

## **SEI Asia Podcast Series: Environment and Policy in Asia**

### **Episode 02: Gender, equity and climate policy**

By Charmaine Caparas, Ha Nguyen and Teddy Baguilat

0:06 - 00:20

Welcome to SEI Asia's podcast on environment and policy in Asia. In this podcast series, we invite experts to discuss the many critical and complex environmental challenges in Asia, and how to find solutions through policy and partnerships.

00:25 – 00:49

Hello everyone! I'm Charmaine from the Stockholm Environment Institute. In today's podcast, we are going to talk about gender equality through a lens of intersectionality. Our two guests for today will look at how the Asian region can re-examine environmental policy mechanisms that can hinder and trigger outcomes.

00:50 – 01:12

I am joined by Ms. Ha Nguyen, who is a Research Fellow with the Gender, Environment and Development research cluster at the SEI Asia Centre. She has 15 years of experience in program design and management with the focus on gender and women's empowerment. Welcome Ha to the podcast!

01:13 – 01:15

Thank you Charmaine. It's my pleasure to be here.

01:16 – 02:05

We're also joined today by Mr. Teddy Baguilat, who was the former Congressman for the Lone district of Ifugao from 2010 to 2019 and he has also served as Ifugao Governor and Kiangang Mayor and Councilor since the late 1990s. He has championed the cause of his native Ifugao tribe and all indigenous peoples (IP) as a lawmaker by proposing laws that protect indigenous peoples and community-conserved territories and areas (ICCAs). Teddy is an ally of the LGBTQIA community as a staunch advocate of the Anti-Discrimination Bill and SOGIE and a mother's voice as the only male champ of the expanded maternity act in Congress. Welcome Teddy to our podcast!

02:06 – 02:09

Hi Charmaine. Hi Ha. Thanks for having me.

02:10 – 02:23

I would like to ask Ha, before we dig deeper into our discussion, it would be great to clarify some terms. You know, what does it mean when we say we should use an intersectional lens on gender equality?

02:24 – 04:19

When we talk about gender equality, people tend to relate to the binary of women and men, and the idea that women are treated unequally to men. In reality, not all women are the same, neither are men. Within the country, woman with well-paid job in city is regarded differently from woman who spent their entire life

working in the farm and within the same community, woman with high education tend to get more respect or high, higher social status compared to those with no or low education. So, using intersectionality lens mean we should not sector in the binary between women and men, we have to look into other social identities such as race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation and so on. In our research on green job, the use of intersectionality enables us to question who benefit or exploited from employment created by the transition to bioeconomy or circular economy. In another research on how Sendai Framework promote gender equality and social inclusion, intersectionality lens allows us to find out that people with disability are left behind in DRR effort at country level, not to mention different types of disability require a different risk reduction approach. So in the nutshell, intersectionality lens enables us to gain more nuanced understanding of who are privileged, who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

04:20 – 04:30

So Teddy, as someone who has a lot of experience as a lawmaker, what do you think about intersectionality in relation to environmental policies?

04:31 – 05:53

When there are marginalized sectors, even among marginalized there are also subgroups that are even more marginalized. This could be indigenous peoples, rural women, children of course, like take the case of the reproductive health law, which we passed in the Philippines. It's really a rights law addresses the needs of families, particularly women, in being able to decide for themselves and decide for their body. Even among indigenous peoples, they are considered in the Philippines as the most marginalized among marginalized sectors. And while we do have the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, which is something that is revolutionary all over the world, in terms of implementation in terms of enforcement, and in terms of general perceptions of indigenous peoples in the Philippines, there's still a lot of discrimination and a lot of laws that need to be amended in order to protect the rights. So I do agree, while for me as a legislator, we have been focusing a lot on marginalized sectors, farmers, rural folks, indigenous peoples, but within these sectors, there are also some subsectors, which needs to be given more attention to.

05:54 – 06:06

I think it's an excellent way of explaining intersectionality. Having subgroups within the group, I think we should just use that term maybe.

06:07 – 07:01

For instance, I was thinking about one very important program, which addresses social justice, which is agrarian reform, or land reform giving land to the landless. So the law initially only recognize male, the male spouse as title holder, but not women. So there was a need to amend that law. Therefore in term of the credit access, there is already that discrimination on women or female agrarian reform beneficiaries, from government or financial institutions. So that's one prime example that while we are trying to address social justice, helping the marginalized, but even within that sector, there are also subgroups that require in terms of legislation and policies.

07:02 – 07:52

I would like to react to your example of woman land rights, because I think it's really interesting example, from the intersectional point of view, say not all woman support giving land to woman for example, as a

mother in law, who wants to protect family land to secure her future, she may not want to give land to her daughter in law when the couple get divorced or her son died for example, and this is what I found in one of my research in Vietnam. So, by factoring another identity in this case, mother in law, we can gain more I would say nuanced understanding of the conflict of interest among woman's group.

07:53 - 09:28

Yeah, I agree with Ha, even among indigenous peoples, indigenous peoples, they are a subset of the most marginalized of the marginalized, but yet many indigenous communities are very patriarchal. So, in terms of while generally, indigenous communities are very protective of children and women, as far as their cultural norms are concerned, but when it comes to decision-making, because while the tribe's decision is collective in nature, but of course, you have the elders, but in a lot of tribes, the elders are mostly male. The elders are the ones who decide in terms of agreements with whether it's government or private sector, in terms of development programs or projects within their ancestral domains. And unfortunately, while our norms are very protective of the welfare of children of women, but when it comes to political decision-making, and as Ha mentioned, even in terms of the economic power, even for indigenous peoples, it's very patriarchal. However, I do believe that culture is evolving, it is not static. So, while right now that culture may be patriarchal, but we need to continue to empower women, to have a stronger voice, even within IP communities, so that the cultural norms, the traditional governance can also evolve and give more voices to women.

09:29 – 09:41

Given all of these challenges, how can we strengthen alliances you know, to build a gender and just social political environment?

09:42 – 11:12

Policy has to address problem of inequality and social injustice on the ground. Because there there's overwhelming evidence of policy prioritizing, like commercialization of nature, have led to environmental change and explore poor community to disaster and poverty and so on. So in order to progress toward gender, and just political environment, policy, and policymakers have to take sides with the poor and disadvantaged group, policymakers should listen to researcher and community of practice. In my view, policymakers are in favor of like numbers statistic and quantified changes such as like, increase jobs and income, they are less interested in quality dimension of wellbeing, such as decent job, good working condition, fair pay, or environmental health, which would reveal inequality and unjust dimension of society. So scientific and vicious communities are always there and willing to work with policymakers providing evidence to make decision. But it all depends on political will and commitment of policymakers and politician to reach out to this community.

11:13 – 13:03

We have to be more inclusive, whether we are policymakers, or whether we are civil society organizations. That's one thing that I've noticed that policymakers, as Ha mentioned, rarely listen to the sectors who are going to be affected by the policies that they pass. I think for many policymakers, not only do they have to listen to the experts, the technocrats, the scientists, the researchers, but they also need to make sure that the consultations are more inclusive. We do need expertise coming from government researchers or civil society organizations. In many of my environmental deals, they were drafted not by my staff or by myself,

but by civil society networks, or by the academe, some also got inputs from government researchers or even think tanks. But after the drafting what's very important I think is to talk to the sectors that will be affected by these environmental policies. So IPs, farmers, local government, so they are also very important in other sectors. Likewise, on the other side, this is something that I've been emphasizing among civil society organizations, not to look at lawmakers or politicians, us as your enemies. While it's true that civil society and in politicians have had some very well, not so friendly relations in the past, even acrimonious relations in the past, but at the end of the day, civil society if they want their policies or their advocacy is to be promoted and to become law then they need to talk and engage with policymakers.

13:04 – 14:42

A prime example which I think is very a good development in the region in Southeast Asia is in the advocacy for human rights, for instance. And that would include climate action and climate justice. We have this organization, the ASEAN parliamentarians for human rights. I used to be the executive director, and now I'm a member of the board. And these are members of parliament, both incumbent and previous MPs, who are themselves advocates. So we provide a venue for civil society, for academe for sectoral organizations to come together and talk to their policymakers in most of the countries in Southeast Asia to promote human rights and democratic values. That's also the reason why, in the Philippines, in many of the environmental laws or rights-based laws that I have been pushing, I make it a point to really talk to the sectoral networks. And as it is, if you look at the parliament all over the region, many are dominated by males, older people and the elites. So that's why I think it's very crucial to be very inclusive in order to build a very strong alliance for parliamentarians, or congressmen like ourselves to talk to the sectors and the researchers and the academe. And likewise, on the other side of the fence, we should have also these advocates not being paranoid or unwilling to engage with politicians.

14:43 – 15:12

Okay, Teddy, as a follow up question on that, you know, how can we be inclusive in practice, when often there's one dominant knowledge or practice or culture, and that acts it actively as exclude women from decision making? How can indigenous peoples especially women, what should they do to or what can they do to enhance inclusiveness? You've mentioned that, you know, there's a male dominance in a lot of the conversation.

15:13 – 16:29

We need to capacitate women to be more active in terms of the governance process within their communities. As I mentioned, the cultural norms are really quite patriarchal. But at the same time, IP communities have respect for women and children. So it's just a matter of capacitating the women to know more about the rights under the Constitution, or under the laws of the Republic, or even making sure that they use the same cultural norms of respect for women, in order to be more active when it comes to the decision making process. I think right now, we have quite a number of empowered women in many indigenous communities. In fact, if you look at the leaders globally, among indigenous communities, they're women. And so I think it's really just a matter of women also being able to assert their voice. It takes some nuancing maybe not challenging the cultural norms, but just asserting their voice that because they're part of the collective, and because the tribe besides collectively, then women should also be heard, when it comes to very important decision-making.

16:30 – 17:24

Yeah, it's very true that women's voices have to be strengthened and women have to gain confidence to assert themselves. But there's also another dimension here, which is about the politics of knowledge, who knowledge matter who knowledge count. The voices of like local community, particularly woman are undermined. So in your view, how can the voices as a knowledge of disadvantage group like indigenous community, particularly woman within those indigenous community, get legitimized and recognized as solid body of knowledge? As a policymaker, would you have any advice?

17:25 – 19:13

Yeah, well, that's a difficult question. If you look at the profile of the Parliament, which is the policymaking body in most countries, whether it's a national parliament or a regional legislative body, where even council of elders or village officials there, as I've said, male dominated the reality's terms of representation, and quite old. So while there's a push to have younger, more females, even more representation from basic sectors, in these lawmaking bodies in this policymaking bodies, it's not enough. For instance, the Philippines, and even in some Southeast Asian countries, the political powers are dominated by political dynasties. So they're the ones who make decisions and policies. It would be good, or it would be providential if some of these policymakers do listen to voices of women and voices of the marginalized. But more often than not, it's their interests that are protected. It's the status quo that remains sacred for many of these elites, male-dominated policymaking bodies. So I think this is the reason why, even as we discuss about environment about more progressive policies, there's also a need for us, as constituents, out to be more savvy in making sure that we elect representatives, because in many of the countries, we have a representative democracy. So we elect representatives but we have to make sure that in becoming a political constituency, we have to make sure that we elect representatives who will really speak and represent our ideas or our issues. That's my experience as a policymaker.

19:14 – 19:27

I think that's the key and that's a very practical approach. I think my question is a little bit dreamy. But I think your solution is just the way it works. Thank you.

19:28 – 19:57

I mean that's the type of democracy that we are in right now you have elites democracy. You have a representative democracy. And I hope that that could change in the future, because like, for instance, we're talking about climate action. We're talking about more progressive laws. We have to make sure that if we are advocates for these rights, then let's make sure that we elect people who will represent these voices inside parliament.

19:58 – 20:10

Are we kind of targeting specific social categories? When we try to frame environmental policies or even research around intersectionality?

20:11 – 20:50

It's not about choosing social category to target or choosing social group to target. It is about understanding how people with certain social identity experiences unequal treatment of violence or deprivation of basic human rights in a very specific context. We have to understand ways of using intersectionality. We have to

use it in a way to understand in which way certain identities make the most disadvantaged or vulnerable in order to justify who should be targeted.

20:51 – 22:29

I guess that's something that policymakers have to also take into consideration when we do policy-making. Normally, we just target sectors and talk about the general rights of sectors without really thinking about the subgroups or the more marginalized subgroups within these sectors. But it does come out in the conversations regularly when you do lawmaking. As an example, we recently pass a new HIV AIDS Law in the Philippines. So the laws called for more aggressive testing of the population for HIV. However, there was a push to provide in the provision that we segmentise be testing to, for instance, the LGBT community. We felt that was stigmatizing the LGBT and certain subsectors within Philippine society. So, we oppose that provisions, we felt that testing shouldn't be one, it shouldn't be compulsory, but it has to be aggressive, but it has to be voluntary. And at the same time, you don't stigmatize specific sectors, just because you feel that, that they're more vulnerable to HIV AIDS. As I mentioned, the LGBT community, so it does come out in conversations that there are sub sectors that you need to consider, but you have to make sure that you fight for their rights instead of demeaning or discriminating or stigmatizing them.

22:30 – 22:40

Very good point, actually, that's I would say it may be a downside or the wrong way of using intersectionality.

22:41 – 22:52

So to wrap up our conversation today, how can we change our approach so that, you know, we can realize our ambition of reducing inequalities and achieving transformational change?

22:53 – 23:40

I think I just recite what Teddy said. It's about inclusion. It's about inclusive process recognizing voices of different groups, but speaking from a feminist social scientists, I would say we maintain uncompromising critical perspective on gender and social equality. Big question has a Monique narrative on development and unveil the production of inequality and injustice. During that process, we make people feel uncomfortable with the status quo but I will say this, we try to place as a catalyst for using our knowledges as a catalyst for social change.

23:41 – 24:32

Let's reach out to the politicians, the policy makers. I know sometimes civil society or academe or researchers may feel allergic dealing with the politics of their advocacies, but that's something that we need to accept. So we need to educate, I know it's difficult, but we need to educate our policy makers. Many governments are saying there is an existentialist crisis right now in the world. And there is now a willingness to listen more. This is the reason why we have a lot of this climate action ongoing now in Glasgow but I again, at the end of

the day, after making the promises, do you think that these policy makers, these governments will be able to fulfill their commitments. That's where it requires a lot of work from all of us.

24:33 – 25:24

That's well said Teddy. I think one final question, I guess from my end as a communicator with the task of getting the research done by our researchers like Ha through policymakers like yourself. You mentioned that we should engage with our policymakers more and not think of them as enemies and rather as collaborators. So what would be in the most practical sense, what would be the best way to reach out to you? I know, like I know that you guys are very busy and you have a lot of engagement day in and day out. So what would be the best way for us to influence you to reading it in kind of using it as a groundwork for your policies in the future?

25:25 – 26:46

Well, that takes an entire course altogether. It's lobbying 101. I actually am a resource person to civil society organizations and sector groups on how to lobby or use policy data. Policymakers don't want long researchers normally you talked to the chief of staff and their staff because they break it down. They simplify it. Look at policymakers as voters. And I've been trying to talk to the voters because as I said, we're having a national election so we're starting campaign sorties every time I talk to the voters about the environment, okay, that's something that more or less everybody understand, but when you start talking about climate action, about reducing fossil fuels, many of the voters to now at least in the Philippines, voters really are not very adjourned to environmental issues so you have to make environmental issues become more popular, not just among the young because it's an issue among millennials, I guess, but the general public, speak the messages about your advocacy in a way that they would understand. And that's the same thing with policymakers. So whenever I talk about the climate change, for instance, I talk about the flood. This is a reality that everybody experiences and that's when you're connect to the environment.

26:47 – 26:56

So before we end, do you guys have any last words or messages before we end this podcast? Ha you want to go first?

26:57 – 28:10

I do have the last word. Speaking about the kind of the wrong way of using intersectionality. So if we use intersectionality as an approach to divide and target, there is a risk of diminishing the sense of community, the sense of solidarity and traditional social supporting system among community members such as in the case of some different projects or active many development projects, which to support the poorer group in a community created social disaggregation and breaking the community. So intersectionality should be used in a way of seeing diversity and understanding different experiences, different form of vulnerability, and need this advantages in order to find ways to address them. Building solidarity and collective action among different social groups and, and communities will be the key for social transformation.

28:11 – 29:25

Nothing really much to add, except to thank ha because I learned some things from her today. I think it's important for us to be open to new ideas or the new tactics and strategies. We may have extensive experience in terms of being in policymaking, being an executive, but there's always room for learning. That's

something that I've always invited in my career. Especially now that we're talking about the life and the planet, it requires a cohesive and collective action, not just from governments, but from the general public as a whole. Our efforts have to be in synchronize towards achieving a common goal, whether it's making sure that our NDCs or our climate action plans are in force or making sure that our general public and the span that focuses on the environment that we are all pushing for. So maybe my last appeal is for you to help us in crafting messages to the general public in order to understand the things that we've recently talked about whether it's internships or gender or the environment. Thank you everyone. Thanks for the opportunity to share my ideas.

29:26 – 30:18

Thank you so much Ha and Teddy for sharing your thoughts today. This podcast was meant to really encourage discourse and share ideas on what we can do for the environment so that our actions are not just a sustainable but also just inequitable. So thank you to our listeners and we hope you found it interesting and if you enjoy this episode, please subscribe to our podcast and share with your network. See you next time.