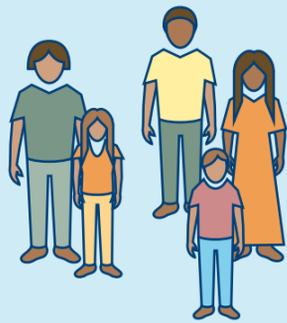


Twice as hard, twice as fierce

How being a woman, and being part of an indigenous community, makes it twice as hard for Martha* to pursue her environmental activism.

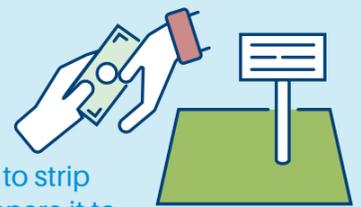
Martha is an indigenous female leader from the Bolivian Amazon. As an environmental defender, she protects her forest and its main river against destructive mining and large scale dams. But her gender and ethnicity make it twice as hard to make her voice heard.

Why is that? And how can we help empower women like Martha?



UNDERREPRESENTED IN DECISION-MAKING

"Women often do not know what their husbands have signed. This makes women dependent on other people's decisions. And whatever they decide is best."



MARGINALIZED POSITION

"The government uses all kinds of strategies to strip us of our territories, rights and life itself. I compare it to colonization, when they came with buttons and mirrors to impress us. And now, these capitalist governments come with similar strategies."

VULNERABLE TO GENDER-RELATED THREATS

"In my own community I have suffered violence from men. They threatened me with physical violence, by raising their hand. That is a kind of machismo; holding power over women."



Gender

Ethnicity



FRAMED AS ANTI-DEVELOPMENT

"They blackmail us with schools, hospitals, and development projects in exchange for our territory. Those of us who oppose these projects, supposedly do not want development."



SUBJECT TO STEREOTYPES

"They told me that I wasn't capable of anything. They said: 'You cannot come here and tell us what's good and what's not. You know nothing.'"

MORE RESPONSIBILITY IN CARETAKING

"For women, the forest is important because we get medicine and water from it. Logging an area and losing our water resources means more work for women. That's why women have a greater sense of forest protection."



STRONG CONNECTION TO THE LAND

"Our idea of poverty is being deprived of free access to water and free access to the forest, where we can obtain food and materials to build our houses. Our wealth is invisible and incomprehensible to those who come from outside. But if they would listen they could learn to see those values."

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT WOMEN LIKE MARTHA?

GOVERNMENTS

- Review policies and practices to see if they are, directly or indirectly, discriminatory towards indigenous women.
- Offer multiple preventive, redressive and deterrent remedies to discrimination and violence.
- Enhance the capacity of indigenous women to participate in policy formulation.
- Ensure indigenous women have rights to land & other natural resources.

COMPANIES

- Use gender-disaggregated data to track the impacts on women that may be vulnerable or marginalized.
- Make sure women are represented in decision-making processes. Pay attention to women's groups' vulnerabilities.
- Integrate a gender perspective into human rights due diligence and impact assessments.
- Ensure that the company and its partners have binding policies that comply to the gender framework.

NGOs

- Financially support women's networks & WHRDs*
- Support women leaders- and groups in decision-making (e.g. linking, coaching, language, exchange etc.)
- Sensitize communities to ensure women can raise their voice and gain their position as leaders to challenge traditional barriers.
- Create informal dialogue spaces in which women can contribute their ideas.

*For security reasons Martha's real name has been changed.

*Women Human Rights Defenders