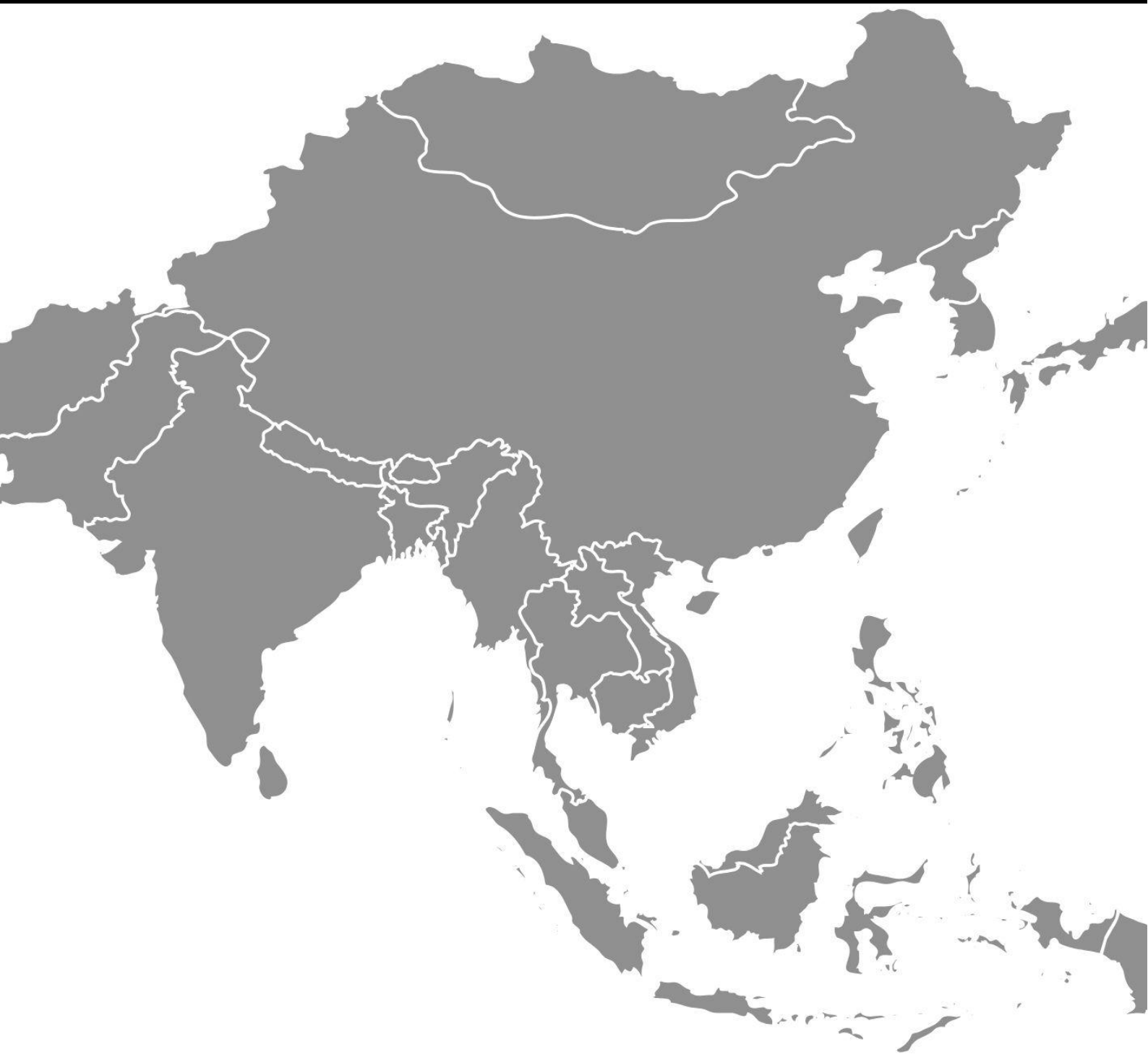
Climate Disinformation in Asia

A Deliberate Strategy Against Indigenous Peoples



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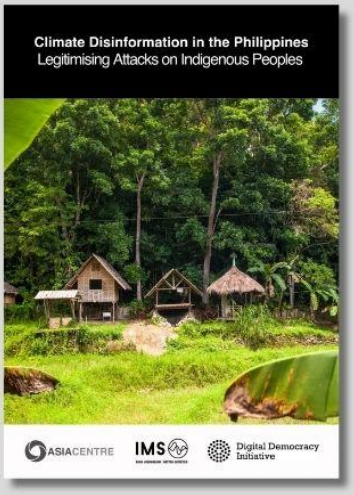
Climate Disinformation in Asia: A Deliberate Strategy Against Indigenous Peoples

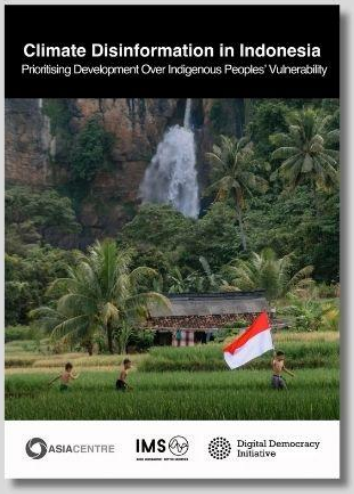
Asia Centre

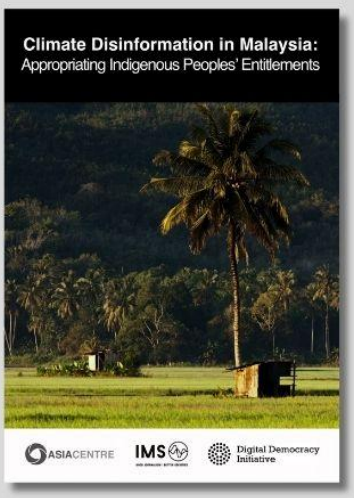
2026

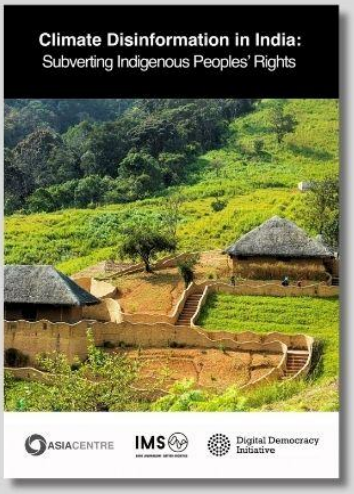
Climate Disinformation and Its Impact on Indigenous Peoples

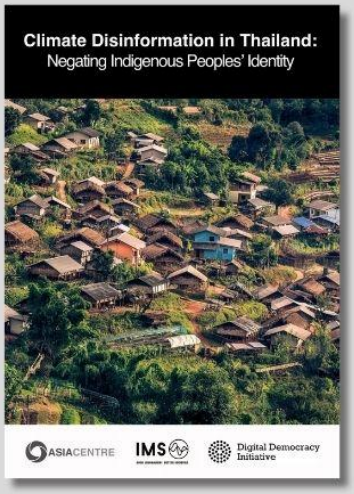
The series “Climate Disinformation and its Impact on Indigenous Peoples”, supported by IMS (International Media Support), examines how climate disinformation marginalises Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and erodes their rights in multiple ways across Cambodia, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.The reports in this series document the reality of the region, shedding light on the challenges Indigenous communities face.

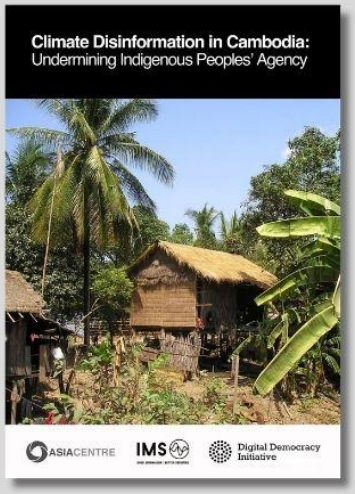












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PREFACE

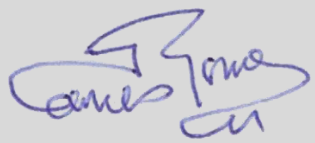
Asia Centre is pleased to present the report ***Climate Disinformation in Asia: A Deliberate Strategy Against Indigenous Peoples***, produced in partnership with International Media Support (IMS). This publication is the culmination of a broader series of country reports assessing the impact of climate disinformation on Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. It also includes a separate assessment of Pakistan undertaken by the Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development.

Going beyond a consolidation of findings from these country reports, this regional report examines the forms of climate disinformation emerging across South and Southeast Asia and their impacts on the socio-cultural practices, livelihoods, rights and safety of IPs. Collectively, the reports confirm that climate disinformation is an increasingly pressing issue in Asia, emerging alongside the broader rise of disinformation. In the context of climate change, disinformation is used to deliberately spread misleading narratives that distort public discourse, undermine evidence-based policymaking and weaken inclusive and effective responses to climate change and deforestation.

The report provides regional-level recommendations for a range of stakeholders, including the international community, governments, international non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, the media, technology companies and IP themselves. These recommendations offer practical pathways to strengthen environmental protection while safeguarding the self-determination of Indigenous communities.

Asia Centre also hopes this report can serve as a toolkit to advance the practice of constructive journalism in Asia in response to the growing challenge of climate disinformation. By equipping journalists with evidence, regional case studies and analytical frameworks, the report seeks to support reporting that scrutinises power, centres Indigenous voices and lived experiences and fosters more informed and democratic conversations on climate governance and environmental justice.

Sincerely,



Dr James Gomez
Regional Director
Asia Centre

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asia is home to two-thirds of the world's Indigenous Peoples (IPs), comprising over 260 million people across more than 2,000 distinct cultures and languages (Errico, 2017). Despite this, however, recognition of IPs and their rights remain contested across South and Southeast Asian countries. IPs in Asia also face acute vulnerability to climate change, with evidence showing that the region is warming nearly twice as fast as the global average, leading to increasingly severe weather events and threatening lives, ecosystems and economic stability (World Meteorological Organisation, 2025) – especially for IPs who are more nature-dependent and therefore more vulnerable to climate change.

This report consolidates and goes beyond the findings from 7 country baseline studies on the intersection between Indigenous Peoples, climate change and disinformation. They include: Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand. All seven reports show that Indigenous communities' vulnerability is exacerbated by the rise of climate disinformation across the region. It reinforces the existing power imbalances between dominant actors, who are mainly states and corporations – sometimes in collusion – to use a false narrative to justify their encroachment on indigenous lands.

This report provides three main contributions in uncovering this dynamic.

First, the report identifies four key forms of climate disinformation in Asia, which, although differing in prominence and manifestation across countries, collectively marginalise Indigenous perspectives and legitimise environmentally harmful policies and projects:

1. One-sided media coverage selectively highlights official narratives of environmental success, national development or conservation achievements while downplaying or omitting ecological destruction and Indigenous rights violations.

2. Greenwashing creates a deceptive "green" image of corporations through sustainability branding, selective reporting and climate-oriented rhetoric despite environmentally and socially harmful business activities.

3. False climate solutions frame unsustainable, ineffective or exploitative programmes as genuine forms of climate action – often promoting projects that prioritise economic or political interests over ecological sustainability and Indigenous rights, while marginalising alternative Indigenous-led approaches to environmental protection.

4. Denying accountability occurs when state and corporate actors reject, minimise or deflect scientific evidence regarding their environmental impact and human rights abuses; and, instead, shift responsibility onto Indigenous communities.

Beyond these four forms, the report also identifies two broader cross-regional dynamics shaping the climate disinformation landscape across South and Southeast Asia.

1. Climate disinformation is increasingly reinforced through cross-border political-economic interests and transnational corporate networks that replicate similar extractive narratives across multiple countries.

2. Digital platform architectures and weak context-sensitive moderation systems amplify anti-Indigenous narratives, conspiracy claims and greenwashing content while marginalising

Indigenous voices and local knowledge systems. In this regard, although still emerging, AI-enabled manipulation represents a growing concern.

Second, the report demonstrates five broad ways, present across the seven country contexts, in which climate disinformation harms IPs, each reinforcing the vested economic, political and ideological interests of state and/or corporate actors at the expense of Indigenous rights. Although these harms manifest differently depending on national political systems, the findings reveal similar mechanisms through which Indigenous exclusion and dispossession are normalised across the region. Therefore, this report positions climate disinformation not only as a communication problem, but as a broader regional governance and rights issue with significant implications for environmental justice, democratic participation and Indigenous self-determination across Asia.

1. Climate disinformation results in tokenistic consultations that create a facade of compliance with environmental and Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC) standards, enabling the state's monopolisation of resources and excluding IPs from the governance of their own ancestral territories.

2. Climate disinformation facilitates the forced displacement of Indigenous communities from ancestral lands by presenting eviction, relocation and land appropriation as necessary, development-oriented and/or beneficial for conservation efforts.

3. Climate disinformation frames misguided "modern" or technocratic approaches as inherently superior to Indigenous knowledge systems, legitimising external interventions that not only fail to deliver their purposes but undermine traditional ecological practices and impair Indigenous ways of life.

4. Climate disinformation portrays IPs and defenders as backwards, environmental threats, opposed to development, and, in some cases, extremists, thereby allowing states to legitimise the criminalisation of IPs and their advocates.

5. Climate disinformation is used to justify a spectrum of harassment and intimidation tactics and physical violence against IPs, leading to impacts that extend beyond physical harm to include fear, social fragmentation and the systematic silencing of Indigenous voices.

Third, to address climate disinformation and safeguard the well-being of IPs, this report outlines a series of actionable recommendations directed at a broad range of stakeholders.

- The United Nations and international human rights mechanisms should strengthen international accountability by integrating climate disinformation into human rights monitoring frameworks, supporting compliance with Indigenous rights standards and ensuring climate governance mechanisms uphold FPIC.

- Governments in the region should legally recognise and protect Indigenous rights, reform climate and environmental governance frameworks and prevent the use of climate narratives to justify dispossession, criminalisation and environmentally harmful projects.

- International non-governmental organisations should support Indigenous-led monitoring, advocacy and protection initiatives while facilitating international scrutiny of climate disinformation and related rights violations.

- Civil society organisations should document and expose climate disinformation, provide legal and digital protection support to Indigenous communities and strengthen cross-sector alliances linking climate justice, media freedom and Indigenous rights.

- The media sector, adopting a constructive journalism approach, should investigate and challenge misleading climate narratives, amplify Indigenous perspectives and experiences, and strengthen accurate, inclusive and rights-based climate reporting.

- Technology companies should address the role of digital platforms and algorithms in amplifying climate disinformation and anti-Indigenous narratives while improving accessibility for Indigenous users.

- Indigenous communities should strengthen community-led monitoring, knowledge preservation, advocacy and media initiatives to defend their rights, challenge disinformation and reinforce self-determination in climate governance.

- Lastly, at the regional level, stronger cross-border coordination is also required to address transnational corporate influence, the diffusion of restrictive laws and disinformation tactics, platform governance failures, and the growing risks posed by AI-enabled climate disinformation across South- and Southeast Asia.

Central to these efforts is the recognition of IPs not merely as vulnerable populations, but as rights holders. There is also a critical need to move beyond siloed national responses towards deeper cross-country and regional cooperation capable of addressing shared disinformation patterns across Asia.

Above all, the report underscores the fact that the region's climate governance must confront the power structures that seek to undermine IPs. Only by protecting Indigenous self-determination, securing land rights and embedding plural knowledge systems can the region move toward climate action that is genuinely inclusive, rights-based and ecologically sustainable.

ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
IP	Indigenous Peoples
SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuit against Public Participation
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

1. Introduction

The use of climate disinformation is a deliberate strategy undertaken by corporations and governments in Asia that reinforces their existing power imbalances vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples (IPs). These imbalances legitimise the economic and political imposition of business activities, laws, policies and so-called climate actions that often disregard Indigenous rights and interests. This report examines this often-overlooked intersection of climate change, disinformation and the marginalisation of IPs to trace the impacts experienced by such communities across the region. This chapter provides background to this issue by outlining the current situation of IPs and the threats posed by climate change. It also offers an overview of the growing challenge of disinformation in Asia.

1.1. Methodology

This report synthesises and further builds on findings from the seven-part baseline study series "Climate Disinformation and its Impact on Indigenous Peoples", which comprises individual country baseline studies on Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand. See Annex 1.

The research underpinning each baseline study was conducted in three phases. First, desk research of primary and secondary sources of information, including laws, policy documents, third-party and news reports. Second, field research (8-12 key informant interviews and 1-2 focus group discussions per country). Third, internal review processes were undertaken amongst the Research Team, while the team also gathered feedback from colleagues at International Media Support.

To extend beyond the findings of the seven baseline studies, this report also incorporates insights from a series of national convenings, training sessions on climate disinformation and reflections gathered during a regional convening held on 20 May 2026 (Asia Centre, 2026) that brought to the surface cross-border dimensions of these issues.

These additional inputs helped to validate, contextualise and deepen the analysis presented in this report.

Key Terms

"False information" can be understood through three interrelated concepts: **misinformation**, **disinformation** and **malinformation**. The key difference between them lies in **falsity** and **intent** to deceive.

Misinformation involves the sharing of false or misleading information without the intent to deceive; those sharing it may genuinely believe the information to be true (United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

Disinformation, in contrast, refers to false information that is intentionally created and spread to mislead or manipulate audiences (Ibid.).

Malinformation, while based on real information, is shared with harmful intent, often by distorting context, exposing private data, or weaponising facts to undermine individuals or groups (Ibid.). Malinformation may also include statements or information disseminated by influential actors (like media and corporate) or public authorities who fail to undertake reasonable fact-checking or good-faith due diligence before making claims, particularly where such communication misleads the public or reinforces false narratives.

Climate disinformation is false content deliberately spread to mislead people about climate change and deforestation for political, financial or ideological gain by those with vested interests in denying its reality or impacts (United Nations Development Programme, 2025). In the context of this report, it encompasses both disinformation and malinformation, emphasising the intent of those producing or disseminating such content. Climate disinformation does not include misinformation, where inaccurate information is shared unintentionally by genuinely misled individuals.

1.2. Background

This section examines two key factors that shape the impact of climate disinformation on IPs in Asia. First, it provides an overview of Indigenous communities. Second, it highlights how climate change and deforestation threaten Indigenous livelihoods.

1.2.1. Indigenous Peoples

Across Southeast and South Asia, Indigenous Peoples constitute a significant and diverse segment of their respective national populations and are distributed across a wide range of geographical settings. See Table 1.

Table 1: Population and Geographical Distribution of IPs

Countries	**Population** *in millions (% of total population)*		**Number of Indigenous Groups**	Geographical Distribution
	Official Estimates	***Unofficial Estimates***		
Cambodia	17 (3%)	0.4	24	Present in 16 provinces, particularly in the forested and mountainous northeast.
India	104 (8.6%)	N/A	730	Distributed across four major Indigenous belts: (1) Central Tribal Belt; (2) Northeastern Belt; (3) Coastal and Island Belt; and (4) Western Himalayan Belt.
Indonesia	N/A	50-70 (18-26%)	1,331	Primarily located in Kalimantan and across the eastern and western island regions.
Malaysia	3.56 (11%)	4.4	70	Distributed across 13 states. The *Orang Asli* reside in Peninsular Malaysia, while *Dayak* communities are concentrated in Sabah and Sarawak.

Countries	Population *in millions (% of total population)*		Number of Indigenous Groups	Geographical Distribution
	Official Estimates	***Unofficial Estimates***		
Pakistan	5 (2%)	N/A	70	Located across diverse ecological zones, including the northern mountains, the rangelands of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Sindh riverine region, desert belts and the Middle Indus basin.
Philippines	17 (25%)	11-21.8 (10-20%)	110	Concentrated in seven regions, including three in the north and four in the south, as well as several island areas.
Thailand	N/A	10 (15%)	60	Concentrated in three main regions: (1) the northern highlands; (2) the Korat Plateau in the northeast; and (3) the south.

Note that the distinction between official and unofficial population estimates is necessary because government statistics often underestimate the size, diversity and geographical distribution of Indigenous communities. These discrepancies stem from methodological limitations in official data collection processes, including state-defined classification criteria that may not adequately reflect the realities of Indigenous identities and settlement patterns. In many cases, such approaches prioritise administrative or political considerations over the principles of self-identification and the information needs of Indigenous communities, resulting in significant underrepresentation of IP populations across the region.

The diversity of geographical areas within which IPs reside reflects the varied livelihoods and cultural practices of Indigenous communities, which are deeply and intrinsically connected to their natural environments. These include forested landscapes (Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact, 2010), mountainous regions (Open Development Cambodia, 2023), coastal areas (Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, 2021) and island territories (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2018). The habitats of IPs shape their subsistence practices, which can include shifting or rotational cultivation (Sada et al., 2019), wet-rice farming (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025), pastoralism, fishing (McDivitt, 2025), hunting and gathering (Ardsmiti & Loekbubpa, 2023) and the collection of non-timber forest products (Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organisation, 2024).[1]

Their habitat also influences the spiritual and cultural traditions of Indigenous communities. Across the region, many IP groups maintain animist beliefs (Adriano & Parks, 2013), spiritual practices and cosmological worldviews that are closely tied to their relationship with the land and natural resources.[2]

[1] The extent to which these practices are followed differ from community to community.

[2] Some Indigenous communities do not strictly adhere to traditional belief systems, often described as animist or spiritualist traditions, and may instead practise major religions such as Buddhism, Islam or Christianity. This religious transformation can occur through processes of syncretism, whereby Indigenous and external religious practices are blended, as well as through gradual cultural assimilation or historical experiences of colonial and state-led religious conversion. Despite these shifts, many Indigenous communities continue to retain elements of their traditional cosmologies, cultural practices and spiritual relationships with the natural environment.

Despite often being classified as minority populations, the large number of Indigenous groups across the region reflects considerable cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. This diversity underscores the need for governance approaches that recognise and include Indigenous communities in decision-making processes. Most of the seven countries examined in this report have ratified major international human rights treaties relevant to the protection of IP rights. See Table 2.

Table 2: Ratification Status of International Treaties Upholding IPs' Rights

Countries	ICERD (1965)	ICCPR (1966)	ICESCR (1967)	CEDAW (1979)	ILO 169 (1991)	UNDRIP (2008)
Cambodia	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Failed	Approved
India	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Failed	Approved
Indonesia	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Failed	Approved
Malaysia	Failed	Failed	Failed	Ratified	Failed	Approved
Pakistan	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Failed	Approved
Philippines	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Failed	Approved
Thailand	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Ratified	Failed	Approved

Nevertheless, significant concerns remain regarding the extent to which these international commitments are reflected in domestic legal and policy frameworks. In particular, the recognition of IPs remains partial, uneven, and frequently inconsistent with international standards. See Table 3:

Table 3: Recognition Status of IPs

Countries	Recognition of IPs	Source/s
Cambodia	Yes	Law on Land (2001)
India	Yes	Article 342, Constitution (1950)
Indonesia	No	Article 18B.2, Constitution (1945) IPs are not recognised as a distinct legal category consistent with international definitions, but labelled as "traditional communities".
Malaysia	Yes	Article 153, Constitution (1957)
Pakistan	No	Article 246, Constitution (1973) IPs are not recognised as a distinct legal category consistent with international definitions, but labelled as "tribal" populations or ethnic and religious minorities.
Philippines	Yes	Article II Section 22, Constitution (1987)
Thailand	No	Article 70, Constitution (2017) and Ethnic Groups Protection and Promotion Act (2025) IPs are not recognised as a distinct legal category consistent with international definitions, but labelled as "ethnic groups".

Prevailing definitions across all seven countries fall short of the international understanding of "Indigenous Peoples" as a distinct legal category. In particular, they do not fully reflect the three-step pathway for implementing Indigenous rights outlined by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: acknowledging historical injustices and fully embracing the human rights-based definition of Indigenous Peoples; (2) harmonising domestic legal frameworks with international standards; and (3) formally identifying and recognising Indigenous communities based on the principle of self-identification.

Countries in the region adopt approaches that dilute or obscure the distinct status of IPs as a minority and historically marginalised population. India and Indonesia apply "Indigeneity" to all their citizens (James, 2022; Antara, 2023), while Malaysia folds in the definition of "Indigeneity" to the categorisation of the majority Malay-Muslims (Ibrahim, 2021). In other countries, IPs' identity is negated and conflated with "ethnic groups" by nationalist narratives that reframe recognition as a "preferential treatment" and a potential national security threat (Wachpanich, 2024). The failure to acknowledge IPs within this rights-based framework significantly constrains states' ability to fulfil their international obligations relating to IPs' rights.

States' shortcomings are regularly reflected in recommendations issued through the Universal Periodic Review process, which have repeatedly criticised all seven countries for the displacement of IPs arising from land conflicts linked to extractive projects. These are compounded by the exclusion of IPs from access to essential services, as well as their marginalisation from national political processes and land concession decision-making. In addition, IP rights defenders continue to face criminalisation and violence, particularly due to a lack of adequate protection of environmental defenders. This is due to scapegoating narratives legitimising attacks on IPs throughout the region, like in the Philippines, where IPs are framed as "terrorists". Finally, a "commitment deficit" persists in their failure to ratify key international instruments like International Labour Organisation Convention 169,[3] which establishes binding standards for the recognition and protection of IPs' rights.

1.2.2. Climate Change

As with global trends, the impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly evident across the seven countries, manifesting through rising temperatures, increasingly erratic rainfall, and more frequent extreme weather events (World Bank, 2021a; World Bank, 2021b) – with countries in the region among the most vulnerable to climate change (Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft, 2025).

Deforestation drives the converging but uneven patterns of climate change, which disproportionately affect IPs due to their close dependence on land and ecosystems. For instance, patterns of increasing droughts and erratic rainfall directly disrupt subsistence farming (Shrestha, 2017). In riverine and watershed regions, IPs are experiencing intensified flooding and riverbank collapse, leading to displacement and the loss of land (UN News, 2023; Mukherjee, 2024). This is further compounded by structural marginalisation and limited access to infrastructure and adaptation support (Hyolmo, 2024). These intersecting pressures leave IP communities among the most vulnerable to climate change despite their minimal contribution to its causes.

All seven countries are parties to the core international climate instruments, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and the Paris Agreement (2016). On paper, these commitments promote mitigation and adaptation through measures such as emissions reduction, energy transition, sustainable land and forest management, and climate resilience. However,

[3] Also referred to as the "Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention", International Labour Organisation Convention 169 remains unratified across the seven countries. The Convention introduces legally-binding provisions focused on IPs' rights, establishing standards of self-determination, cultural preservation, land rights and participation in decisions affecting them.

implementation across the region is constrained by common structural challenges arising from both capacity and funding gaps and (lack of) political willingness, including insufficient climate finance, high transition and technology costs, weak monitoring and data systems and limited institutional capacity (Dixit & O'Connor, 2022). Meanwhile, international commitments remain non-binding. (Hall & Persson, 2018).

All seven nations are held back from fully realising their international obligations due to state-imposed land-use regimes prioritising economic growth, territorial control and extractive development over customary land stewardship. In Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines, forest loss is closely linked to agricultural expansion through economic land concessions, plantation licensing and mining permits (Global Forest Watch, 2025). Although state-led developmentalism is the direct cause of forest loss across all these countries, Indonesia and India frequently employ this principle to obscure how infrastructure expansion, extractive industries and growth-oriented planning frameworks circumvent environmental and social safeguards (Sulistiawati, 2024; Land Conflict Watch, 2024). This results in the selective enforcement of laws, where economic policies are upheld to subvert IPs' rights in India and development is structurally prioritised over IPs' vulnerability in Indonesia. In, for example, Pakistan, the continued reliance on coal and other fossil fuels has been accompanied by the exclusion of IPs' knowledge systems from national climate submissions, despite references to forests and nature-based solutions (Selan, 2024).

Thailand, and to a lesser extent the Philippines, illustrates a different but equally harmful trend, where the language of climate action has been used to justify increased state and military presence in Indigenous territories, including the suppression of dissent against extractive activities (Wongnithisathaporn & Worsdell, 2021).

Collectively, these patterns demonstrate how state land ownership regimes and economic land-use policies continue to undermine Indigenous land rights, transforming forests into sites of extraction while marginalising the communities that have historically stewarded them.

1.3. Digitalisation and the Rise of Disinformation

This section explores the key drivers behind the emergence of climate disinformation across the seven Southeast and South Asian countries. First, it examines how the digitalisation of the media landscape fostered conditions that enable the spread of disinformation. Second, it investigates the underlying causes that further fuel the spread of disinformation, ultimately contributing to the circulation of climate disinformation that negatively impacts IP communities.

1.3.1. Digitalisation of Media

Since the 2010s, the general trend of internet penetration has increased. Countries like Malaysia (98%), Thailand (90%) and the Philippines (84%) have reached near-total saturation (World Bank, 2025), while India (70%), Indonesia (69%) and Cambodia (61%) have seen massive uptake (Ibid.). Others, like Pakistan (57%), are still in the midst of expansion efforts to reach rural and underserved populations (Ibid.).

This trend is similar for social media, where information consumption is shifting towards visual, algorithm-driven platforms, which have largely superseded traditional news outlets. While Facebook remains the region's dominant news gateway, there is an accelerating trend toward short-form video, with TikTok emerging as a key information hub for mobile-first audiences (Ibid.). As for messaging applications, WhatsApp, followed by Facebook Messenger, Telegram and LINE, among others.

Despite the rapid growth of online media consumption, legacy broadcast outlets continue to achieve widespread reach through both traditional (television, print, radio) and digital channels. This broad reach, coupled with the general public's higher trust in these outlets, solidifies their dominant position in mainstream media.

As an alternative that counters the limitations of mainstream media, digitalised media has created meaningful but uneven opportunities for IPs to assert visibility, challenge dominant narratives and mobilise around land, climate and environmental justice in all seven countries. Social media platforms, digital journalism initiatives and community-led tools have enabled IP activists and organisations to expose rights violations (Khan & Manzoor, 2024), document deforestation, coordinate campaigns and reach national and international audiences (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2024). Youth-led movements, Indigenous-run outlets, citizen journalism platforms and culturally rooted storytelling have been particularly effective in amplifying IP perspectives (Catoy, 2020).

However, these gains are severely constrained by structural hindrances. Persistent digital divides – driven by weak rural infrastructure, unreliable connectivity, low smartphone ownership, limited digital and media literacy and linguistic marginalisation – exclude many IP communities from sustained participation online (Seoung, 2023). The dominance of majority and colonial languages in digital spaces further sidelines Indigenous-language content, while resource-poor Indigenous media struggle to achieve reach and impact (Sindakis & Showkat, 2024).

1.3.2. The Rise of Disinformation

The swift digitalisation of media in South and Southeast Asia has simultaneously fueled a sharp increase in disinformation. For instance, the Thai government identified over 74,892 false messages between 2019 and 2025 (Thai PBS, 2025). Additionally, in South Asian countries like India, online disinformation is surging with recorded cases of false news and rumours increasing by 26.7%, from 858 in 2022 to 1,087 in 2023 (News Laundry, 2025).

This disinformation is frequently political, intensifying during sensitive times such as elections or when focused on topics like Indigenous rights and climate change. Such narratives have been traditionally disseminated primarily through offline channels, including television, radio, print media, but also direct, face-to-face engagement with the population, such as Indigenous communities. In many instances, IPs have been presented with misleading information or promises of development, compensation and livelihood opportunities that are subsequently unfulfilled, often to secure consent for projects affecting their lands and resources.

In its contemporary form, the spread of disinformation has been further amplified by digital platforms. Coordinated networks, bots, and algorithmic systems enable misleading narratives to circulate rapidly, heighten social polarisation, and lend legitimacy to false or unsubstantiated claims (Pusat KOMAS, 2025). Malicious, deliberate actors spread what is termed disinformation, which the public often consumes and further shares without proper fact-checking, transforming it largely into misinformation. The media's role is complex: they may unknowingly spread this false information, or they might be complicit by either failing to fact-check due to neglect or knowingly adding corporate disinformation, whether paid as PR/advertisements or unpaid.

Despite differing political contexts, all seven countries exhibit similar patterns: high public exposure to false content, growing Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven campaigns and disinformation functioning as a deliberate strategic tool rather than an incidental byproduct of digital media. In response, state-led efforts have emerged to combat disinformation. However, these efforts share three key characteristics:

a securitised, image-protection approach framing disinformation as a threat to national stability; a technocratic takedown-centric model with vague content standards enabling overreach.

Independent fact-checking initiatives serve as critical counterweights to state-aligned initiatives. However, their effectiveness is constrained: restricted resources and donor fatigue, algorithmic suppression of fact-checks, sporadic and risk-averse engagement with sensitive issues and reduced platform support from companies like X and Facebook (Baizas, 2022; Freedom House, 2024; Associated Press, 2025). Restricted media freedom further weakens independent fact-checking and accountability. Vaguely worded criminal and internet laws are used to surveil and securitise information, suppress critical reporting (Cultural Survival et al., 2023). Media outlets, environmental activists and Indigenous land defenders also face restrictive registration, identification, legal status and tax regimes that are routinely abused (Amnesty International, 2024). Extra-legal practices foster pervasive self-censorship. With a lack of regional initiatives, these dynamics continue to marginalise Indigenous perspectives, entrench state- and corporate-aligned narratives and allow disinformation to circulate with minimal resistance.

In this environment, the role of constructive journalism becomes increasingly important.[4] Investigative and community-based reporting can cut through disinformation, amplify Indigenous voices and lived experiences and provide evidence-based accounts of the social and environmental impacts of climate and development projects. This report seeks to contribute to these efforts by strengthening public understanding of climate disinformation and its impacts on IPs in Asia. Chapter 2 defines the key forms of climate disinformation within the regional media landscape and examines how they operate across different contexts. Chapter 3 analyses the various impacts of climate disinformation on IPs across the region, including its effects on rights, livelihoods, culture and safety. Finally, Chapter 4 presents recommendations for the media sector and other stakeholders to counter climate disinformation and promote Indigenous rights and climate justice.

[4] Constructive journalism refers to a journalistic approach that contributes to democratic dialogue by providing a fuller and more accurate picture of society through rigorous scrutiny of problems, the inclusion of diverse perspectives and evidence-based examination of responses and potential solutions. In the context of climate disinformation affecting IPs, constructive journalism can help expose harmful narratives, centre Indigenous voices and experiences and foster informed public debate on more just and sustainable pathways forward.

2. Forms of Climate Disinformation

This chapter examines the four key forms of climate disinformation that emerged consistently across the information landscape in Asia: one-sided media coverage, greenwashing, false climate solutions and the denial of accountability for contributing to climate change. The first three forms are primarily manifestations of "climate delayism", which uses malinformation as a basis to manipulate facts and contexts to disseminate false information.[5] The fourth reflects the use of disinformation to spread "climate denialism" by obscuring or rejecting the existence of climate change and responsibility for environmental harm.[6]

2.1. One-sided Media Coverage

The first form of climate disinformation is one-sided media coverage, which falls under climate delayism. This skewed coverage of environmental issues consists of malinformation, as it selectively highlights official narratives of environmental success while ignoring ecological harm, the displacement of IPs and failures in accountability. Consequently, media systems prioritise state sources and positive statistics over independent verification, marginalising community and Indigenous voices. This section discusses two main forms of one-sided media coverage.

One, it takes the form of reproducing state climate commitments and corporate sustainability claims through celebratory headlines and insufficiently scrutinised reporting that projects an illusion of environmental progress. Rather than undertaking rigorous due diligence, independent verification, or engagement with affected communities, such coverage frequently privileges official narratives and selective statistics while omitting evidence of deforestation, forced evictions, and violations of IPs' land rights linked to state- and corporate-aligned climate mitigation projects. For instance, in Cambodia, skewed coverage with headlines like *"Cambodia unveils $2 bil plan to tackle climate change"* (Khmer Times) (Sokhean, 2024) persists within a media environment that limits journalists' capacity for critical climate reporting. In India, celebratory coverage of the India State of Forest Reports' claims hides criticism that plantation expansion is conflated with natural forests (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2024). In the Philippines and in other countries, media coverage also focuses on presenting environmentally harmful mining projects as receiving consent from the communities affected, while ignoring the fact that such consent may be tokenistic and coercive. An example is the Makilala Mining Company project, where the company (Celsius Resources, 2024) and media (De La Cruz, 2025) claims of consent were disputed by community members who reported intimidation and the use of misleading imagery to fabricate consent. In Thailand, government claims on reforestation are frequently reproduced while ignoring parallel commercial expansion in protected forest areas, such as the revocation of reserve forest status in Saraburi Province for mining concessions and proposals to degazette over 104,000 acres of Thap Lan National Park (Bangkok Post, 2024).

Two, one-sided media coverage also includes deploying an appeal to well-being, framing extractive projects as indispensable for national economic growth, development, and the livelihoods of the majority non-IP communities, while marginalising or excluding Indigenous perspectives from public discourse. These narratives justify deforestation, emissions and biodiversity loss, while omitting or

[5] Climate delayism refers to information that misleads the public and hinders the implementation of effective climate action (Lamb et al., 2020), rather opting towards small-scaled and surface-level solutions and "delays" climate action.

[6] Climate denialism is the rejection of information concerning the existence, source, victims, perpetrators, impacts and/or the solution to address climate change (Sethi, 2024).

minimising the destructive impacts on IPs' livelihoods and survival, who are instead recast as either beneficiaries of development or obstacles to progress. In Indonesia, media coverage that aligns with state-led developmentalism depicts Indigenous land stewardship as inefficient or backward to legitimise extractive projects as essential for national welfare. For instance, government-friendly outlet Antara frames palm oil expansion in West Papua as supporting economic development and energy transition through headlines such as "*Bolstering palm oil industry to speed up energy transition*" (2024), with more sustainable Indigenous intercropping practices being portrayed as underproductive and their territories as "unused". In Malaysia, media narratives weaponise misconceptions of Orang Asli poverty to legitimise development as a moral necessity, with The Star quoting state officials claiming that "the only way for [the *Orang Asli*] to have a better life is to change their attitude and lifestyle" to portray environmental destruction as an acceptable trade-off for improved living standards (Jamal & Manan, 2016).

In conclusion, one-sided media coverage uncritically spreads official government narratives, justifying environmental and human rights violations as "necessary" or omitting them altogether. This functions by simultaneously enhancing government- or corporate-led projects and undermining Indigenous communities' stewardship.

2.2. Greenwashing

The second form of climate disinformation is greenwashing, which combines disinformation and malinformation because it involves the deliberate use of misleading claims to portray organisations and their products as environmentally friendly, thereby obscuring harmful practices and shifting focus away from large-scale ecological damage. It falls under climate delayism, as corporate actors aim to preserve their public image and safeguard economic gains by constructing these "green" facades, while postponing the urgent, systemic changes required for climate mitigation. This section discusses the two most prominent forms of greenwashing in the region.

One, engaging in promotional campaigns and partnerships to present an "environmentally responsible" image, while masking the environmental and human rights impacts of extractive and industrial operations. In Cambodia, Think Biotech projects a "champion" image of sustainable forestry through government-friendly media, masking how its legal concessions encroach upon the Prey Lang sanctuary, causing extensive forest loss within the area. Similarly, Indonesia's Royal Golden Eagle Group pledged to a "zero deforestation" policy, while its undisclosed network of subsidiaries and affiliates continues to drive large-scale deforestation across the nation. Malaysia's state-owned PETRONAS promotes a net-zero 2050 target but deliberately excludes "Scope 3" (indirect up- and downstream) emissions that constitute over 70% of its total fossil fuel impact. The Philippines' Shell Pilipinas instead employs influencer partnerships to promote its carbon-offset rewards programme, despite its affiliation with Royal Dutch Shell, the seventh company worldwide for carbon emissions since 1965 (Taylor & Watts, 2019). In Thailand, Nestlé's "Water Saves Water" project receives significant media attention for local biodiversity improvements through headlines such as "*Nestlé revitalises Khlong Khanom Jeen in 10 years, from polluted water to a national OECM ecosystem model*" (Bangkok Biz News, 2025), even as the company continues the excessive extraction of water in water-scarce regions.

Two, corporations rely on state-backed certification schemes like Indonesia's Sustainable Palm Oil Certification and the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil and Timber Certification Scheme to provide a veneer of legitimacy to monoculture plantations, despite data showing these industries convert millions of hectares of forest reserves (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2008). For instance, headlines such as The

Star's "*MSPO 2.0 reinforces Malaysia's leadership in sustainable palm oil production*" (2025) contribute to greenwashing by reinforcing Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil Certification's "sustainability" claims. Presenting these certifications as evidence of environmental responsibility legitimises companies' portrayal of palm oil production as sustainable, despite evidence showing how these plantations threaten ecosystems' biodiversity and enable IPs' dispossession.

In conclusion, greenwashing narratives widen the gap between corporate rhetoric and meaningful environmental efforts. Shielding extractive industries from the consequences of their unsustainable practices, these tactics enable companies to maintain a "green" facade, ensuring continued profitability at the expense of genuine climate progress. Ultimately, this misrepresentation of effectiveness creates a false impression of progress.

2.3. False Climate Solutions

The third form of climate disinformation is the promotion of false climate solutions, a rhetorical strategy that distorts the reality of climate change to legitimise unsustainable or ineffective climate solutions that obstruct meaningful action, thus falling under climate delayism. This approach functions through a mixture of disinformation and malinformation. This section explores two main narratives: those related to carbon offset afforestration and those related to so-called "clean" and "green" energy.

One, carbon offset programmes, especially those in the afforestation sector. The most notable mechanism in this regard is carbon offsetting via REDD+,[7] promoted as a primary tool for forest conservation but plagued by concerns around "phantom credits" and "overcrediting" that allow corporations to exaggerate emission cuts. India's Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority and the Green Credit Programme have been criticised for enabling corporations to offset environmental damage through monoculture plantations of teak and eucalyptus. These plantations often fail to replicate native biodiversity and have been shown to deplete groundwater reserves, worsening local droughts (Global Forest Coalition, 2022). In Indonesia, the Katingan Mentaya Project has been criticised for claiming carbon credits three times higher than the actual absorption capacity, potentially discrediting the integrity of global net-zero targets (Kanematsu & Ishibashi, 2021). In Malaysia, the national REDD+ programme is marketed as a success despite evidence that modest carbon profits cannot compete with the expansion of timber and oil palm plantations. The Philippines' REDD+ efforts in General Nakar have seen forest cover decline from 72% to 57% between 2016 and 2022 (Israel et al., 2024). Pakistan similarly oversimplifies complex climate challenges by promoting a single symbolic action like reforestation, with posts highlighting the "10 billion Tree Tsunami" as legit climate resilience.

Two, rhetoric related to "clean" and "green" energy. In Cambodia, the Lower Sesan II hydropower dam is touted as a "bright future" for relocated villagers (2021) even though it resulted in a significant decline in fish biomass and displaced 5,000 people (Harris et al., 2015). Malaysia's Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy dams are estimated to cause the loss of 2,425 km^2 of rainforest, leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions and the displacement of roughly 10,000 IPs (The Borneo Project, n.d.). In the Philippines, the continued support of liquified natural gas is largely attributed to a conflict of interests caused by business ties between a number of politicians and the fossil fuel industry (Davey, 2024). Similarly, in Thailand, claims that portray natural gas as a "cleaner, more responsible" alternative to coal are reported by mainstream media and disguised as genuine media coverage, while in actuality being sponsored by fossil fuel companies (Bove, 2020).

[7] Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries

In conclusion, false climate solutions function as a form of disinformation that distorts the reality of climate change and climate action to manufacture a facade of environmental progress. Ultimately, this distortion not only misleads the public but legitimises ecological harm and human rights violations while delaying the urgent structural actions required to address the global climate crisis.

2.4. Denying Accountability

The fourth form of climate disinformation consists of the evasion of accountability by perpetrators of climate change, who negate scientific evidence and victims' testimonies by deliberately disseminating false information. As a form of climate denialism, the denial of accountability operates by manufacturing doubt, rejecting the links between their activities and climate harm, and recasting the blame onto marginalised groups. These can be seen in three major ways.

One, governments and corporations deflect accountability for contributing to climate change by rejecting scientific evidence that highlights environmental degradation, claiming that climate change is not an issue or downplaying its seriousness. The Cambodian government refuted reports of deforestation in the Cardamom Mountains and Mekong Lowlands, utilising the Khmer Times (Kongkea, 2024) to dismiss the decline in forest cover and claim that "there is no downside of forest cover in Cambodia". This parallels India's Environment Minister, Prakash Javadekar, who made a controversial statement on glacier stability, thereby disputing documented evidence of glaciologists on the alarming acceleration of its melting process (Times of India, 2015). In Indonesia, reported data differ between governmental agencies, corporate actors and civil society due to methodology variances. For instance, in Wawonii Island, corporate claims of water restoration following nickel mining clash directly with reports from IPs of environmental pollution and land grabbing (Mulya et al., 2024).

Two, governments acknowledge climate change and deforestation, but they either deny their active contribution to the issue or backtrack on their previous climate commitments, avoiding accountability for the lack of effective climate action. Malaysia attributes the effects of deforestation to climate change, with the Pahang forestry department denying criticism that massive wood debris in the Telemong area was linked to illegal logging (Free Malaysia Today, 2022). They claimed to have traced the debris to landslides in hilly areas via an aerial survey despite lacking inspection transparency. In the Philippines, the Duterte and Marcos Jr. administrations employ "double-speak" to deny previous and unfulfilled environmental commitments (Greenpeace, 2022). For instance, despite a nine-year moratorium on new mining permits, in 2020, Duterte backtracked on the ecological commitments by authorising 291 pending applications and opening vast areas of ancestral lands to extractive projects (Chavez, 2021).

Three, governments and corporations across the region deflect accountability for climate change by scapegoating civil society and marginalised groups. In particular, in Indonesia, climate conspiracy theories supported by President Prabowo frame climate activism as a foreign-funded scheme seeking to hamper Indonesia's economic growth (Jong, 2025). Similarly, conspiracy theories in Pakistan reframe climate disasters as foreign sabotage or geoengineering orchestrated by malevolent actors that "import hysteria", and instead, dismiss certain climate change events as part of "natural weather cycles" or "an act of God". In the Philippines, resistance to environmental destruction on Indigenous territories is presented as "terrorists", enabling the state and corporations to dismiss the opposition's rightful claims and deflect accountability for environmental damage (Cariño, 2022). In Thailand, the state and corporations minimise their own contribution by blaming IPs' traditional practices for environmental

degradation. Notably, wildfires and air pollution are deceitfully attributed to swidden agriculture, while ignoring the root causes of pollution from industrial-scale agriculture (Besst, 2023).

Altogether, these narratives protect highly extractive industries from public scrutiny, thereby concealing the entities truly responsible for environmental destruction. This deflection of accountability allows unsustainable land-use practices and Indigenous rights violations to persist. Furthermore, by casting doubt on scientific findings, these actors undermine public awareness of the urgency for effective climate action. A critical consequence of these strategies is the deepening of vulnerabilities for the most climate-sensitive populations, particularly by sidelining the invaluable forest-management expertise of IPs, which is essential for effective climate change mitigation.

Cross-border Dynamics of Climate Disinformation

Beyond the country-specific manifestations, the seven reports reveal broader regional dynamics that structure the production, amplification and evolution of climate disinformation across Asia. Two interconnected cross-regional trends are particularly evident: first, the convergence of state-led narratives and transnational extractive networks; and second, the enabling role of digital platform architectures and moderation failures, including against the rising concern of AI-enabled manipulation; and third, the emergence of AI-enabled manipulation as a force multiplier for climate disinformation.

First, at the regional level, the seven reports collectively show that climate disinformation is driven not simply by isolated domestic dynamics, but by shared political-economic models and transnational networks operating across South- and Southeast Asia. As the cases across Chapter 2 have shown, across the region, governments consistently frame hydropower expansion, mining, monoculture plantations, carbon markets and large-scale infrastructure projects as national climate or development imperatives, while sidelining Indigenous land rights and environmental concerns.

This also occurs in cross-country economic arrangements. For instance, Thailand's long-term electricity purchase agreements and investment relationships tied to Mekong hydropower projects with countries like Laos (Prachatai, 2025), as well as possible deals with Cambodia (Reuters, 2024), are repeatedly framed as supporting regional clean energy transition and development cooperation, despite widespread criticism regarding ecological degradation, fisheries collapse and the disruption of riverine and Indigenous livelihoods (Roikaew & Lamun, 2025; Sangarasri Greacen and Sohsai, 2026).

In several cases, similar patterns of climate disinformation emerge across multiple countries because major transnational corporations, their subsidiaries and affiliated business networks operate under the same corporate umbrella across the region. For instance, the Royal Golden Eagle Group, through subsidiaries operating in Indonesia and Malaysia, faced repeated allegations of deforestation, peatland destruction, land conflicts and Indigenous dispossession despite simultaneously promoting zero-deforestation and sustainability commitments. These overlapping regional operations allow similar narratives of "sustainable development" and "green growth" to be replicated across borders, contributing to the regionalisation of climate disinformation and environmental harm (Greenpeace International, 2025). A similar dynamic can be observed in the rapid expansion of Singapore-linked data centre investments in Johor, driven by Singapore's strategy of relocating resource-intensive digital infrastructure (Bernama, 2026). Supported by both governments through initiatives such as the Johor–Singapore Special Economic Zone, data centres are frequently promoted as engines of sustainable growth and digital transformation (Antara, 2026). However, these narratives often overlook the sector's substantial demands on water, electricity and

land resources. Concerns have emerged regarding increasing pressure on local infrastructure, environmental sustainability and competition over resource allocation. These impacts have increasingly and disproportionately affected Orang Asli communities, whose livelihoods and cultural practices remain closely tied to local ecosystems and access to customary lands.

Second, the emergence of climate disinformation also demonstrates that digital platform architectures and moderation failures are not secondary issues but central enabling conditions for the spread of anti-IP climate disinformation. Across multiple country cases, algorithmic systems on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and WhatsApp consistently privilege emotionally charged, sensationalist and polarising content, allowing conspiracy narratives, anti-activist messaging and state-aligned propaganda to circulate more rapidly than verified scientific or community-based information (Indigenous Media News, 2026).

In Cambodia (Chheng, 2025), Malaysia (Mahmood, 2026) and Pakistan (Ejaz et al, 2021), viral disinformation surrounding climate disasters and environmental governance spread rapidly through highly networked social media ecosystems with weak moderation capacity. Similar moderation gaps appear in India (Dhruv Madan, 2022) and Thailand (Jitkaroon, 2025), where coordinated online networks and pro-government "cybertrooper" ecosystems amplify state-aligned greenwashing narratives while harassing critics and environmental defenders. In the Philippines, Meta has faced sustained criticism for failing to remove "red-tagging" content that falsely labels Indigenous activists and environmental defenders as insurgents or terrorists, contributing to offline threats and violence (Silva, 2024). This is similarly the case for Indonesia (Amnesty International, 2026). These asymmetries are particularly pronounced because state and corporate actors possess significantly greater resources, institutional legitimacy and coordinated amplification capacities than Indigenous communities contesting environmentally destructive projects.

The emergence of AI-enabled manipulation represents another concern in this regard. While existing evidence does not yet indicate a coordinated effort to deploy generative AI specifically to disseminate anti-Indigenous climate disinformation, AI-generated content is increasingly being used to produce sensationalist and misleading climate narratives. In Pakistan, for example, during the 2025 floods, AI-generated videos showed the Indian release of dam water into Pakistan (Dawn, 2025). Although based on the findings of the seven country reports, these narratives do not yet appear to systematically target IPs, the growing accessibility, speed and scale of AI-generated content raise significant concerns. As generative AI tools become more sophisticated and widely adopted, they may further intensify existing information asymmetries and provide state and corporate actors with new means of shaping climate narratives at scale.

Chapter 2 has outlined the various manifestations of climate disinformation. These forms illustrate how climate narratives across the seven nations are frequently manipulated through the deliberate spread of disinformation or the selective sharing of malinformation to prioritise state and corporate agendas through trusted mainstream media outlets. The subsequent chapter will detail the wide-ranging consequences of climate disinformation, showing how it entrenches the systemic marginalisation of IPs and deepens the power imbalance between them and dominant actors.

3. Impact on Indigenous Peoples

This chapter examines five interconnected impacts of climate disinformation on IPs that emerged across the seven reports covering South and Southeast Asia: exclusion from decision-making, the impairment of IPs' traditional ways of life, forced displacement from ancestral lands, criminalisation, and lastly, intimidation and physical violence. These impacts show how the use of climate disinformation is a deliberate strategy that reinforces existing power structures and ultimately results in the subversion of IP rights.

3.1. Exclusion of IPs from Decision-making

The first impact of climate disinformation on IPs is their systematic exclusion from critical decision-making processes, particularly regarding initiatives affecting ancestral lands. This exclusion directly violates the fundamental right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)[8] by denying them access to information that is thorough, precise and prior to their operations. By keeping IPs uninformed, state and corporate actors gain leverage in decision-making in land use, thereby enabling them to prioritise their interests over the needs of these communities. This section discusses two ways that such exclusion occurs.

One, IPs are consistently marginalised from genuine decision-making concerning development projects that impact their ancestral lands, with their input often disregarded through biased narratives. Indonesia excludes IPs by replacing their local institutions with state-led ones, driven by narratives that frame state land use as more efficient. This, for instance, is codified in Article 37 of the Nusantara Capital City Law (2022), which mentions participation but fails to formalise any designated role for IPs, effectively erasing them from the legal governance of the new capital city area. India demonstrates a similar trend of subverting FPIC through the rapid environmental clearance of the Great Nicobar Island mega-infrastructure project. One-sided narratives of "strategic necessity" have obscured direct violations of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (1996), with the government failing to establish mandatory benefit-sharing mechanisms with the *Nicobarese* and *Shompen* peoples (Sheksaria, 2025). In Malaysia, consultations often occur only after operations commence, with companies like Samling using greenwashing tactics via a Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme certification to legitimise logging (Wong, 2020). These entities frequently replace meaningful dialogue with "seminars" that community leaders have criticised as non-interactive facades (Al Jazeera, 2021). In the Philippines, climate disinformation is used to justify the militarisation of ancestral lands for "national development". This was evident in the Jalaur River Multi-Purpose Project Stage II in the Visayas and Mindanao regions, where *Tumandok* communities opposed the use of bribery and coercion to bypass FPIC, leading to the displacement of over 17,000 individuals (Alenciaga, 2016). In Thailand, for instance, a dolomite mining project in Kaeng Krachan province remains operational despite persistent claims that consultations with IPs residing near the mine were non-transparent and failed to address community fears of environmental damage (Bangkok Post, 2021). Communities' concerns are frequently dismissed via narratives that frame them as obstacles to national progress (Yongcharoenchai, 2020).

[8] This refers to the principle that ensures IPs have the right to give or withhold consent to projects or activities that may affect their lands, territories or resources, guaranteed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Two, the exclusion of Indigenous voices extends into climate mitigation strategies, where disinformation is weaponised to facilitate "green" land grabs. Across the board, low digital literacy and limited internet access prevent IPs from actively participating in national climate discussions. While this isolation limits their exposure to some online disinformation, their reliance on local community meetings – where, in many instances, they are organised by authorities or corporates – often results in a narrow and deliberately incorrect information scope. In Malaysia, Indigenous communities are selectively excluded from climate action, including those reclaiming ancestral residences as forest reserves without their FPIC. Amid state-led media-covered projects like the carbon credit project by Enggang (Pekan) Sdn. Bhd., there have been documented cases where communities are withheld crucial details (Centre for Orang Asli Concerns, 2025). IPs in Pakistan are similarly largely absent from national and provincial climate policies, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's policy neglecting pastoral livelihoods and Indigenous land-use systems (Khan, 2025). This frequent oversight leads to the neglect of IPs' rights to FPIC. Thailand mirrors this approach in its carbon credit initiatives, which are often marketed as "partnerships" but function as top-down mandates. *Karen* communities have specifically highlighted opaque communication regarding land leases and benefits, noting that disinformation is used to frame restrictive land-use policies as "environmental stewardship" while stripping them of their agricultural rights (Redvers et al., 2025).

In conclusion, climate disinformation justifies the monopolisation of resources by creating a facade of environmental and FPIC compliance through tokenistic consultations. This systemic failure ignores their right to be involved in activities that affect their land and ways of life. This has led to their inability to protest against projects and initiatives that have a direct impact on their livelihoods, as will be discussed in the following sections.

3.2. The Impairment of IPs' Traditional Ways of Life

The second impact of climate disinformation is its role in undermining IPs' traditional ways of life by legitimising external interventions that restrict Indigenous socio-economic practices and erode livelihoods. The reports in this series show that across South and Southeast Asia, climate disinformation is used to create narratives that portray state-led, technocratic, and supposedly "modern" approaches as inherently superior to Indigenous knowledge systems and practices. Such narratives contribute to the erosion of resilient Indigenous traditions and increase the vulnerability of Indigenous communities. This section examines two major ways in which climate disinformation achieves this.

One, climate disinformation portrays government-led initiatives as more advanced than Indigenous practices to legitimise top-down interventions that disregard ecological and social realities that Indigenous communities have managed sustainably. In India, authorities displaced the Mishing community's flood-resilient bao rice varieties in favour of hybrid monocultures promoted as "climate-smart" (Ghosh, 2018). During the 2017 Brahmaputra floods, hybrid crops suffered yield losses of 60–70%, while bao rice sustained relatively limited damage. The resulting crop failures had direct economic consequences for the Mishing community (Lotha et al., 2024). In Indonesia, climate disinformation contributed to the forced abandonment of swidden agriculture and *sasi*,[9] falsely blamed for deforestation and portrayed as obstacles to "national development" (Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy, 2017). In Malaysia, state-led land development projects have resulted in the clearing of Orang Asli territories and natural ecosystems, disrupting traditional practices. For example, rubber

[9] Sasi is a customary institution that administers land and water resources (WWF, 2019). It alternates periods of harvest and rest, and determines fishing limits according to natural resources regeneration and breeding patterns (Az-Zahra & Guntur, 2025).

plantation projects in the state of Perak experienced repeated crop losses when elephants and wild boars destroyed plantations following disruptions to established wildlife movement patterns (Ramli et al., 2025). In Pakistan, Indigenous knowledge related to soil management and riverbank cultivation has historically enabled communities to adapt to environmental change. However, online narratives increasingly portray these practices as outdated and unscientific, leading some Indigenous youth to disregard traditional knowledge and misjudge local flood risks.

Two, climate disinformation undermines Indigenous ways of life by obscuring the structural causes of climate vulnerability and shifting responsibility onto Indigenous communities themselves. In doing so, they legitimise interventions that disrupt Indigenous livelihoods, settlement patterns and traditional coping mechanisms. In India, narratives that attribute disasters solely to climate change similarly obscure governance failures that heighten Indigenous vulnerability. Restrictions on logging have limited access to bamboo, a critical resource for IPs to construct climate-resilient housing in their traditional land (Guha, 2021). At the same time, embankment projects are promoted as superior adaptation measures, even though they often disrupt local ecosystems, weaken traditional livelihood systems, and increase dependence on external support (Ibid.). In Malaysia, *Orang Asli* communities, forced to move locations following land clearing for development projects, experience disproportionately poor health outcomes from inadequate access to clean water, sanitation and healthcare services. However, these conditions are frequently absent from national statistics, while public narratives often attribute poor health outcomes to their supposedly "backward" lifestyles that are maladaptive to "modern" socio-economic practices. This was evident following a death and leprosy outbreak in *Chergun* and *Guntur* villages in Negeri Sembilan state in 2025, where conflicting official accounts obscured infrastructure deficiencies and reinforced negative stereotypes (Sipalan, 2025). In Pakistan, ineffective and inconsistent climate communication has undermined Indigenous communities' ability to respond to environmental risks. During the 2025 Buner floods, poor data verification and weak interagency coordination produced conflicting official death tolls ranging from 79 to 162 fatalities. Such information failures delayed protective action and reduced communities' capacity to draw on local knowledge and preparedness practices to mitigate flood impacts.

Collectively, by portraying Indigenous practices, livelihoods and knowledge systems as inefficient, obsolete or incompatible with development, such narratives legitimise extractive models of growth and weaken long-term climate resilience.

3.3. Forced Displacement from Ancestral Lands

The third impact of climate disinformation is the forced displacement of Indigenous Peoples. Forced displacement refers to the non-consensual removal of individuals or communities from their homes, territories, or places of economic activity through direct actions (such as evictions) or indirect pressures, without adequate legal safeguards, meaningful consultation, or access to alternative housing that respects their cultural traditions and livelihoods. For IPs, forced displacement occurs through land grabbing and the transfer of community-owned ancestral lands to state or corporate control. This section outlines several ways in which climate disinformation is used to enable and justify forced displacement.

One, across the region, climate disinformation enables and justifies the weak and/or non-existent legal land protections. By portraying state-led development and conservation initiatives as necessary for environmental protection or climate action, these narratives obscure Indigenous stewardship practices and justify restrictions on Indigenous access to land and livelihoods. In India, conservation policies have

similarly been used to restrict Indigenous access to land while failing to fulfil rehabilitation obligations. The *Van Gujjar* community near Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand state remains dispossessed despite a 2021 High Court order mandating land allocation and compensation, with public narratives often prioritising wildlife protection over Indigenous stewardship and land rights (Chettri & Broome, 2023). In Malaysia, in 2025, the Pahang Orang Asli Corporation and Department of Orang Asli Development (a government agency) were accused of encroaching on customary lands and imposing additional licensing requirements on Orang Asli palm oil smallholders in Pahang (Centre for Orang Asli Concerns, 2025). Since community members reported being pressured to pay new "tapping rights" fees, this illustrates how bureaucratic mechanisms framed as development initiatives are being used to undermine Indigenous economic autonomy and control over customary resources. In Pakistan, climate disinformation trivialises impacts, denying affected communities recognition and support, which worsens psychological distress. For instance, prolonged droughts and floods in Balochistan have devastated grazing lands, forcing Indigenous families to migrate to peri-urban areas and lose their livelihoods and cultural identity.

Two, climate disinformation provides moral and political justification for displacement by delaying or invalidating Indigenous land claims under the guise of environmental protection. For one, land may be declared a "protected" area, barring the presence of Indigenous communities in a meaningful capacity. In Cambodia, 39% of the country's landmass has been designated as protected areas, overlapping with at least 24 sites under Communal Land Titling applications (Cambodia Centre for Human Rights et al., 2023; Brook, 2024). Similarly, the Thai government, through the National Park Act (2019), has declared many "national parks" over ancestral lands (Kuaycharoen, 2021). In this regard, climate disinformation is used frequently to frame Indigenous presence as environmentally harmful, recasting long-standing stewardship as illegal encroachment. In Thailand, the 2024 "Save Thap Lan" online campaign falsely claimed that proposals to adjust park boundaries threatened pristine forests, despite the land comprising established communities and farmland (Prachartai News, 2025). In both contexts, climate protection is mobilised as a moral imperative to erase Indigenous histories and legitimise state-controlled land management.

This is made more concerning as land recognition processes may be deliberately complicated and slow. In India, restrictive evidentiary standards and narrow interpretations of eligibility under forest laws exclude many Indigenous communities. This trend was further reinforced by the Forest Conservation Rules (2022) that removed mandatory Gram Sabha consent for forest land diversion. Similar gaps persist in Indonesia, where a 2013 Constitutional Court ruling recognising Indigenous forests remains largely unenforced due to complex recognition procedures (The Tenure Facility, 2025). In Malaysia, even officially recognised communities remain vulnerable when land has not been gazetted as Orang Asli Reserves, as state land offices have used this uncertainty to reallocate territory for "development". In the Philippines, the lengthy process of obtaining a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title leaves many Indigenous lands classified as public domain under the Regalian Doctrine,[10] enabling eviction for extractive and infrastructure projects.

All in all, climate disinformation is used to justify forced evictions, presenting displacement as environmentally necessary. This allows states to seize land and resources, violating Indigenous rights and undermining Indigenous stewardship, which is more effective for biodiversity protection than state or corporate efforts.

[10] The Regalian Doctrine (Jura Regalia) is a legal concept where the State is the ultimate owner of all lands and natural resources that are not otherwise held by private title.

3.4. Criminalisation

The fourth impact of climate disinformation is enabling the criminalisation of IPs. Across the region, misleading narratives are being used to frame IPs as criminals and these distortions legitimise the misuse of a mixture of legal, financial and security mechanisms to suppress Indigenous resistance, protect extractive and conservation-linked projects and silence environmental accountability. This section explores different ways in which countries in the region criminalise IPs, communities and advocates.

One, climate disinformation enables the selective and punitive enforcement of environmental laws against IPs. In Indonesia, the Omnibus Law (2020) and the Conservation Law (1990, revised 2024) have simplified land acquisition for "development" while criminalising Indigenous permanence on ancestral territories. Resistance to companies such as PT Toba Pulp Lestari has resulted in dozens of arrests (Rainforest Action Network, 2025). In Thailand, the Forest Reclamation Policy and associated frameworks are being used to cast Indigenous communities as "encroachers" and "destroyers", criminalising subsistence farming and foraging (People's Party, 2025). As "defenders of the forests", prosecutors routinely represent the state as the injured party, while evidence implicating government or corporate actors is suppressed. Criminal charges are increasingly paired with civil lawsuits under the National Environmental Quality Act (1992), demanding exorbitant compensation for causing environmental damage. In 2025, three *Lisu* villagers were ordered to pay damages for alleged harm to Sri Lanna National Park for their sustenance activities (IMN Voice, 2025; Khaosod, 2025).

Two, falsely portraying IPs as intruders or disruptors of environmental protection efforts already in place. This occurs only after disinformation (particularly greenwashing and false climate solutions) is already circulating in the information ecosystem. In Cambodia, state-aligned narratives depict Indigenous patrols and traditional land-use practices as environmentally harmful, despite evidence of Indigenous stewardship. This distortion enables legal action against Indigenous defenders under the guise of conservation. The expansion of false climate solutions such as REDD+ has intensified this trend. For instance, in 2024, a *Chorng* farmer was arrested for allegedly clearing forest land to claim ownership, even though he had cultivated rice on ancestral land since 2013 (CamboJA News, 2024). The area was later absorbed into a REDD+ project, and the absence of official boundary demarcation was ignored as the perceived legitimacy of REDD+ lent credibility to the charge (Ibid.). Similarly, in Malaysia, Indigenous resistance to extractive activities is reframed as obstruction. In 2025, two *Penan* community members in Sarawak were detained under the Sarawak Forestry Ordinance (2015) for allegedly interfering with forestry operations, despite acting to defend their forest resources (Bruno Manser Fonds, 2025). Greenwashing narratives portraying palm oil operations as "sustainable" legitimised these arrests, suppressing Indigenous resistance and reinforcing dispossession (Ibid.).

Three, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) represent a more targeted form of criminalisation, using defamation and "fake news" accusations to silence Indigenous monitoring and advocacy. In Cambodia, after a *Kuy* community documented 334 forest crimes in Preah Roka Wildlife Sanctuary in May 2025, authorities accused them of spreading false information to disrupt social order, rather than investigating the reported illegal logging (Kuy Indigenous Community of Prameru Village, 2025; Kiripost, 2025; CamboJA News, 2025). In Indonesia, villagers opposing pollution by PT Bangka Asindo Agri were criminally charged for attending a meeting to plan legal action, despite later acquittal under Anti-SLAPP provisions (Jong, 2021). In Malaysia, Samling Plywood filed a RM 5 million (USD 1,233,000) defamation suit against SAVE Rivers for questioning the legitimacy of the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme in Indigenous territories, delaying investigations and enabling continued

operations (Keeton-Olsen, 2023). In Thailand, journalist Pratch Rujivanarom faced criminal defamation charges after sharing evidence linking a Thai mining company to environmental harm, with the company seeking damages and court-mandated "corrections" to suppress critical reporting (Smith & Perry, 2020). Across contexts, SLAPPs divert attention from environmental damage, exhaust limited resources and silence Indigenous resistance. Corporations have used SLAPPs to pressure journalists, non-governmental organisations and Indigenous advocates into retracting critical reporting and disseminating pro-corporate narratives. Defamation lawsuits, often backed by greenwashing credentials and sustainability certifications, impose severe financial and psychological burdens.

Four, climate disinformation is also used to target the financial operations of Indigenous and advocacy organisations. In India, the advocacy group Greenpeace was targeted by the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act (2010) to bar it from receiving foreign funding. This was seen as deliberate punishment against the organisations' environmental and Indigenous advocacy (Dhara, 2019). In the Philippines, terrorist labelling has been used to freeze the assets of civil society organisations supporting Indigenous communities, cutting off essential aid and advocacy. Under the Anti-Terrorism Law (2020), asset freezes and prohibitively high bail amounts financially cripple organisations and individual activists. In 2025, staff members of the Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development Group were charged with terrorism financing, leading to frozen assets and excessive bail requirements. These actions coincided with the organisation's opposition to a palm oil project promoted as a carbon credit and reforestation initiative (Amnesty International, 2025).

While control over the finances of environmental and Indigenous advocacy organisations is currently only explicit in India and the Philippines, governments in several Asian countries have increasingly expanded regulatory oversight over foreign funding, financial reporting and registration under the language of national security, counter-terrorism and anti-money laundering. These measures have already been accompanied by public accusations and verbal attacks targeting environmental defenders, Indigenous rights advocates and civil society organisations as "foreign agents", "anti-development" or threats to national stability, laying the groundwork for future legal and financial restrictions (Asia Centre, 2022). Such tactics risk being redirected towards environmental defenders and Indigenous rights organisations challenging state-backed extractive or "green" development projects.

By reframing IPs as environmental threats, extremists or disinformation agents, states and corporations legitimise arrests, SLAPPs, red-tagging and financial repression. It also allows for the use of intimidation tactics and physical violence, as will be discussed next.

3.5. Intimidation and Physical Violence

Physical Violence

The fifth impact of climate disinformation is enabling the use of intimidation and physical violence against IPs to suppress Indigenous voices. This has contributed to a regional environment where IPs are surveilled, criminalised, assaulted, displaced or even killed – creating a climate of fear. This section traces the major forms of intimidation and physical violence where climate disinformation plays a major role in justifying such actions.

One, indirect intimidation. In both Cambodia and Thailand, among other countries, authorities systematically use "consultations" and face-to-face meetings as a venue to pressure communities into adopting government-aligned "development" or climate actions, while discouraging engagement with independent information. The visible presence of authorities at community meetings and door-to-door visits, even without direct intimidation and use of

violence, creates a form of public surveillance that deters open discussion of deforestation and climate impacts.

Two, IPs face threats involving the withholding of subsistence resources and secure land tenure. In many instances, they are not framed as punitive measures, but rather as the conditional provision of development benefits and basic services. Across the countries examined, such pressures are commonly embedded within narratives of development, modernisation and national progress, through which Indigenous communities are promised employment opportunities, electricity, water, roads and other forms of infrastructure. However, these promises often carry an implicit – and at times explicit – condition: access to such benefits depends on communities consenting to business activities, development projects or partition of their customary lands. Conversely, refusal to comply may result in exclusion from services, livelihoods or development opportunities. In this way, development becomes a mechanism of coercion, whereby access to basic needs and socio-economic advancement is made contingent upon the surrender of Indigenous land rights, autonomy and traditional ways of life.

In Malaysia, these dynamics intersect with religious identity and state-led narratives of development and well-being. Reports of the Islamisation of *Orang Asli* communities have often been accompanied by promises of welfare assistance, housing, education and access to state services (Hakim, 2019). At the same time, threats of eviction or the withdrawal of subsistence assistance illustrates how control over land and resources can extend into the spiritual and cultural sphere. Resistance by *Orang Asli* communities to such practices is frequently framed as resistance to development (Ibid.), social integration or national values, reinforcing a hierarchy in which Malay-Muslim identity is positioned as the normative benchmark.

Three, in connection with Section 3.4, climate disinformation also fosters hostilities by portraying IPs as encroachers or environmental criminals. In India, *Adivasi* communities in Madhya Pradesh have similarly been labelled "encroachers" in official records and media, even when defending legally recognised land rights. Violent eviction drives, pellet gun attacks and retaliatory police filings illustrate how misrepresentation shields state actors from accountability (Lalwani, 2019). In Malaysia, land defenders opposing palm oil expansion have faced lethal violence, as in the 2016 murder of *Dayak* activist Bill Kayong. Framed as obstacles to development, IPs are criminalised while corporate and state interests remain protected (Global Initiative, 2020). In Thailand, Indigenous agricultural practices such as swidden farming have been falsely blamed for wildfires, justifying raids, land seizures and physical assaults. During the enforcement of "Zero Burning" policies, Karen villagers in Chiang Mai province were attacked and dispossessed, while images of these operations circulated online to reinforce narratives of Indigenous culpability (Khamchamnan, 2020). Such portrayals have emboldened public support for violence and entrenched fear.

Four, climate disinformation merges with national security discourse to legitimise lethal violence, in addition to the use of restrictive laws. In India, "anti-Maoist" military operations in mineral-rich regions have intensified armed encounters, with Indigenous *Adivasi* civilians frequently caught between government forces and armed opposition groups (Sharma, 2025). However, in this process, the Adivasis are at times labelled as pro-insurgency and anti-development, to both obscure extractive objectives and normalise extrajudicial killings and displacement of IPs. Similarly, in the Philippines, "red-tagging"[11] functions as a climate-security conspiracy narrative, casting Indigenous environmental defenders as terrorists. During the 2020 massacre of nine *Tumandok* leaders opposing the Jalaur Dam in the Visayas and Mindanao, weapons were allegedly planted in camps of IPs to justify the military operation (Kodao, 2020). Meanwhile, bombings near civilian areas, framed as counter-insurgency or "green development"

[11] The practice of labelling ("tagging") individuals being or sympathetic to communists (the "reds" – traditional definition) or, broader, terrorists.

operations, have inflicted severe psychological harm on entire communities, with long-lasting impacts on children and cultural continuity.

It is also important to note that Indigenous women face disproportionate and gendered forms of intimidation. In India, coordinated online harassment campaigns target women environmental defenders through accusations of foreign sponsorship and extremist affiliations. These attacks often escalate into police harassment and extend to families, resulting in psychological trauma and threats to physical safety. In the Philippines, militarisation of Indigenous territories has exposed women and girls to heightened risks of sexual harassment and abuse by security forces.

Across the region, climate disinformation enables a spectrum of intimidation and physical violence against Indigenous Peoples, from surveillance and livelihood disruption to enforced disappearances, sexual violence and murder. The cumulative impact is not only physical harm but the systematic silencing of Indigenous voices and the destabilisation of community life.

Altogether, Chapter 3 has explored five impacts of climate disinformation on IPs in Asia, namely: exclusion from decision-making, forced displacement from ancestral lands, the impairment of their traditional ways of life, criminalisation and lastly, intimidation and physical violence. These dynamics prioritise the vested economic, political and ideological interests of dominant actors, exacerbating existing power imbalances with IPs. Recommendations to address these impacts are explored next in Chapter 4.

4. Recommendations

This chapter presents a set of actionable region-wide recommendations to address the rise of climate disinformation and its disproportionate impact on IPs and their identities, livelihoods and safety in Asia.

The United Nations and international human rights mechanisms should:

- Support states to ratify the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 and fully align domestic law with UNDRIP, ensuring FPIC across all climate, conservation, and development projects affecting IPs.

- Establish independent expert audits of state compliance with UNDRIP, with a mandate to investigate how state- and corporate-driven climate disinformation enables violations of IP land, resource, and self-determination rights.

- Mandate country and regional visits by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to examine how climate policies, conservation schemes, and "green" development narratives are used to justify dispossession, criminalisation, or militarisation.

- Integrate climate disinformation into Universal Periodic Review processes and treaty body reviews as a structural human rights concern, and condition climate finance, carbon markets, REDD+, and nature-based solutions on verifiable FPIC, transparency, and independent monitoring.

- Support independent, satellite-based and community-led audits of forest cover and land use to counter misleading official data and uphold the right to accurate environmental information.

Governments of relevant countries should:

- Publicly recognise climate disinformation as deliberate and strategic, including when reproduced through official narratives, state-aligned media, or corporate partnerships.

- Legally recognise IPs in line with international human rights standards, including self-identification, and harmonise land, forest, conservation, and climate laws accordingly.

- Establish binding FPIC standards for all climate, conservation, infrastructure, and extractive projects, with penalties for violations and effective remedies, including land restitution where displacement has occurred.

- Reform environmental data systems to distinguish natural ecosystems from plantations, offsets, and monocultures, and suspend or reform climate and conservation programmes based on false climate solutions that undermine IP rights or ecological integrity.

- Protect IP land and environmental defenders from criminalisation, SLAPPs, surveillance, and violence, and ensure counter-disinformation measures safeguard freedom of expression, digital rights, and media independence.

International non-governmental organisations should:

- Prioritise IP-led audits and monitoring of climate, conservation, and development projects to uphold communities' rights to oversee interventions affecting their territories.
- Submit shadow reports to UN mechanisms documenting how climate disinformation, surveillance, and repression violate IP rights to land, expression, participation, and privacy.
- Establish rapid-response legal and protection networks for IP defenders facing criminalisation, SLAPPs, or violence linked to climate narratives.
- Partner with IPs to map climate disinformation networks and support community-based fact-checking and verification in IP languages.
- Advocate with donors and multilateral banks to withhold funding from projects that violate FPIC or rely on misleading climate claims.

Civil society organisations should:

- Maintain national and regional databases documenting evictions, criminalisation, and violence carried out under "green" or climate justifications.
- Operate mobile legal and digital clinics to assist IP communities in asserting land rights, accessing information, and challenging disinformation.
- Produce investigative documentation exposing greenwashing, false climate solutions, and manipulated environmental data.
- Train IP journalists and communicators to report on algorithmic bias, disinformation campaigns, and environmental harm.
- Build cross-movement alliances linking IP rights, climate justice and digital rights.

The media sector should:

- Investigate and expose one-sided climate reporting, greenwashing, and denial of accountability that erase IP impacts.
- Establish IP-language reporting and fact-checking desks and publish IP testimonies, land histories, and lived experiences.
- Examine the role of algorithms, advertising, and platform incentives in amplifying climate disinformation and anti-IP narratives.
- Provide legal and safety mechanisms for journalists reporting on state–corporate environmental harm.
- Proactively highlight IP-led climate solutions, stewardship practices, and governance models.

Technology companies should:

- Conduct transparent audits of algorithmic bias and political or corporate advertising that amplify climate disinformation and marginalise IP voices.
- Address coordinated harassment, greenwashing, and disinformation targeting IPs without enabling surveillance or censorship.
- Provide secure communication, privacy, and safety tools for IP activists, journalists and communities at risk.
- Ensure grievance and reporting mechanisms are accessible and effective for IP users.

Indigenous communities should:

- Document land-use violations and environmental harm through community-led mapping, monitoring, and evidence collection.
- Revitalise and transmit traditional ecological knowledge, governance systems, and early-warning practices as foundations of climate resilience.
- File collective complaints challenging projects that violate FPIC or rely on disinformation, exercising the right to remedy.
- Build alliances to establish IP-owned and operated media platforms and community information networks.
- Engage local governance institutions to reject projects lacking FPIC and transparency and to strengthen self-determination.

In addition to country-level actions, regional coordination should be strengthened through the following measures:

- Support governments to develop regional-level standards to safeguard Indigenous rights within climate finance, carbon markets, conservation initiatives and energy transition projects.
- Support governments to strengthen regional transparency and accountability frameworks for transnational corporations, requiring disclosure of environmental impacts, supply chains and Indigenous rights due diligence.
- Develop regional independent media networks and resource pools to support collaborative investigations, information sharing and on-the-ground reporting by Indigenous journalists, citizen journalists and local media organisations covering climate and environmental issues.
- Establish regional monitoring and fact-checking networks to track climate disinformation, greenwashing and anti-Indigenous narratives associated with transnational corporations, cross-border investments and large-scale development projects.
- Create cross-border rapid-response mechanisms providing legal assistance, digital verification, and protection support for Indigenous communities and environmental defenders facing coordinated disinformation campaigns and harassment.

5. Conclusion

Over the past decade, governments and corporate actors across South- and Southeast Asia have exponentially expanded their access and control over land traditionally held and stewarded by Indigenous communities in their respective countries for "development" purposes. To justify and continue enabling this control over land, climate disinformation emerges as a new tool.

Meanwhile, however, governments have on paper increasingly signalled support for IPs, environmental protection and climate action through suites of pledges, policy frameworks and legislation. Internationally, they have endorsed principles relating to Indigenous participation, sustainability, biodiversity protection and emissions reduction. Nationally, they have climate adaptation plans, net-zero targets, afforestation programmes, carbon market initiatives and "green" development strategies that claim to incorporate Indigenous communities and environmental safeguards.

The reports in the series "Climate Disinformation in Asia and its Impact on Indigenous Peoples" have shown that such commitments cannot be meaningfully realised without addressing the growing role of climate disinformation and its impacts on IPs. This report identified four major forms of climate disinformation in Asia: one-sided media coverage, greenwashing, false climate solutions and denying accountability. Such narratives do not only emerge through outright falsehoods, but, increasingly, they have emerged through selective reporting and manipulation of truths. This is known as malinformation.

The report further demonstrated that these dynamics are increasingly regional. Shared developmentalist models and transnational corporate operations enable similar climate narratives and extractive practices to be replicated across multiple countries. Digital platform architectures and weak moderation systems further enable the spread of disinformation; while emerging AI technologies are beginning to intensify existing information vulnerabilities.

Climate disinformation has produced an adverse impact on IPs. It has been used to marginalise Indigenous decision-making power over their own land, directly impair their traditional practices and livelihoods, subvert their right to land and justify legal action and physical violence undertaken for government and corporate interests. In doing so, climate disinformation reinforces longstanding structural inequalities that shape the relationship between states, corporations and Indigenous communities across Asia.

Confronting these challenges will require more than pledges and symbolic but weak legal protections. Effective responses must also include comprehensive legal and policy reforms, stronger protections for Indigenous rights, independent oversight of climate and conservation initiatives, greater corporate accountability and sustained support for civil society, environmental defenders and Indigenous-led advocacy.

In addition, constructive journalism offers an important pathway for countering climate disinformation by scrutinising power, centring affected communities and highlighting evidence-based responses and solutions. This is particularly important at a time when independent fact-checking initiatives increasingly operate under strain due to limited resources, funding cuts, algorithmic constraints and the sheer scale and speed at which disinformation spreads online. By amplifying Indigenous voices and experiences, such constructive approaches can contribute to more inclusive and accountable climate governance. The reports in this series have contributed to these efforts by serving as practical resources for journalists seeking to investigate climate disinformation and report on Indigenous rights in ways that are accurate and accountable.

Ultimately, climate justice in Asia depends on transforming both the policy and information ecosystems through which climate policies and development projects are legitimised and contested. Ensuring that these ecosystems are transparent, inclusive, and grounded in Indigenous rights is essential if climate governance is to move beyond the appearance of sustainability towards genuine environmental justice and accountability.

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Annexe

Asia Centre's research series "Climate Disinformation and Its Impact on Indigenous Peoples"	
Cambodia	Baseline Study: *Climate Disinformation in Cambodia: Undermining Indigenous Peoples' Agency* National Convening: Climate Disinformation Brought Into Focus In Cambodia Op-ed: "Restoring Indigenous Agency: Why Cambodia Must Tackle Climate Disinformation"
India	Baseline Study: *Climate Disinformation in India: Subverting Indigenous Peoples' Rights* National Convening: National Convening on Climate Disinformation in India: Subverting Indigenous Peoples' Rights Op-ed: "How 'Green' Narratives Are Used to Dismantle Indigenous Rights in India"
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Malaysia	Baseline Study: *Climate Disinformation in Malaysia: Appropriating Indigenous Peoples' Entitlements* National Convening: National Convening on Climate Disinformation in Malaysia: Appropriating Indigenous Peoples' Entitlements Op-ed: "Privilege Over Rights: Appropriating Indigenous Peoples' Entitlements in Malaysia"
Philippines	Baseline Study: Climate Disinformation in the Philippines: Legitimising Attacks on Indigenous Peoples National Convening: National Convening on Climate Disinformation in the Philippines: Legitimising Attacks on Indigenous Peoples Op-ed: "When Climate Lies Kill: Red-Tagging Indigenous Defenders in the Philippines"
Thailand	Baseline Study: *Climate Disinformation in Thailand: Negating Indigenous Peoples' Identity* National Convening: Indigenous Peoples' Identity Key To Counter Climate Change Op-ed: "Erasure by Climate Disinformation: The Undoing of Indigenous Identity in Thailand"

In addition, the research also compiled information from the report *Climate Disinformation in Pakistan: Silencing Indigenous Peoples' Voices*, produced by the Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development.

Asia Centre is a civil society research institute in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC).

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