



Policy Brief

PHILIPPINES

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RIGHT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Institutionalizing Indigenous Perspectives of Sustainability Towards Economic Development

Introduction

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) adopted in 2007 emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures, and traditions, and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations. The voices of children in these visions of economic and social development are given recognition by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). “Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life.”

The Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA) states that the State shall protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains to ensure their economic development thereby recognizes the applicability of customary laws.

This policy brief summarizes key findings and recommendations on the right to economic development from a study done by Tebtebba, entitled “Pag-sasalinlahi: Asserting and Safeguarding Indigenous Peoples’ Rights for the Next Generation.”

Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life.

In the course of the research, it was inferred that the well-being of the children is tied to the economic progress of their communities and the richness of biodiversity. The policy brief looks into the current economic condition of the Dumagat/Agta of General Nakar, Quezon and the Mandaya of Bagangga, Davao Oriental. The effect of extractive industries on their economic condition and the biodiversity within their communities is also tackled. The Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP)¹ is also reviewed.

¹ The ADSDPP is the consolidation of the plans of indigenous cultural communities within an ancestral domain for the sustainable management and development of their land and natural resources as well as the development of human and cultural resources based on their indigenous knowledge, systems and practices.

Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP)

The Dumagat of General Nakar, Quezon have developed an ADSDPP which recognizes the importance of the forest and water resources to the community. The plan emphasizes preservation and enhancement of traditional occupations. Livelihood projects indicated in the plan include nursery and seedling production for rattan and fruit trees, as well as rice production. The projects of the ADSDPP are gender inclusive as these provide for both men and women's role in realizing outputs for these projects.

On the other hand, the Mandayas of Bagangga, Davao are aware that there is an ADSDPP but only the purok leaders know about the details of the plan. The municipality has no Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) who can make representation in the local government.

Economic Condition

In General Nakar, the Dumagat/Agta's traditional sources of income are rice farming and the farming of coconut, rattan, root crops and fruits, as well as fishing. Non-traditional sources of income includes construction projects, driving the *habal-habal* and working as a laborer for daily wage. The Dumagat/Agta are unable to sustain their traditional farming practices because Typhoon Ondoy wiped out their seed stock; as such they are dependent on the modern variety introduced by the Department of Agriculture.

In General Nakar, a Dumagat/Agta family of 4-9 members have a monthly cash income that ranges from P1,500 to P3,000, which is augmented by non-cash income from fish catch and resources raised by women. Family expenditure prioritizes basic food staples, followed by the allowance of the children going to school, clothing, and medicine.

Boys aged 12 and above are allowed to earn from gathering coconuts during harvest. They are paid P50 for 100 nuts and their earnings go to their personal needs such as clothing.

Their income is inadequate as evidenced by their practice of borrowing for basic needs. There are commercial establishments that cater to this need. Payments are made after harvest or sale of seedlings.

In Bagangga, Davao Oriental farming is the traditional occupation, but ever since Typhoon Pablo, aside from traditional crops, the Mandayas have now incorporated non-traditional crops. Farming constitutes 93% of their occupation whereas others work non-traditionally as laborers in Abaca plantations.

Wage ranges from P1,500 to P5,000 a month depending on the demand for the wage earners services. This income is inadequate and is complemented by hunting and gathering food from the forests.

The youths, starting at age 15, work in the abaca plantation. In some cases, 12-year-old boys are allowed to do light work in the plantation while younger ones aged 10 years old fetch water, gather firewood, cook and wash dishes and help in raising vegetables.

Household expenses include food, clothing and maintenance of their *habal habal*; school supplies, on the other hand, is last on their list.

Their income is inadequate as they are dependent on a lending institution which charges a high interest rate. There are occasions when they have to borrow food items from the local sari sari store.

Extractive Industries

In General Nakar, there used to be large-scale mining in the 90s which saw the indiscriminate cutting of trees. The deep crevices of the roads serve as a reminder of the large vehicles that carried logs from the forests.

Today there is an encroachment of the Tagalog-speaking migrants who are engaged in opportunistic and indiscriminate logging. There are also big fishing vessels sighted in their municipal waters that use poison, electricity, dynamite, and fishnets of very small mesh size.

interest of children and youth is essential in the development of the ADSDPP. Economic development interventions should be consistent with the ADSDPP and should take on a holistic approach which is not market oriented as in the case of extractive industries. This will address poverty and will improve livelihood activities so children and youth will not have to work for their school needs. Biodiversity conservation and access to basic social and support services should be established in a way that will not compromise cultural integrity.

There is a need to strengthen and fully implement the ADSDPP. The government should also conduct monitoring and evaluation of the status of the implementation of the ADSDPP. Also, a mechanism needs to be established to support capacity strengthening for indigenous fund managers to ensure that indigenous communities manage their own projects and funds.

In addition, extractive industries and other development initiatives should strictly undergo the FPIC process, ensuring participation of women and youth

Institutionalize the share of indigenous communities in the EPIRA

The Department of Energy (DOE) should implement the 5% share of indigenous communities, con-

sidering that they purport to recognize the rights of indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) and indigenous peoples in their ancestral domains and access to the financial benefits as host communities.²

Biodiversity and livelihoods

Decriminalize, recognize and promote rotational farming as traditionally practiced by indigenous peoples, as a sustainable agricultural system that addresses biodiversity and soil conservation. The acknowledgement of the scientific indigenous knowledge behind rotational agriculture, including other livelihood systems, will go a long way in life skills development among indigenous youth. Emphasis should be given to the fact that traditional practices are necessary in the maintenance of biodiversity. Specific programs should be created by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) relative to environmental recuperation as well as recovery of traditional crops and food systems.

Government programs initiated by agencies such as the Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Agriculture and DENR should promote traditional crops instead of introducing new varieties. These programs should tap into local expertise and ensure the engagement of the children and youth in the facilitation of knowledge exchange and transmission.

This policy brief is developed and based on the findings of the 2017 study entitled “Pagsasalinalahi: Asserting and Safeguarding Indigenous Peoples’ Rights for the Next Generation,” a research led by Wilfredo Vidal Alangui with component reports from Leah Enkiwe-Abayao, Corazon L. Abansi, Maria Victoria P. De Guzman, Bernice A. See, Maria Teresa Guia-Padilla with James Israel Alim and Abigail Kitma and commissioned by Tebtebba, with support from UNICEF and OHCHR. The statements in this publication are the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of UNICEF and OHCHR.

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² Specified in DOE Energy Regulation (ER) 1-94 and Rule 29 (A) of the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act 9136 or the “Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA).