marketing and management concerns. Perhaps what differentiates Madhu Duniya from other bee conferences is its emphasis on highlighting the knowledge and wisdom of community harvesters. It supports the participation of community experts from a diverse

base of indigenous and local honey groups. In a Madhu Duniya gathering, one can expect to hear the latest buzz about bees on a global, regional, and local scale.

### **Characterization and Conservation of Asian bees**

With the objective of raising more awareness and increasing understanding on tropical bees of Asia, Madhu Duniya 2019 was held last October 21-24, 2019 with the theme “Conservation and Characterization: Asian Bees: Unique and Threatened.” Country representatives gave an overview of achievements and initiatives that they have been working on over the past years and their experiences with Asian bee species, which includes *Apis dorata*, *Apis cerana*, *Apis florea* and *Apis andreniformis*, among others.

Honey characterization was tackled through interactive sessions such as taste-tests, visual observation, and an analysis of honey and floral samples using microscopes. Workshops on harvest protocols and conservation were also facilitated, and lectures and demonstrations on beekeeping for *Apis cerana* and stingless bees were conducted. Topics on honey crystallization, value-addition and markets were also presented. A field exposure to

a honey processing center of the Agta-Dumagat in Quezon was arranged to enable participants to continue conversations about sustainable community enterprises. Finally, a science panel was held on the last day to showcase latest studies and research on bees. The 4th Madhu Duniya was truly a rich and sweet experience marked by diversity, learning and camaraderie.

### **A honey world is a healthy world**

What emerged during the gathering was the conviction that an abundant honey world can only exist within the context of healthy forests. We want bees to be able to go about their usual business of building hives on tree branches, crevices, and logs – homey places where they thrive and are able to produce honey. The effects of climate change and forest degradation, however, does not guarantee business as usual for bees. Changing weather patterns, along with pesticide use, unsustainable harvest practices and the loss of traditional knowledge threaten their, as well as our, existence. Bees, in their role as chief pollinators, are crucial to our food systems and ultimately, our well-being. As the saying goes, “no we without the bee.”

It is in this space where a network like Madhu Duniya, which has local and regional roots, plays a pivotal role. The Madhu Duniya network facilitates the strengthening and forging of partnerships among a plurality of actors who are involved and collectively interested in nurturing the link between people and forests. What started as an informal, regional honey network is now a growing community composed of representatives from at least 10 countries in Asia advocating for sustainable governance and conservation of forests through responsible harvesting of honey, an essential non-timber forest product.

The Madhu Duniya network hopes to sustain its growth and maintain its influence as an enabling platform that advocates for the inclusion and participation of forest peoples in matters of governance, recognizing that their traditional ecological knowledge, practices, leadership, and self-empowerment are key elements in making sure that forest landscapes remain life-sustaining and abundant for the next generations to come. After all, a thriving honey world that does not exclude Asian bees but rather, celebrates its contributions to human health, livelihoods and forestry is an indicator that we are still living in a healthy world with a wonderfully diverse environment.



Dr. Shiny Rehel conducts pollen analysis of honey samples submitted by Madhu Duniya 2019 participants.



Participants examine forest honey products from different countries in an outdoor product exhibit and gallery.



Participants discuss with indigenous honey gatherers during a visit to a honey processing facility in Infanta, Quezon.



(From L-R) Researchers Dr. Cleofas Cervancia, Dr. Denise Matias and Dr. Ramon Razal field audience questions during the Science Panel in Ortigas, Metro Manila.

# KEEPING ABUZZ

## POST-MADHU DUNIYA 2019



A year after the 4th Madhu Duniya festival, partners and friends in the network were still abuzz with recent findings, learnings and discoveries about forest honey and bees. In the year of what has been dubbed as “the new normal”, the group was able to keep in touch and exchange knowledge virtually through digital communications, particularly through social media, email and Zoom.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- On June 22, 2020, Evert Jan Robberts (an ecofarm owner and tropical bee consultant based in the Philippines) and Dr. Shiny Rehel (botanist and programme coordinator for Conservation at Keystone Foundation in India) presented a summary of the results of the pollen and floral analysis from the Madhu Duniya 2019 samples in a webinar hosted by NTFP-EP Hive, NTFP’s learning exchange platform.
- 30 honey samples from *A. dorsata*, *A. cerana*, *A. mellifera* and stingless bees from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam were analyzed. Pollen from different types of flowering plants were identified, accompanied with pictures showing a microscopic view of the various pollen found.
- Insights from a marketing and research and training perspective were shared by Nola Andaya and Dr. Shiny Rehel.
- The need to develop protocols and guidelines on how to carry out work related to data-gathering, research and analysis for the envisaged pollen atlas was noted. Discussions on the pollen atlas were carried out and focal persons were identified. NTFP-EP Asia will work on coordinating updates once plans for next steps have been finalized.
- A capacity-building and training needs survey was carried out online after the June 2020 webinar. In response, Dr. Shiny Rehel, in collaboration with NTFP-EP Asia, with support from SSNC, is working on producing a video training module on honey quality control, certifications, pollen analysis and honey value addition. The network is aiming to launch this by March 2021.
- Eric Guerin, a researcher based in Cambodia, shared a recent published article he wrote entitled “*Native Honey Bees of Southeast Asia and Conservation Challenges*”.
- PT ABT Systemiq Partnership for Forest (P4F) launched a knowledge product on “*Wild Forest Honey Knowledge: Lessons Learned from Bringing Indigenous Wild Forest Honey from Bukit Tigapuluh Forest (Jambi) to the Premium Market*” last October 20, 2020. An English version of the webinar is planned for 2021 in collaboration with the Madhu Duniya network.
- Terra Madre Indonesia organized “*Ark of Taste Indonesia: A Journey of Taste, Nature and Culture with Forest Honey*” last October 31, 2020. JMHI and Sahabudin gave presentations.
- Resource mobilization is being undertaken to find funds to support the Pollen Atlas project.
- NTFP-EP is working on a Madhu Duniya database and mailing list to consolidate information and knowledge from previous festivals and conferences.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

Although the next Madhu Duniya would have to wait until 2023, the network aims to maintain strong ties and sustain its partnerships through open communication and exchange of information, insights, and ideas about the wonderful world of forest honey and honeybees. Preparations for initiatives on research and training are underway.

Ideas and suggestions for the next Madhu Duniya are always welcome and can be emailed to [madhu.duniya@ntfp.org](mailto:madhu.duniya@ntfp.org).



# Indigenous peoples can help fight climate change (so why aren't we letting them?)

## TACKLING INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS TO RECOGNITION

Article by Jon Robin Bustamante and Dazzle Labapis  
Photos by Jon Robin Bustamante and PASD Thailand

For most indigenous and local communities, nature and culture are inseparable. And for that reason alone, no other sector of society is more suited for caring and guarding key biodiversity and forest areas.

Despite only comprising 5% of the global population, indigenous peoples protect 80% of the world's biodiversity areas and possess traditional knowledge and practices in adapting, mitigating and reducing risks associated with climate change and natural disasters. As one of the most climate-vulnerable sectors across the world, they are at the frontlines in the campaign for environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

But many domestic governments in Southeast Asia have been less than keen in accepting the indigenous peoples as partners for climate change advocacies. Countless incidents of persecution, land-grabbing, forced evictions, human rights violations and even state-perpetrated violence continue to prevent meaningful cooperation between the two sectors.

On the international stage, indigenous peoples and local communities fare little better. At the Conference of Parties (COP), the annual United Nations climate talks, they collectively gained stronger voices through the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. But in practice, their participation remains tokenistic at best, drowned out by profit-driven debates on false solutions to climate change. And if these state delegates continue to miss the time to act, voices aren't the only thing drowning in the near future.

### Emphasizing the wrong solution

A cursory search through news headlines at the conclusion of COP25 in Madrid last 2019 yielded worrying remarks: CNN says it “fell short,” Forbes calls it a “failure,” The Economist describes it as “a sad splutter,” and The Guardian labels it a conference of “squabbling.” The U.N.'s own newsletter defines it as “an important opportunity lost.” Even U.N. Secretary General António Guterres also expressed disappointment in his statement on the outcome of COP25. We have indeed missed another opportunity.

The epicenter of COP25's stalemate was Article 6 of the 2015 Paris Agreement. The controversial article establishes a mechanism for states to contribute to the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions through an international "carbon market." In other words, countries that emit little greenhouse gases are allowed to sell their excess allowances to countries that emit large amounts of greenhouse gases, resulting in a net global reduction of emissions. By putting a price on carbon emissions, countries that regularly exceed their allowed emissions would be burdened with the costs of global warming while countries that comply are rewarded.

But just as they did in COP24 in Poland, several wealthy nations stonewalled progress at reaching an agreement regarding Article 6 by pushing to allow an "accounting loophole" in carbon allowances to gain an unfair advantage over the new climate deal, drawing the ire of civil society observers as well as delegates from small island countries endangered by rising sea levels.

Regardless, the most damaging consequence of this argument is the disproportionate amount of focus on carbon trading during the conference, given that experts have already said it has limited ability in addressing climate change. COP25 ended up being the longest climate summit yet, extending two days beyond its two-week time frame, but it found little time to discuss and recognize the importance of human rights and social justice, especially for indigenous peoples and local communities.

While negotiators were busy watering down a compromise agreement, the protests of countless environmental workers, indigenous peoples and youth groups congregating in Madrid fell on deaf ears.

"The climate solution should not be dominated by carbon trading because it will always be a business under the capitalist system, it won't succeed in addressing climate change," said Roger Garinga, Executive Director of the Institute for the Development of Educational and Ecological Alternatives, Inc.

"The carbon market must be secondary. It will be better to push or compel industries to reduce their emissions instead of just focusing on [carbon] offset," Garinga added.

## Demanding recognition

In a preparatory webinar a week before COP25, Garinga and other representatives of the CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN identified the need to recognize the vital role and contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities specifically towards nationally determined contributions (NDCs), or the country-wide efforts to reduce emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change signed by most of the countries under the Paris Agreement in 2015.

All easier said than done, of course. As the CSO Forum participants from Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand can all attest, most of the governments in ASEAN view indigenous peoples as more of a hindrance rather than a partner for development. In a bid to turn ancestral lands into profitable commercial land, some companies have conspired with local government officials to deprive indigenous and local communities of their rights and displace them from their homes.

Indigenous groups and farmers' groups are far too often the target of violence perpetrated by enforcement arms of the state. Lands declared as "conserved areas" end up being converted anyway. Even more worrying, civil society organizations and groups that are deemed too critical can be branded as 'anti-government' and face grave threats to both life and liberty. This culture of hostility breeds further distrust between indigenous communities and governments.

Even in situations where the authorities are more benign, the lack of information and awareness pose a secondary obstacle to recognition. In many regions, there are negative connotations attached to indigenous and local communities that range from being uneducated, uncultured, to wholly unskilled at managing and conserving their own land. As an example, the Karen people of northern Thailand are no strangers to that stereotype. The yearly smog above Chiang Mai district, described as one of the worst in the world, has often been blamed by the Thai government on the indigenous Karen practice of shifting cultivation, despite studies showing it has little effect on the haze compared to other smoke sources such as accidental and natural forest fires.

And while many people working in environmental and development organizations are aware of





The rotational farming practice of the Karen, which studies have shown to help reduce carbon in the atmosphere, is often misunderstood by the public as well as government and international institutions.

concepts like the Paris Agreement and NDCs, they are also a tiny minority of the general population. Most people, and by extension most government officials, may not even know or understand what those are. The chance to attend COP is a privilege afforded only to few individuals and organizations, as such the information gained from these meetings (most of which are technical in nature) barely trickle down to a wider audience.

### **Ways forward for CSOs**

At the national and regional level, the CSO Forum participants highlighted several courses of action that can be taken by concerned organizations to help indigenous and local communities in their bid for proper recognition.

First, CSOs, with consent and in clear agreement with partner indigenous peoples and local communities, can help facilitate ancestral domain recognition and protection, as well as help in establishing defined boundaries for conservation and self-regulation. That means helping with technical processes, boundary setting, legal compliance, after-planning and tangible implementations.

Bridging the gap between indigenous communities and the national government is vital for achieving recognition. But a bridge also goes both ways.

It also falls under CSOs to not only create collaborative statements, but also meet with the policymakers face-to-face in constructive dialogue for the benefit of the indigenous communities. Second, CSOs must recognize when they can take a step back and allow indigenous communities to speak for and represent themselves. More than just empowering them through visibility, it also allows them to share their stories, knowledge and practices directly without the need for a secondary channel.

Finally, CSOs that can join COP every year must take advantage of this opportunity, and at the same time recognize that only very few organizations can do so. It's important to strengthen communications on COP activities at all levels, from social media posts and information sharing, to media interviews, press releases and creating policy briefs for concerned officials. But such approaches should take a careful approach, with the aim to not only promote one's own organization, but to more importantly to highlight the position of indigenous peoples and the vital role they play in our fight against climate change.

Now is not the time to wallow in disappointment at recent developments. We must not give up. We must change our mindsets and ensure that COP26 this 2021 is the critical turning point that the world's most vulnerable people sorely need.



# Lunch with a Falcon

## ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE IN A HIGH-TECH CITY

Article by Satheesh Muthu Gopal  
Photo by Balaji Narayanan

Bangalore is a fast-growing city. Known as the Silicon Valley of India, the revolution in information technology has created more job opportunities for young Indians while the city kept growing in all directions. As such, skyscrapers have become a common part of the landscape of the city. Bangalore itself is very close to the Western Ghats which is home to a myriad of species, and the wetlands and shrub forest in and around the city provides habitat for many bird species.

It was a monsoon day and I was about to start my lunch on the fifth storey in one of the modern architecture buildings in south Bangalore. I saw a bird which I couldn't identify as it flew away between the building where I was and the 15-storey structure just opposite. This is a secured IT hub zone in the outskirts of Bangalore; there is no road between these two buildings, and it is quiet except for the techie's chit chat in the coffee corners. I wasn't sure if what I saw was a lifer (a bird-watching term for a first-time sighting of a species.) For any birder, lifers are a stirring experience. But one thing was certain: it was definitely a raptor.

The next day while having lunch, I made sure that I sat facing the window, just to catch a glimpse of the bird if I'm lucky. My wish was granted. The bird flew in from a long distance but fortunately it landed on an ideal perch on the building across. There were extended metal bars on each floor of the building and it landed on the 14th floor. I had neither a camera nor binoculars to look closely at the bird, but this time I observed the bird's flight and concluded it must be a falcon. The bird sat in the same place until I finished my lunch and, of course, I couldn't concentrate on my meal. Though I had more than 300 lifers in India, I had never seen a falcon before.

There are four different types of falcons in South India: the red-necked falcon (*Falco chicquera*), the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), the laggar falcon (*Falco jugger*) and the amur falcon (*Falco amurensis*). I knew Amur is a migrant which travels all way from East Asia to Africa via India, though sighted only in winter. I ruled out Amur falcon from the list.

I came back to the pantry for a coffee at 4 in the afternoon when I found the perch empty and the falcon gone. Do I need to wait for the next day? Does the bird really come here on a daily routine? Why so? I had many questions in my mind and resolved to continue my vigil the next day.

During lunch, I saw the bird was sitting on the same perch. Since it was a secured work premises, I was not allowed to bring binoculars or a camera. I had to go about identifying the bird only using the naked eye, and it was difficult. Every hour that day, I went to the pantry and fortunately had a close look when the bird took off from the perch and flew across two buildings, before flying off into the distance. I observed the black barred rufous belly and the black mustachio stripe. I called my friend Ashwin Viswanathan, a well-known ornithologist who was excellent at identifying bird species by their call or silhouette. When I explained my observation he ruled out the laggar falcon from the list.

The remaining two options were the red-necked falcon and peregrine falcon. The red-necked falcon is a resident bird, but Vishwanathan said that it preferred a natural perch. The only other option is the peregrine falcon, which can be found on five continents. But this falcon migrates to India only during the winter. So what is this bird? I thought it would be difficult to identify unless I photographed it. I had a mobile phone but it was of little help. I had to wait for a chance to get an even closer look at it, so I started watching the bird every day and found out it always comes to the same building.

This went on for about a week. I decided to go to the other building and seek permission to photograph the bird. Based on the window position and perch location, I calculated the specific place which would give me the closest look at this bird. Even a mobile phone camera should be enough to take a good picture if I could just reach that location. I went to the 13th floor and approached the security guard to allow me to take a photograph of the bird, but he denied me access.

The next day the bird was sitting one floor below, close to the washroom ventilation. I saw the rope hanging from the top of the building and a knot in it indicated that the bird's perch was a few feet away. I wanted to ensure I reached the correct floor. I went to the 12th floor and entered the washroom and from within I saw the knot of the rope between the slides of the ventilation. But the bird was sitting

very close to the wall of the washroom, just below the ventilation and I couldn't see it. I knew the bird was less than three feet from the washroom. I went outside and saw both the knot and the bird.

One day, surprisingly, the bird changed its perch to the adjacent side of the building. I rushed there immediately to the pantry on the other side. Finally, I had a closer look at the bird and even got a picture with my phone:



It was a shaheen falcon (*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*), a cousin of the peregrine falcon! The shaheen falcon is a subspecies of the peregrine which is resident in India. My friend whom I showed the photo told me that shaheen falcons are attracted by pigeons common in urban areas. The peregrine falcon is the fastest flying bird in the world and can fly at 330 kph. They are especially skilled at hunting swoops and are able to survive in the alpine highlands as well as in lowland cliffs. It can be found in the desert, the tropics, in islands and in other habitats. Unfortunately, due to the introduction of DDT, they were on the brink of extinction. However, thanks to ornithologists, environmentalists and activists who all fought against DDT, these birds are enjoying a resurgence.

The shaheen falcon was always on its perch between 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. For a couple of months on weekdays, I watched the bird during my lunchtime. The falcon made my lunchtime precious and something I always looked forward to.



# Finding the Appetite for Wild Foods

**IN THE BEGINNING, EVERY THING WAS WILD FOOD**

Article by Grant Barraquias  
Photos by Madhu Ramnath



These wild yam tubers (*Dioscorea pentaphylla*) can be found in southern and eastern Asia. They are rich in potassium, iron, calcium, magnesium and other nutrients.

Around 10,000 years ago, humans were hunter-gatherers who foraged mountains, forests, and seas to obtain their food. But not long after, they began to cultivate plants and eventually settled down. Thus, started the agricultural boom which forever changed our lifestyle and our landscapes.

In the present, most of us would breeze past the idea of slow foods (locally sourced, traditionally prepared food) and prefer instant or fast food. Aside from being unhealthier, this has placed higher demands on a few specific food crops which directly impact biodiversity and food security.

These problems are a call for us to revisit lessons from our roots and learn from traditional food systems and knowledge. It offers a chance for us to realize that beyond our restaurants, fast food, and grocery stores, there are other tastes, slower foods, and stories we have yet to discover, rediscover, and appreciate. This is precisely what the Wild Foods,



The monkey jackfruit (*Artocarpus rigidus*) is consumed in Vietnam. Like most jackfruit, the seeds are also edible after being boiled or roasted.

Biodiversity and Livelihood network, an expert group supported by the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) in collaboration with NTFP-EP Asia, aims to achieve. The expert group brings various disciplines together in enriching understanding on the importance of forests, wild foods and biodiversity for livelihood and food security.

Last June to September 2020, SIANI and NTFP-EP Asia held a four-part Expert Group Discussion Series on Wild Foods, Biodiversity, and Livelihood via Zoom. Attended by expert group members and dialogue partners, these webinars served as an avenue for hearty discussions on the concept



Aside from being tasty, the “kelow” fish (*Clarias sp.*) is also known for its medicinal properties and recommended for women during and after pregnancy.

of wild foods and related matters. The discussion series gave the participants a taste of the stories across Asia, from high above the Krayan Highlands of Indonesia to the southern regions of India. “When you talk about wild foods, there are many other related matters. As I say, about harvest, processing, about the knowledge of the terrain, where wild foods are found with respect to other plants, all these things are actually one,” said Madhu Ramnath, the lead resource person during the introductory discussion last June 30, 2020.

The discussion series aimed to introduce the subject and deepen the conversation on wild foods, and facilitate interactions among members and partners towards the crafting of policy recommendations and ideas for possible ways forward. The topics discussed included an introduction to wild foods and its relation to customary tenure rights and traditional food systems and knowledge, biodiversity, and community livelihoods.

“We can’t live without the forest. Many of our needs are taken from the forest. Therefore, we try to keep our customary territory sustainable [because] we use it to support our daily life, [especially for] our food,” said Lukas Atung, an indigenous Punan from North Kalimantan, Indonesia, during the fourth part of the discussion series held last September 22, 2020.

The knowledge sharing activities in the webinars were facilitated towards developing a regional network for learning, dialogue, and action in Asia. These inputs shall be consolidated and presented during the planned regional policy dialogue event in March 2021, targeting policy actors and support institutions in South and Southeast Asia.

Our relationship with food encompasses nourishment and sustenance and has importance for our culture, memory, and our identity as well. Sharing these stories and practices, especially for the youth, is an opportunity to shape the future. Discovering the intricate and rich culture behind wild foods is a learning experience that we can also apply to the issues we are facing today. In the rush and pressure of present society, this is a sign for us to slow down, reflect, and take time to have a taste of the value of wild foods.



# Charting a Path of Collective Journey

## CSO FORUM ON SOCIAL FORESTRY IN ASEAN

Article and Photos by Dazzle Labapis

The Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN organized a two-day reflection, assessment, and planning meeting last February 2020 which provided a platform for the CSO Forum participating organizations to reflect, assess, and plan the succeeding actions of the network beyond 2020. Twenty-seven CSO representatives from eight countries attended the meeting hosted by PARARA Indonesian Ethical Store in Jakarta, Indonesia.

In the said meeting, the result of the rapid assessment survey of CSO Forum's impact in the perspective of the members were presented. Based on the survey, the network and its members were able to contribute in varying levels to the CSO Forum targets on each of its thematic

areas: governance mechanisms (development of community forestry management structure in Cambodia, strengthening and establishing community-based forest management national working group in the Philippines, strengthening CSOs, indigenous peoples and local community knowledge and opportunities to engage with state actors), forest tenure and access rights (established platform and space to discuss tenure rights, awareness and knowledge sharing on relevant policies, capacity building and policy advocacy on tenure and customary tenure), safeguards (started the discussion of implementing free, prior and informed consent in social forestry in the region), and community economy and livelihood (support to policy development, enhanced capacity of local community through trainings and capacity building

activities, marketing and production of forest honey) at the country level and in the ASEAN or regional level.

However, despite these accomplishments and gains, there are still gaps, challenges and opportunities for continuing collaboration, alliance building, and work for the CSO Forum in the region. In one of the plenary sessions, CSO Forum participants described and identified common issues on social forestry in the region. For instance, while there is market access for some non-timber forest products, linkage and capacity to engage are still lacking. There is improvement in terms of forestry policies and governance, but capacity to engage governments effectively is still lacking. Policies for some countries are already outdated and needs review and revisions to recognize rights of local communities and indigenous peoples. Land ownership and recognition of land rights for indigenous peoples is still restricted and conditional, in some cases even regressing, and for some countries still lagging.

The above-mentioned gaps and challenges have prompted the CSO Forum network to continue the work that the platform is doing. To get at pace with the developments in the region, the CSO Forum improved its vision providing emphasis on its work of empowering indigenous peoples and local communities in ASEAN in the areas of safeguards, tenure and access rights, governance, community economy, and livelihoods.

Also, during this meeting, the CSO Forum participants also developed a 5-year theory of change (TOC) that details strategies, outcomes, outputs and activities to achieve the vision of the network. To disseminate and promote the TOC and the new and improved vision of the CSO Forum, the results of the reflection, assessment, and planning, as well as the network's policy recommendations and key messages, were shared with partners and ASEAN Member States working on social forestry.

Ms. Pirawan Wongnithisathaporn, Environment Programme Officer of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) represented the CSO Forum in the closing event of the ASEAN Swiss Partnership on



Femy Pinto (right) of NTFP-EP Asia leads a discussion with fellow CSO representatives at Parara Indonesian Ethical Store in Jakarta

Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC) last February 25-26, 2020 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Speaking on behalf of the CSO Forum network, Ms. Pirawan shared the following recommendations: (1) recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities on their customary land and forest tenure, (2) development and adoption of a FPIC policy and ample resource to support grievance mechanisms for environmental defenders, (3) strengthening the role of women and youth in forest governance and promoting indigenous and traditional forest management, and (4) development of a Community Forestry Enterprise (CFE) program to support capacity building, connectivity, and continuity of partnerships between CFEs and larger enterprises and relevant support sectors.

In recent news, two of the key recommendations of the CSO Forum, which are (1) upholding FPIC as safeguards in social forestry and (2) the recognition and review of customary tenure were recognized by the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry. These recommendations were included as part of the key activities under the Plan of Action (POA) for 2021-2025. This can be considered a big win for the network. Moving forward, the network hopes to monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action to ensure that recommendations adopted will genuinely be implemented.



# Kaleidoscope: The Changing Patterns Webinar Series

## SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS ARTISANS AMID A PANDEMIC

Article by Nia Ismoyo  
Photos from Meet the Makers Indonesia

Having awakened stunned from the shock of the onslaught of the pandemic, we began to look around us to see how we could construct positive initiatives to reach out in our community of artisans and together try to bring some financial support to the respective communities, studios and grass root organizations.

Hence the Meet the Makers Indonesia Kaleidoscope—Changing Patterns Webinar Series took form. There were ten webinars that took place between June and August 2020. We were able to gain the support of the Indonesian Heritage Society and the NTFP-EP Asia to carry out this series. For this we charged a small fee which went to the artisans or their community. In addition, we had an Instagram campaign after the webinar

to make the work of the artisan available for those who were interested.

Webinars during the pandemic have become the mode of interaction, but what was particularly significant about these webinars was the efforts made by the participants in remote communities to share their stories. This was incredibly moving and only strengthens the basic initiative of Meet the Makers Indonesia which was created to give a direct market link for artisans in a culturally rooted event where the craft as art objects are not separated from their makers and the story and meaning behind the objects.

Artisans funded to travel to Jakarta to show their work in the annual Meet the Makers Indonesia



## BIBOKI BUNA (BUNA HASUFA)



This weaving technique is different from the ikat weaving technique because the weaving forms ornamentation and supplementary weaving that is not continuous. Yarn counts with contrasting colors are wrapped around each lembar benang. There are various kinds of Biboki Buna cloth that are developed and integrated with matching ikat motifs.



Screengrab from "Biboki Weavings of West Timor", the first webinar in the series recorded June 18, 2020. The late Yovita Meta (right, bottom), Director of Tafean Pah, discusses West Timor weaving traditions with Crissy Guerero of NTFP-EP Asia (right, top) providing English interpretation for viewers. Yovita Meta passed away on July 5, 2020.

Craft as Art Show has given prestige to the creators and an opportunity to speak of their work in a talk show and discussion and to demonstrate their work. The skills and confidence to speak of their process is not necessarily a given.

In the Kaleidoscope Webinar Series, it remains one of the most moving consequences of the webinars to witness the efforts of the remote community artisans to share their stories. Some of them climbed to the top of a mountain in the middle of night to get signal, others travelled far away to find a stable connection to the internet. Technological challenges of participating in a webinar and skill building in this medium have been a given in urban areas during the pandemic and not necessarily an easy one for urban dwellers. When signal was lost in the middle of the Kalimantan webinar, one of the Borneo Chic staff had to share the video using her their cellphone so the webinar could continue and the artisan could complete her presentation. These amazing artisans took on this challenge with great commitment.

In many ways, the continuation of these very important traditions lies in the hands and voices of artisans such as these. Their voice be it practiced

or in process is essential for the regeneration of this ancient knowledge. Factors of colonialism, racism and economics have taken from them the space of growth to share their voice. So perhaps one of the most important moments in this webinar series was hearing them speak.

Above all, what this webinar gave to Meet the Makers Indonesia was the opportunity to work together to attempt to create a support system for the artisans who face the challenges of survival in a broken economic system. The sense of unity and comradery was by far the richest lesson that was shared by all.



This webinar series and more is available at the Meet the Makers website at [mtmindonesia.com](http://mtmindonesia.com)



# Sisters in Solidarity

## UNITED WOMEN ENVIRONMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN ASIA

Article and photos by Ruth Siringan

What does it mean to be a woman environmental human rights defender (WEHRD) for grassroots women in Asia?

From November 24-26, 2020, grassroots WEHRDs from India, Nepal, Cambodia, Philippines and West Papua virtually gathered together for the WEHRD Online Regional Retreat titled, “Grounding and Empowering: Nourishing the grassroots for transformative change.”

The retreat aimed to contextualize the local struggles within the regional and global context; to provide space for reflection and sharing of good practices, skills and strategies, particularly on successful lobbying and advocacy in confronting unjust power structures and promoting gender equity; to celebrate their identity as WEHRDs, and share ways to do self-care; to inspire each other



WEHRDs from Palawan, Philippines identifying issues, actors and powers in their community.

with the sharing of different movements and campaigns at the regional and international level; and to provide space for discussions on moving forward.

Organized and facilitated by the Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme - Asia (NTFP-EP Asia) and the Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights (LILAK) and in collaboration with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia, Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), BothEnds, and Keystone Foundation, the three-day online regional retreat became a platform for grassroots women to strengthen their identities as WEHRD and gain new strategies and allies in their campaigns.

Plenary lectures by Dr. Inday Ofreneo on the situationer of WEHRD and the ecofeminist perspective, NTFP-EP Asia's Executive Director Femy Pinto on power analysis, and Focus on the

Global South's Shalmali Guttal on the global powers affecting the state of natural resources, and Judy Pasimio from Lilak, on what and who is a WEHRD, guided the reflections and discussions of each session.

### **Making the Invisible, Visible: Surfacing the Place of the Women in their Communities**

Even though they live in different places, the women were able to relate with each other's experiences and challenges. They mapped out the environment they live in and situated their community in it, making it easier to grasp the current situation they are facing as a community, and as WEHRD. Through the exercise of identifying the invisible and visible powers affecting their community, they were able to get a clearer sight on what and who they should be facing. This exercise helped them in identifying what should be done to strengthen their campaigns. During the sharing sessions, the key issues which surfaced are mining (Cambodia, India, and the Philippines),



Women from India presenting their village map.

oil palm plantation (West Papua), building of dams (Philippines), coal-mining and hydropower projects (Philippines and Nepal). These issues do not only cause deforestation and pollution of the environment that they live in, but also cause tensions within their communities, loss of cultural practices, lack of social services and source of livelihood. In particular for the WEHRDs, the environmental issues they are facing aggravate gender based-violence and discrimination, which make it more challenging to pursue their campaigns.

Through the breakout activities, they had a clearer view on who the local-national powers are at play, as well as international powers such as international banks which they may have not seen as a primary power affecting the environment they are defending at the moment. Although overwhelmed, this exercise allowed them to have a clear view of the actors they are facing.

In the words of Nanay Conching Calzado from Sierra Madre (Philippines):

***“we are fearful [of the visible and invisible powers], but we will fight.”***

## **What it means to be a WEHRD: Woman and Environment Against Patriarchy**

Through the ecofeminist perspective shared by Shalmali Guttal, the women were reminded that fighting for their environmental rights also means fighting for their rights as women. Environmental and gender rights are intimately related - both being threatened by patriarchy. The women shared that the patriarchal values in their communities hinder the advancement of their environmental rights campaigns, such as holding back their movement, lack of participation in decision making, lack of access to resources, lack of access to education and information. All of these are vital in their fight to protect the environment.

Through strengthening their identity as women and the gender rights they should also be defending, they will be able to strengthen their campaigns for the environment. In fact, even as they struggle, these women have already established campaigns in their respective areas, such as campaigns against the construction of mega-dams, conservation/preservation/protection of natural resources, opposition to plantation. In the midst of continuous struggle, they are able to network with other organizations supporting their campaign, lobby



Women from Cambodia sharing their stories to the participants.



Dumagat women from Sierra Madre in the Philippines listening to the presentations.

with government (Philippines), enact capacity and awareness building activities, income generating activities (Nepal), revival and continuation of traditional practices, community conservation activities (India) and community forestry activities (Cambodia).

Through the retreat, they were reminded that being a WEHRD is someone who does not only face issues concerning the environment and protecting the natural resources, but also fights for their rights as women in their community, as people capable of leading the protection of their environment and fighting against patriarchy.

### **From My Sister's Village to Your Sister's Village: Building Solidarity, Advancing Campaigns**

By the end of the retreat, not only were they able to get a better grasp of the issues they are facing, but were also able to exchange best practices as sisters

in solidarity with each other. In the beginning, the women expressed that through the retreat, they want to gain more support for their campaigns, and gain a wider audience and network for their campaigns to be heard and enacted upon. The women shared with each other their needs, such as source of funding for organizing, creating more pressure on the government, broadening of networks in the international community, signing of petitions, and creating platforms for collaboration. Through this exchange, they were able to gain new strategies from the experiences of their sisters, and most importantly, forge solidarity with fellow grassroots women, defending their gender and environmental rights.

For the WEHRDs, this is only the beginning of a strengthened fight against a patriarchal system which oppresses both women and the environment, in solidarity amongst grassroots women and ally organizations to further amplify their campaigns at the international level.



# Mind the [Digital] Gap

## ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE OF THE PANDEMIC

Article by Jon Robin Bustamante

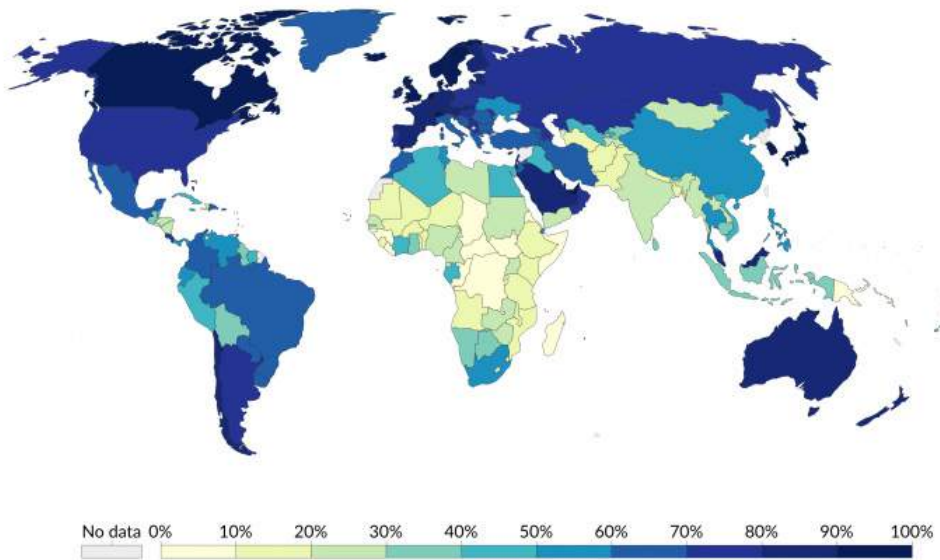
Nobody could have thought it would be this bad. January 2020 was just over a year ago, yet it feels like the distant memory of a by-gone era.

Back then, we were busy planning for meetings, seminars, conferences, and field work all over Asia. I even bought a new suitcase for myself, fully expecting a year of constant traveling in 2020. By the end of February, we were still able to join an ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change event in Jakarta, Indonesia and meet with partners from across the region. We never knew that for some of us, it was the last face-to-face meeting we would attend for the year.

Just two weeks after, the World Health Organization announced that it's officially a pandemic and countries will be going on lockdown. International travel halted, events were cancelled, and offices closed. It was a drastic, but critical step

in curbing the rapid spread of COVID-19. Some of us, optimistically though naively, believed that we'd be back in the office by June or July. Clearly that didn't happen. The new normal is here, and it's what we're doing right now. It was clear that we had to adapt very quickly to using digital and online technology to continue our work.

For my part, a significant part of my work shifted towards handling the online face of NTFP-EP as primary manager of the website and the social media channels. I was also the main technical focal person for Zoom meetings and webinars hosted under the HIVE platform. It used to be that webinars were novel concepts for quick and low-budget gatherings and discussions. Now it was our primary way of communicating and discussing with partners also stuck at home during the pandemic.



Percentage of population who have used the internet "once in the last three months." Chart and data from the World Bank.

NTFP-EP’s first major online-only event came in the ICCA Consortium Regional Assembly held last June 2020. As the primary technical host of the event, it was a crash course for us in using Zoom as a way to replicate how an in-person assembly would have been held normally: complete with plenaries, breakout rooms, snack breaks, panel discussions and even live entertainment. Learnings and experiences from holding in-person events did not exactly translate completely to the digital space. Nevertheless, in the months following the Regional Assembly, NTFP-EP Asia has also successfully held webinars for events and workshops for our network and partners.

But this digital migration, heavily focused on digital and online technologies, can only serve to widen the digital gap with marginalized communities.

Digital migration heavily favors those living in comfortable urban areas with access to computers, phones, internet, and electricity. Those who live in more rural areas, such as forest-based communities, are not always afforded such luxuries. Data from the World Bank shows that nearly 60% of the world’s population are offline and cannot participate in the digital space and thus benefit from its usefulness. The structure of online communication, especially in the development sector, also limits participation to those who are designated to speak on the scheduled program—there is little avenue for casual and side discussion as it would in a face-to-face set-up. Time zone differences mean schedules need to be strictly followed to accommodate the greatest amount of

people. This means communication is effectively hindered by the digital gap: those without the means to connect simply are not heard in our online-only world.

The digital gap cannot be ignored, especially now that the United Nations has recently declared that access to the internet is a human right. This declaration is based on the notion that access to the internet allows people to exercise their more fundamental rights to free speech. The internet is a powerful tool for indigenous communities, especially in terms of preserving their cultural treasures such as languages, music and traditional stories. It also allows indigenous communities to participate in skill-sharing, knowledge exchange, fight for advocacies and share their stories across the globe, all without having to travel far from their homes.

In the future, digital and online conferencing, as well as working-from-home, presents a viable alternative to usual face to face meetings. From an environmental perspective, it helps reduce carbon emissions from constant travelling and commuting, water and power consumption and overall reduced overhead from office space-related expenses. But remember: this is our shared future, and indigenous peoples should have the opportunity to contribute to the future that they are a part of, while also preserving their self-determination. In facing the human and ecological challenges of the next decades, the ability to connect with the world is our most vital tool.

## FEATURED PUBLICATIONS

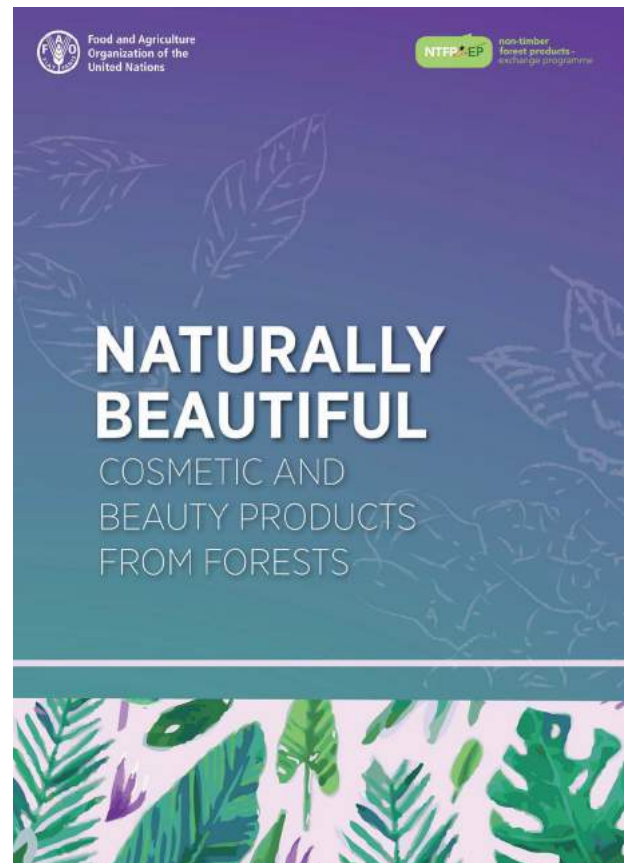
# NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL COSMETIC AND BEAUTY PRODUCTS FROM FORESTS

It is said that ‘there is a plant for every use in every continent’ – this is true of cosmetic use also. Non-wood forest product (NWFP) use for beauty products extends into antiquity, which is reflected in the poetry and literature of numerous countries. NWFP-based cosmetics and beauty products have been used both as traditional preparations and for trade in various Asian and Pacific countries. This report covers their traditional uses and those that have been commercialized by local enterprises or major brands.

During the last decade or so the extent of natural ingredients used by the cosmetics industry has increased, but there is no comprehensive publication on beauty products based on forest products, although scattered information does exist. By bringing attention to the role of forests in supplying beauty products and the connections with livelihood security and utilization of NWFPs, awareness of the importance of forests and their connection with cosmetics will be raised.

Within this context, FAO and the Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) Asia have conducted this regional assessment of NWFPs related to the cosmetics and fragrance sector. The study compiled a set of case studies that examined specific NWFPs and the various traditional contexts in which they are collected, processed and marketed.

The main objective of this volume is to present the case studies and the emerging synthesis, while encouraging cross-sectoral discussions in Asia on forests and beauty products. The study also provides recommendations on further enhancing equitable arrangements between forest communities and industry players.



*“Beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.  
But you are life and you are the veil.  
Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror.  
But you are eternity and you are the mirror.”*

*– On Beauty; Khalil Gibran*



# Wild Tastes in Asia

## Coming home to the forest for food

Written by Madhu Ramnath and Ramon Razal, *Wild Tastes in Asia* gives us a glimpse into the array of factors that go into the collection of food in the wild. Apart from skills, these factors include the knowledge to identify species, the spaces and times when particular foods become available, the resources necessary to collect certain foods (like traps and diggers), the norms involved in gathering and sharing food, and the traditions that ensure sustainable harvests of resources.

*Wild Tastes in Asia* is available for US\$30 hardbound or US \$20 paperback, excluding shipping fee.

Visit [tinyurl.com/wildtastes](http://tinyurl.com/wildtastes) for more info.

“ *Wild Tastes in Asia* gives a vital Asian perspective from cultures that are increasingly marginalised, presenting this knowledge through each element of the plant, and different uses for root, bark, leaf, flower, fruit, stem and shoots. For its botanical photos and compendium of knowledge alone, this book is unparalleled.

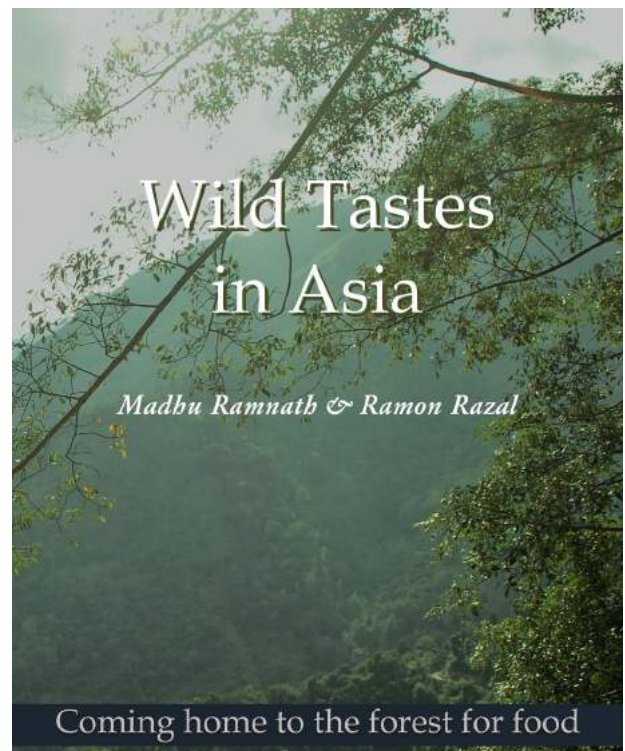
- The Hindu  
Daily broadsheet from India

“ One is satisfied at the end – because it shares understanding about indigenous peoples and the link between food, food security and food sovereignty with the control and use of land and water bodies determined largely by their indigenous knowledge, systems and practices.

- Giovanni Reyes  
President, Philippine ICCA Consortium

“ *Madhu and Ramon's book* gives us a small opening into the extreme complexity of these traditional management practices and the way territories are sustainably managed for peoples' livelihoods and for preserving diversity.

- Dr. Jeremy Ironside  
Consultant, McKnight Foundation



“ *Wild Tastes in Asia* beautifully and timely reminds the reader about what should always be the way we see forests – the richness they provide in terms of varieties, food, culture and raw material for a number of non-timber products.

- Maria Rydlund  
Senior Policy Advisor, Swedish Society for  
Nature Conservation

“ As we strive to regain a balance in our food, our planet and our future, this book is a great resource to understand how we can learn from indigenous cultures to be as one with nature, as she provides all that we need!

- Elena Aniere  
Regional Director, Slow Food International

“ The book reminds us that wild foods in Asia do not only contribute to food security of indigenous peoples but are also repositories of knowledge and culture.

- Dr. Denise Matias  
Research Scientist, ISOE Germany



FEATURED FILM

# IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT

## THE KAREN ROTATIONAL FARMING STORY



I think it is a practice that must be maintained and is a treasure of humankind



The government has to accept and recognize the case of rotational farming



to apologize to the fire spirits



If the smoke from the farm clearing goes high in the sky, it will be despair for us soon



Rotational farming, also called shifting cultivation or swidden agriculture by some, is one of the most misunderstood systems of land use. Many ASEAN countries have laws criminalizing or banning the practice, but for indigenous peoples, rotational farming is a sustainable practice closely interlinked into their lives and culture.

NTFP-EP Asia and the Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD Thailand) present a short film on how the Karen indigenous peoples in northern Thailand practice rotational farming. It explores how rotational farming has helped them provide for their food security, while also contributing to the sustainable management of their forest ecosystems.

The film also hopes to continue the discussion and support that the CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN has been advocating to ensure that indigenous peoples and local communities' customary tenure rights and access to their forest and farmland including shifting cultivation areas are secured.

The film premiered on December 17, 2020 in a launch event hosted on the NTFP-EP Facebook page that included opening remarks from Femy Pinto of NTFP-EP Asia and Songphonsak Ratanawilailak of PASD Thailand. After the film premiere, Dr. Prasert Trakansuphakon delivered a lecture to provide more details on the rotational farming practice. Pirawan Wongnithisathaporn, Environment Programme Officer of Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, and Mai Thin Yu Mon of Chin Human Rights Organization provided their insights and experiences with rotational farming and the need to campaign for recognition of the practice among key policymakers in ASEAN.

*In a Different Light: The Karen Rotational Farming Story is available to watch for free on the Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Programme YouTube channel and Facebook page*

*The film was made possible with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Swedish Society for Nature Conservation*

# Adivasi Women Train Youth on Forest Foods in India



This fundraising project supports Adivasi youth training on wild foods from women experts at the Forest Food Field School in Adukkam, India.

The scholars will learn to identify, document and harvest nutritious food from the wild, prepare meals from forest resources, and grow and maintain their own food gardens for food resilience.

For as little as \$15, you can help preserve this traditional knowledge from Adivasi elders so that the youth are able to carry on the old tradition of healthy diets from the forest.

The Forest Food Field School addresses the knowledge gap of youth and locals on wild foods through capacity building on relevant techniques on wild foods documentation, management, and preparation. The forest food gardens will function as demonstration plots at the local level and as a place for collection of newer, lesser-known edible plants. Seed exchanges between gardens will be made possible for biodiversity conservation. The youth will look at their landscape with a more appreciative view.

Beyond the training, the youth can apply the knowledge they learned in setting up their own wild food gardens, mentor other youth to cultivate their own community/family gardens that are easy to monitor, and contribute to their family's healthy plate. Youth and elders' relationships in villages will be improved as they play an important role in reviving wild food traditions. Other impacts include learning nutritive and medicinal values of a wider array of forest foods and potential cultivation.

Visit [goto.gg/48854](https://goto.gg/48854) to donate to the project now!



What are your thoughts about this issue? Do you have interesting stories of people and forests that you'd like us to feature in Voices from the Forest?

Send in your contributions, comments, and suggestions:

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