I. Summary

The population of indigenous peoples in the Philippines has not been reliably established until now. With the inclusion of an ethnicity variable in the 15th Census on Population and Housing in September 2020, we hope to finally see a close estimate of the number of indigenous peoples in the country and where they are with the inclusion of an ethnicity variable. Indigenous peoples have not been adequately and properly reflected in any census because of the lack of the proper ethnicity variable in the census tool, the questionable conduct of the census, and the lack of study on how best to make the census, or any national survey for that matter. In other words, indigenous peoples have been left behind.

Under the mantra of “Nothing about us, without us”, indigenous peoples the whole world over, together with partners, came out with the Indigenous Navigator Initiative to develop a tool to monitor the gaps in the enjoyment of indigenous peoples of both their individual and collective rights and make duty-bearers accountable, and also to help them devise implementation strategies for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The UNDRIP does not have a monitoring mechanism and thus violations of indigenous peoples rights are often hidden under other categories and are not addressed properly, and often excluded from development efforts.

The Indigenous Navigator framework is based on the UNDRIP, with the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) added for the Philippines, and all other human rights instruments ratified by the country. It also integrates a number of the global...
Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators and by collecting data related to the global SDG indicators, indigenous peoples can contribute data for local, national, and global SDG monitoring, and generate comparable data to monitor if indigenous peoples are left behind.

In 2015, the Philippines joined world leaders in adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development comprising of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 related targets intended to be achieved by 2030.

Among other things the country has to do are to affirm the 17 SDGs that seek to realize the human rights of all, and pledge to ‘leave no one behind’ and to reach those furthest behind first. These will reflect the country’s obligation and ambitious vision to recognize the fundamental human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality in the development process.

The final results of the SDGs will depend on how the Agenda is implemented at national and local levels. If the implementation contributes to the realization of the indigenous peoples’ rights, as enshrined in the UNDRIP and for the Philippines, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), it will help overcome the current discrimination against and the human rights challenges faced by indigenous peoples. In contrast, if efforts to achieve the Agenda ignore indigenous peoples’ aspirations and rights, it may again contribute to or even entrench the marginalisation of and discrimination against indigenous peoples and undermine their well-being, thus again, leaving them behind.

If the 2030 Agenda should address the challenges faced by indigenous peoples, there are three key aspects that must be considered:

- Indigenous peoples must be protected from adverse impacts of mainstream development, which may undermine their rights and well-being;
- Indigenous peoples have the right to fully participate and benefit from general development efforts;
- Indigenous peoples’ collective right to self-determined development must be supported.
THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

The Philippines, through the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), conducted its 15th decennial Census of Population and 7th Census on Housing, or the 2020 Census on Population and Housing (CPH), in September 2020. Scheduled to be done within 25 days, it ended in various dates in different regions due to the limitations imposed by measures to control the spread of the Corona Virus Disease 2019. The results had not yet been made public so the output cannot be reviewed yet. As of May 1, 2020, ethnicity is included in the questions to be asked from respondents of all households, apart from that of education and literacy, birth registration status, religion and functional difficulty. From 20 percent sample households, additional information will be gathered on occupation, land ownership, language/dialect generally spoken at home, types of internet access, available at home, including ownership of ICT devices, among others. The 20 percent sampling may reliably reflect the situation of areas where the indigenous peoples comprise the dominant population. However, this will not reflect the situation of indigenous peoples who are minoritised in their own ancestral domains, and thus their situation will be shoved under the mantle of averages.

WHO ARE THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

A. Legal Policy and Framework

The 1987 Constitution assures that the State, “subject to the provisions of this Constitution and national development policies and programs, shall protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands to ensure their economic, social, and cultural well-being (Art. 12 Sec. 5).”

On September 17, 1997, these provisions of the Constitution were translated into an enabling law, Republic Act 8371 or the IPRA, which defines the four bundles of rights to be enjoyed by indigenous peoples: a) the rights to ancestral domains, b) self-governance and empowerment, c) social justice and human rights, and d) cultural integrity. Aside from restating the description of indigenous peoples, the IPRA also creates the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) as the primary government agency mandated to “protect and promote the interest and well-being of the ICCs/IPs with due regard to their beliefs, customs, traditions and institutions.”

The Philippine Statistical Authority (PSA) is the State body mandated to conduct the census on population by the RA 10625 (sec. 6.b), or the Philippine Statistical Act of 2013. Batas Pambansa Blg. 72 accords the authority to the PSA to conduct population censuses every ten (10) years starting in 1980. On September 2020, the PSA conducted its Census on Population and Housing (CPH), the 15th census
on population since the first national census in 1903. The PSA itself uses the IPRA in describing who are indigenous peoples.

Specifically for the 2020 CPH, PSA clarifies that ethnicity “is a primary sense of belonging to an ethnic group (which) is consanguine in nature, meaning, the ties are reckoned by blood and traced through the family tree. Thus, ethnicity refers to the household member’s identity, by blood and not by choice nor by adoption/confirmation for any ethnic group, primarily the Indigenous Peoples (IPs). Generally, ethnic grouping denotes genealogical and paternal lineage to any of the Philippines’ group of native population. However, for the purpose of census, ethnic grouping also includes maternal lineage. As such, anybody whose consanguinity with either both parents or any one of them who is a member of an indigenous group, is an Indigenous Person. The updated categories of ethnicity are provided by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos”.

The Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 (PDP) is the country’s current medium-term development that is anchored on the AmBisyon Natin 2040 which envisions a Filipino society that is “matatag, maginhawa at panatag na buhay” (strongly-rooted, comfortable, and secure life). The PDP incorporates some of the SDGs, (e.g., SDGs 1, 3, 4, 9, 11, 16, and their indicators) both in the strategies and outcomes. The NCIP has also come out with its Indigenous Peoples Master Plan (IPMAP) which adopts a so-called “whole-of-nation” approach to deliver services to indigenous peoples, in line with its Strategic Directions as lined up in its NCIP Strategy 2016-2022 geared towards contributing to the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, and 16.

B. Our Numbers Count

The NCIP lists 110 ethnolinguistic groups as indigenous peoples. As the government body mandated to formulate and implement policies, plans, programs and projects for the economic, social and cultural development of indigenous peoples, and to monitor the implementation thereof, it is pathetic that there is no data at all on its website on the population that it is to serve. The PSA is not helpful either as it has only an uploaded scanned copy of a Special Release on Indigenous Peoples dated April 2004. Other estimates of the country’s indigenous peoples population can be gleaned from the websites of foreign sources like the Minority Rights Group, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, the International Fund for Agricultural Development,
United Nations Development Programme, Cultural Survival, and in the country, the Philippine Fund for Environment, among others. Most of these cite an unavailable source at the moment which cites NCIP as estimating the indigenous peoples population in 2003 as about 11 million.

Despite only estimates on the total population of indigenous peoples, OUR NUMBERS COUNT.

It is estimated that indigenous peoples comprise 12 to 17% of the national population and if based on the 2017 national population of 104,733,524, indigenous peoples would number about 12.5 – 17.8 million. The 2020 National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) completed the assessment of almost 24.5 million poor households representing 66% of the 21 million households in the country. This registry of poor households, or the Listahanan, is the second biggest database being administered by the PSA, after the CPH 2020, covering 81 provinces, 1,634 cities/municipalities, and 41,123 barangays. Unfortunately, there is no disaggregation yet on households of indigenous origin.

The implications for the lack of disaggregated data on indigenous peoples is significant in addressing their peculiar situation as peoples with collective rights, apart from their individual rights. It then impacts on the crafting of appropriated laws, policies, programs and projects to address their human rights and development situation.

For instance, when indigenous peoples are lumped with farmers, their right to their ancestral domain is ignored and when violations occur, the redress may be redistribution of lands to individuals which may be collectively owned as ancestral domains. Data can also be used as evidence to track the progress in achieving the goals of measures to address discrimination against indigenous peoples in all its forms. Local government units and line agencies can use such data in developing plans, programs, projects and others such interventions, to address the specific situation of indigenous peoples in their own jurisdiction or sector. But more importantly, indigenous peoples themselves need data in their advocacy work, in crafting their self-determined development plans, in addressing issues of access to basic services and justice, among other concerns.

It is important to have solid data on the numbers and situation of indigenous peoples in the country for them not to fall into the cracks and be left behind as the country implements its commitments to the SDGs.

5 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40224860/philippines_ctn.pdf/ae0faa4a-2b65-4026-8d42-219db776c50d.
II. DATA GATHERING ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

A. Census of Population and Households

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) issued a Commission En Banc (CEB) Resolution No. 07-36.2017 approving the ethnicity variable based on descent/blood/consanguinity and its operational definition to be used for the 2020 CPH to be conducted by the PSA and providing the list of indigenous peoples to the statistical body for their use.

NCIP then defines ethnicity as “a primary sense of belonging to an ethnic group based on descent/blood relation/consanguinity.” It then clarifies that ethnicity is based on descent while ethnolinguistic group is based on language. Thus, it asserts that because ethnicity can be traced through bloodlines, it cannot be claimed by choice nor by adoption or confirmation by any ethnic group. It then advises that for indigenous peoples and for the purpose of the 2020 CPH, ethnic groupings includes both maternal and paternal lineage, and as such, an individual whose consanguinity with both parents or any of them, who ascribes to belong to an indigenous peoples, is an indigenous person.

The IPRA defines indigenous peoples/indigenous cultural communities to include individuals who self-ascribe AND are ascribed by others. The NCIP states as an advice to the CPH that self-ascription should have a basis of which the controlling factor is descent/blood relation/consanguinity and not just voluntary or mere choice. Thus, in cases where an individual ascribes that he/she is indigenous but does not want to be counted as indigenous peoples, he/she must still be counted by self-ascription. On the other hand, if an individual would want to be counted as indigenous peoples but has no genealogy as such, the real ethnicity should prevail. There is an elaborate advice on how to determine the ethnicity of children of mixed IP-non-IP descent.

The PSA, in monitoring Sustainable Development Goals Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, has a database which includes parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregate.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^\text{10}\) https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/phdsd/PH_SDGWatch_Goal04.pdf - preliminary submissions as of March 2020 (data for 2016 and 2018) is available, however, the particularity of indigenous peoples cannot be determined as they are lumped together with others as vulnerable.
However, indigenous peoples are again lumped together with other vulnerable groups.

In terms of civil registration in support of access to social protection programs for indigenous peoples, the Administrator and Civil Registrar General issued Memorandum Circular 2011-008 on April 12, 2011 addressed to all city/municipal registrars/OICs, on the free birth registration of children of indigenous descent for beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). The memorandum is premised on the fact that the levels of civil registration of births of indigenous peoples have been very low and only few availed of the provisions of AO3, series of 2004, (IRR Governing the Registration of Acts and Events Concerning Civil Status of Filipino Indigenous Peoples), thus, they cannot produce the appropriate birth certificate to avail of the 4Ps. Local civil registrars can be another source of information on indigenous peoples which can be incorporated in the database of local governments.

The PSA identified one of the issues on the low level of birth and death registration especially in some special sectors of the society- Muslims, Indigenous Peoples, and poor sectors. It then issued Office Memorandum 2011-03 to all its regional directors/provincial statistics officers/ OICs easing some of the requirements for the issuance of proofs of birth for indigenous peoples in order to avail of the 4Ps program of DSWD. Data on the number of indigenous children in the 4Ps who have availed of this remedy can be a proxy on the indicator of the state of birth registration for indigenous children.

Data on the number of Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representation (IPMR) can be provided by the NCIP and/or DILG. In the PSA indicator on the Societal Goal: To lay down the foundation for inclusive growth, a high-trust and resilient society and a globally competitive knowledge economy for Sub-chapter Outcome 4 on Culture-sensitive public governance and development strengthened, it indicated that the responsible agency to provide the data is the NCIP on the percentage of municipalities, cities, and provinces with Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representation (IPMR) (cumulative). Related to this, the PSA monitoring of local government’s compliance with the IPMR directive indicated only 10% achievement as of 2018.

On agriculture-related data, the Department of Agriculture (DA) must have data on agri-fisheries and agribusiness in ancestral domain under Joint Special Order (JSO) #01 series of 2020, issued June 15, 2020. The JSO is between the DA and NCIP creating the DA-NCIP National Steering Committee and Technical Working Group for the DA-NCIP collaboration program on agri-fisheries and agribusiness development.

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11. [https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Free%20Birth%20Registration%20of%20IP%20Children%20for%20Beneficiaries%20of%204Ps_April122011.pdf](https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Free%20Birth%20Registration%20of%20IP%20Children%20for%20Beneficiaries%20of%204Ps_April122011.pdf) – 4Ps beneficiaries.
in ancestral domains. Additionally, the DA has the Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran ng Kababayang Katutubo, also known as 4Ks, a special project developed by the DA which is expected to espouse an enhanced provision of agricultural and fisheries related livelihood, investments and services to NCIP-recognized legitimate indigenous peoples organizations.

On technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the NCIP and TESDA should have data on indigenous individuals who enrolled and also successfully completed their free skills training under the memorandum of agreement signed between NCIP and TESDA on February 28, 2017[^15], aimed at helping scholars for wage or self-employment. In its 2021 first quarterly TVET Statistics Report[^16], it reports of a client type “Indigenous people (sic) and Cultural Communities” which indicates how many individuals were enrolled, graduated, assessed, and certified.

On indigenous youth, the DSWD, with the Office of the Cabinet Secretary (OCS) under the Office of the President (OP), the NCIP, and the National Youth Commission (NYC), signed a MOA[^17] in 2018 to help provide more opportunities for education, future employment, and overall improved well-being of indigenous youth. Among others, DSWD is tasked to facilitate the conduct of participatory situational analysis in coordination with OCS, NCIP and NYC for the identification and assessment of needs, problems, concerns, and issues of indigenous youth leaders. It is also tasked to provide initial/basic culturally-sensitive capacity building activities to indigenous youth leaders. Additionally, the DSWD, in partnership with the NCIP and NYC provide counterpart funding requirements to implement other youth projects that are based on their Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) towards IP youth leadership development and resiliency.

On natural resources, the DENR can provide information on ancestral domain where protected areas, reservations, forestry- and mining-related ventures are located, status of permits, licenses, concessions, FTAAs, and the like.

### B. COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING SYSTEM (CBMS)

RA 11351, or the Community-based Monitoring System (CBMS) Act, established the community-based monitoring system. The law defines CBMS as a technology-based system of collecting, processing and validating disaggregated data for planning, implementation and monitoring at the local level with the participation of communities in the process of generating data as a basis in the planning, budgeting and implementation of government programs towards poverty alleviation and economic development. It entails a census of households by the local governments with the participation of community using accelerated poverty profiling system is the data collection, processing, mapping and analysis of data. The PSA is mandated to implement the CBMS.

If adopted and properly used by local governments, they can enhance their capacity to monitor and act on development issues on indigenous peoples in their jurisdiction as


one of its features involves complete enumeration of all households. CBMS merges methodologies of data collection used by all national agencies and geo-tagging, entailing census of households by LGUs “with the participation of the community”.

Led by the PSA, the CBMS is being implemented by local government units (LGUs) under the supervision of the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute (PSRTI), and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). The PSA believes that the CBMS will amplify the key indicators of quality of life in the municipalities and cities and through the assessment of these locally generated poverty statistics, the PSA can contribute in determining the progress towards the achievement of the SDGs.¹⁸ If LGUs disaggregate data by ethnicity, the CBMS can generate the data on the situation of indigenous peoples on the ground.

C. COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING AND INFORMATION SYSTEM (CBMIS)

Another global tool developed by indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) to generate their own data is the Community-based Monitoring and Information System (CBMIS). Not to be confused with the CBMS of the Philippine government, the CBMIS arose from the engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) process. CBMIS is “a participatory action research using various tools, methodologies and technologies for the generation of baseline data, mapping their territories, and coming out with resource inventories and relevant reports about their communities.”¹⁹ It is an internationally acknowledged tool for generation of global statistics on IPLCs by the 12th Conference of Parties (COP) to the CBD in October 2014.²⁰

In the Philippines, six indigenous communities from the Cordillera and Davao generated six community profiles in partnership with Tebtebba, a key stakeholder in the development of the system. The data has been generated by the communities are owned by them. They use these for various purposes, like, as basis for community development planning, decision-making, action and development; advocacy with LGUs and other interest groups; assertion of customary laws, protocols and rights to territories, lands and resources. Access to the data can only be done through community protocols formulated by the particular community.

¹⁸ https://psa.gov.ph/cbms/nid/162519
¹⁹ http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/446-enhancing-indigenous-peoples-development-through-cbmis
²⁰ https://swed.bio/focal-areas/themes/biocultural-diversity/cbmis/
III. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS and PROPOSALS

The dearth of reliable statistics on the population of indigenous peoples, that even the NCIP does not have, goes to show the degree of invisibility indigenous peoples in the Philippines that leads to questions on how programs, plans, and projects really reflect their needs and priorities. It is in this context that concerted effort both from the part of indigenous peoples, and that of the State authorities, to strive to collect reliable and quality demographic data and other relevant data on the situation of indigenous peoples. The tools used in the CBMS, the NHTS-PR, the CBMIS, and the IN should be studied in order to explore possibilities for harmonizing these towards making data on indigenous peoples available for the planning and implementation of interventions to realize the human rights and development needs of indigenous peoples in a culturally appropriate and responsive way. These efforts become more urgent as the nation strives to achieve the SDGs under the mantra of “Leave no one behind.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Data on indigenous peoples must be reflective of their situation, including a realistic count of their numbers. There are indicators of particular significance to indigenous peoples, such as those related to their lands and waters, territories and resources, participation in decision-making, including issues of discrimination or exclusion in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights. Rights-based indicators to be used for data collection and disaggregation on indigenous peoples should be capable of reflecting the current status of the realization of their human rights, be useful in policy articulation and prescription and should measure both the process and the outcome of development activities. They should be able to measure dimensions of the process of the realization of human rights, such as participation, non-discrimination, empowerment and accountability.

RECOMMENDATION 1: From the submission to the 59th session of the CESCR: We recommend the immediate release of 2010 ethnicity data, enactment of a law mandating the inclusion of an ethnicity variable in the Philippine census (such as Senate Bill No. 912 or the Ethnic Origin Bill and House Bill No. 579 or the Ethnic Origin Census Bill), and the improvement of training for census enumerators on culturally-sensitive methods for collection of ethnicity data.21

Despite the number of years passed since the UNPFII started calling attention to the need to disaggregate data on indigenous peoples, States have not had substantive measures to solve the invisibility of indigenous peoples in national statistics. Thus, the recommendations still stand valid today which we reiterate in this paper.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Towards the ensuring that indigenous peoples are not left behind in the achievement of the SDGs, we call for the governments to establish permanent, open and inclusive mechanisms for consultation, participation and representation of indigenous peoples in local, regional, national and international processes and bodies relating to the Sustainable Development Goals. We also call upon Governments to allocate adequate resources towards implementation of plans that include indigenous peoples, as well as to ensure data disaggregation on the basis of indigenous identifiers. It also must ensure to include indigenous peoples in their reviews, reports and delegations, including reporting on good practices on how it includes indigenous peoples’ indicators in its voluntary national reviews.\(^\text{22}\)

RECOMMENDATION 3: to ensure the disaggregation of data on the basis of indigenous identifiers/ethnicity and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in developing and monitoring national action plans and in all processes relating to the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.\(^\text{23}\)

OUR PROPOSALS to the government:

1. Underused sources of statistics at the national level be fully used; these may be for national surveys, research and academic institutions, scientific publications, and data generated by indigenous peoples themselves;

2. Mandate the NCIP, as part of its research functions, to capture existing data in published sources and scientific reviews both at the domestic and global levels; CBMS, and the NHTS-PR, and elsewhere; and to encourage indigenous institutions and organisations to generate relevant data (for example, through the CBMIS and IN tools) and to coordinate their activities in this field and in partnership with government to the extent possible;

3. For the PSA to publish a Special Release issue on indigenous peoples similar to the one released by the NSO in April 2004 in line with the results 2020 CHP;

4. Sensitivity and awareness raising for policy makers and those designing data collection exercises on indigenous peoples and purpose/s of which data on them is being sought. At the local level, properly trained numerators of indigenous descent who speak the language be assigned in indigenous communities during surveys and censuses;

5. Substantive consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples in

\(^{22}\) 16th Session of the UNPFII (2017).
\(^{23}\) [15th Session (2016)].
developing methodological tools, guidelines, samples of questions that could help in identifying indigenous peoples, and key indicators for data collection concerning indigenous peoples, to ensure a common concept of the indicators among the different indigenous peoples to allow for comparison;

6. For Congress to provide adequate budget to allow for inclusion of the ethnicity variable and indicators in national censuses and surveys;

7. Adoption of the IN and the CBMIS, or elements therefrom, in the various tools used by the government in data-collection;

8. Recognition by government agencies of self-generated data from indigenous communities; and

9. All local government units to update their CBMS regularly with disaggregation of data to include ethnicity.

DISCLAIMER

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Written by: Bernice See
Edited by: Raymond de Chavez, Helen Biangalen-Magata and Doris Borna Mae Esteban
Lay-out: Paul Michael Nera

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