



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS & PRACTICES IN THE PHILIPPINES

STATUS AND TRENDS



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Introduction

Indigenous peoples (IPs) possess rich indigenous knowledge systems, values, practices, innovations and technologies transmitted through generations since time immemorial. These are the foundations of their persistent pursuit of sustainable self-determined development and of their continuing resilience in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss, discrimination and other numerous struggles. Unfortunately, there is still lack of appreciation on these knowledge systems and practices of indigenous peoples.

As a contribution to increasing awareness and better understanding of the knowledge systems and practices of indigenous peoples in the Philippines, this information material is produced. It highlights the status and trends in the indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSP) of the country; the potentials of IKSP in promoting sustainable development; as well as the present threats and challenges to the vitality of IKSP. Moreover, initiatives of various actors including the indigenous peoples themselves, their communities and their organizations for the protection, promotion and further development of their IKSP are presented.



Who are Indigenous Peoples?

Globally, there is an estimated 476.6 million indigenous peoples; 238.4 million are women and 238.2 million are men. They comprise 6.2 % of the world's population, of which 70% are found in Asia and the Pacific region.¹ They are called different names in different regions e.g. Adivasi, Jumma people, aboriginals, ethnic minorities, natives, Masyarakat Adat, Orang Asli, First Nations, Sami and Inuit among many others.

In the Philippines, while there is no official figure on the population of indigenous peoples, it is continued to be estimated between 10% and 20% of the total population of 100,981,437,² or around 15 million in 2019. They are found in the seven ethnographic regions of the country (refer to Figure 2 on next page).

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system...

On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group). (Source: José Martínez Cobo (1983))

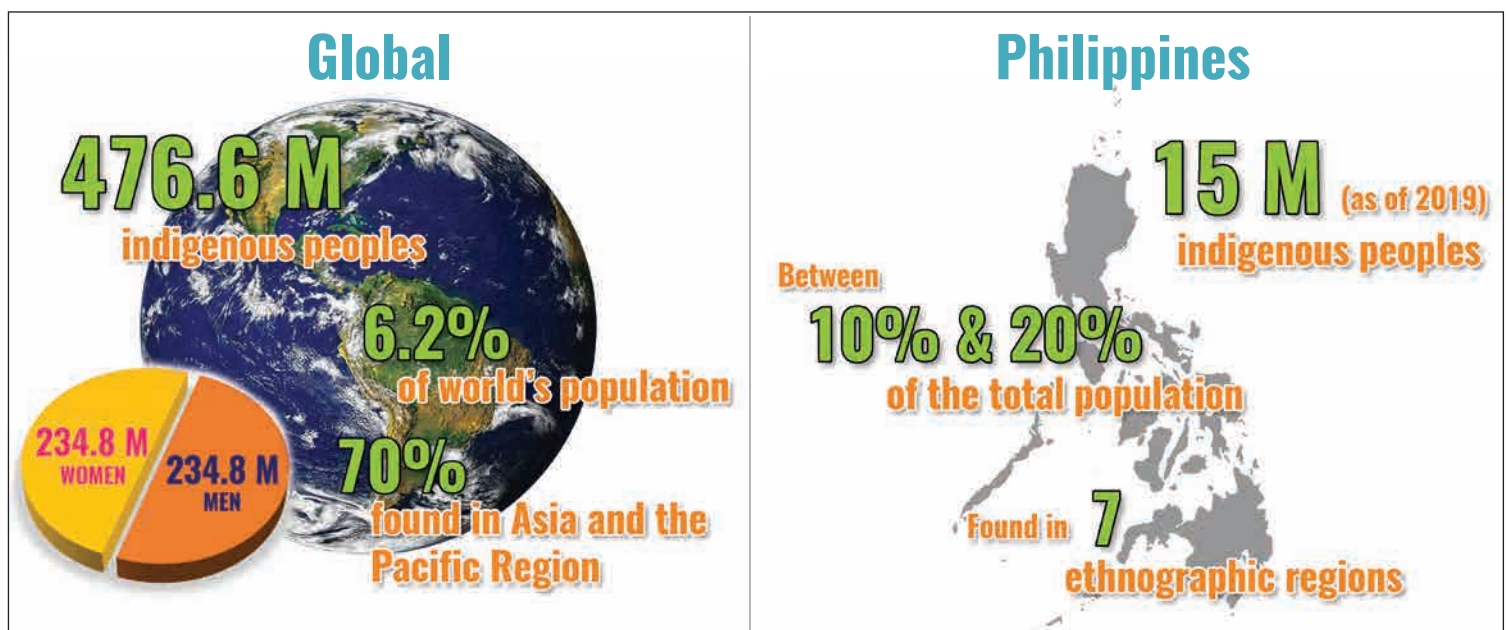


Figure 1: Indigenous peoples in the world and in the Philippines

¹ Rishabh Kumar Dhir, Umberto Cattaneo, Maria Victoria Cabrera Ormaza, Hernan Coronado and Martin Oelz, *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention towards an Inclusive, Sustainable and Just Future* (International Labor Organization, 2019), 13.

² Sarah Dekdeken and Jill Cariño, "Indigenous World 2019: Philippines," *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)*, April 24, 2019, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/philippines/3416-iw2019-philippines.html>.

Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines

ETHNOGRAPHIC MAP

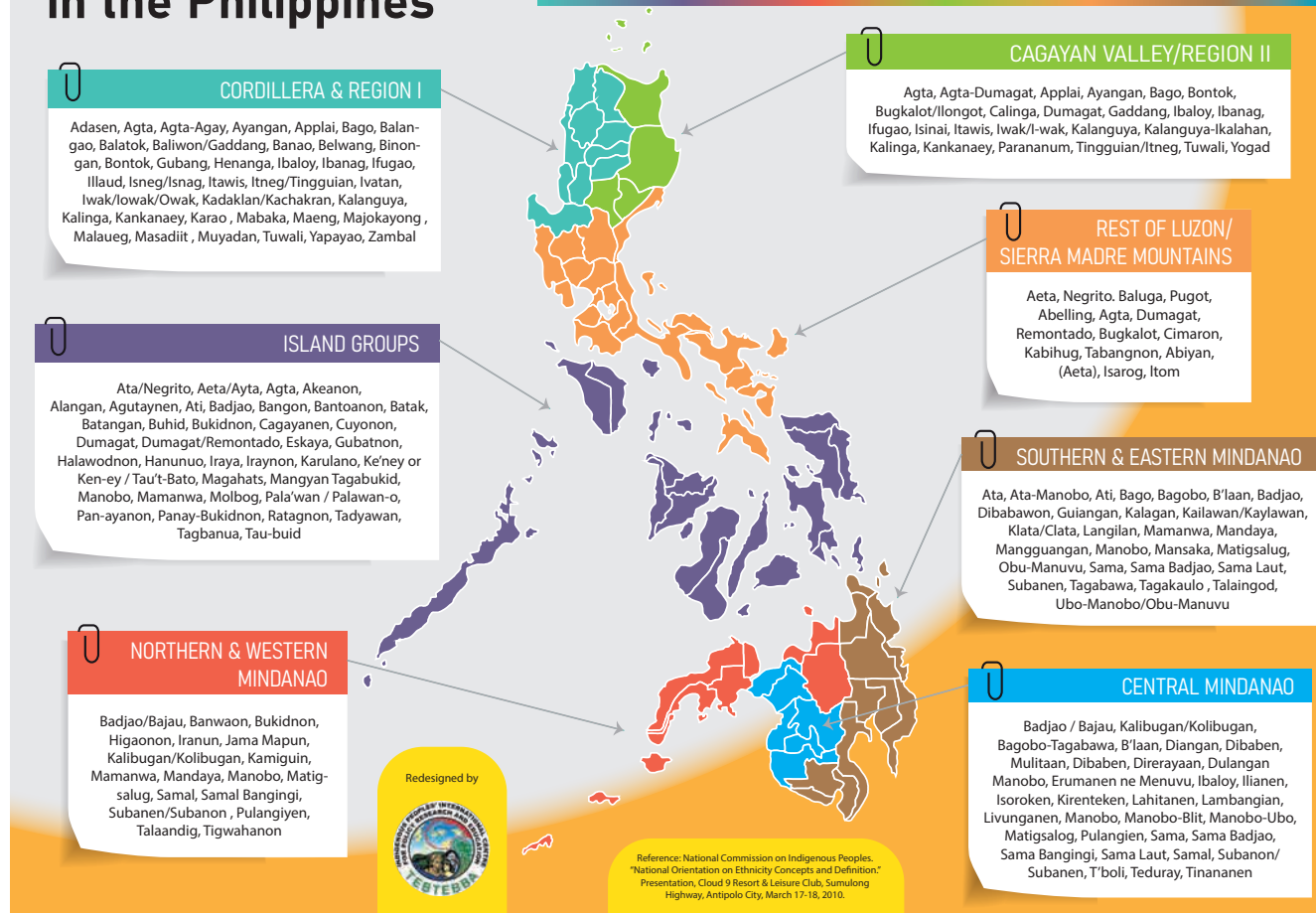


Figure 2: Ethnographic Regions in the Philippines

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA) or RA 8371 of the Philippines interchangeably use Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and refer to these as *a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos.*

ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains (IPRA, Section 3h).

Indigenous peoples share a common history of discrimination and marginalization through the lack of recognition of their rights to lands, territories and resources, institutions, distinct culture and knowledge systems. They formed their movement and won a landmark victory on September 13, 2007, when the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was approved.

Article 31 of the UNDRIP affirms the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions including the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures. Aside from the UNDRIP, there are other numerous agreements and treaties that were crafted for the protection, promotion and advancement of indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

Definition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP)

There is no single terminology and definition of the knowledge of indigenous peoples. Some terms that have been used to refer to it are traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), indigenous knowledge (IK), local knowledge, rural peoples' / farmers' knowledge, ethnobiology/ ethnobotany/ethnozoology, ethno science, folk science, and indigenous science.³ More recently, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) uses the term “indigenous and local knowledge.”

The United Nations Convention of Biological Diversity (UN CBD), uses the term **traditional knowledge**, to refer to the “knowledge, innovations and practices of local and indigenous communities around the world”. Transmitted orally from generation to generation and collectively owned, traditional knowledge “takes the form of stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds”.⁴

IPRA uses the term IKSP and defines this as “systems, institutions, mechanisms, technologies comprising a unique body of knowledge evolved through time embodying patterns of relationships between and among peoples, their lands and resource environment, including such spheres of relationships which may include social, political, cultural, economic, religious, and which are the direct outcome of the indigenous peoples' responses to certain needs consisting of adaptive mechanisms which have allowed indigenous peoples to survive and thrive within their given socio-cultural and biophysical conditions” (Rule II, Section 1, para. I of the IPRA Implementing Guidelines).



³ Tebtebba. *Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on Biological Diversity: An Education Resource Book* (Tebtebba: Philippines, 2010), 40.

⁴ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Traditional Knowledge and the Convention on Biological Diversity*. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/8j-brochure-en.pdf>.

IKSP in the Philippines

Like their other counterparts in the world, the worldviews and perspectives, knowledge systems and practices of the indigenous communities in the Philippines have been shaped from their relationship to their lands, which for them are their source of life and wellbeing.

“Nahubog at umunlad ang aming mga pananaw, kaugalian, kaalaman at kultura mula sa aming mahigpit na relasyon sa kalikasan at sa aming mga pamayanan. Ang aming kalupaan, katubigan, at iba pa ang kabuuan ng aming pag-iral bilang mga katutubong mamamayan, at gayundin ang pinagmulan ng aming buhay, kasaganahan, kalusugan, at kagalingan.”

- Ugnayang Pambansa para sa Katutubong Kaalaman at Talino (UPAKAT)

The Philippines is the first country in South East Asia to legally recognize the rights of indigenous peoples. Article XIV, Section 17 of the 1987 Constitution recognizes, respects and protects the rights of the ICCs/IPs' to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions and institutions within the framework of national development. These rights are elaborated with the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Acts in October 29, 1997. The IPRA recognizes the four bundles of indigenous peoples' rights i.e., rights to ancestral domains and lands, rights to self-governance and empowerment, rights to social justice and human rights, and rights to cultural integrity. Cultural integrity includes Sec. 34. *Right to Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices and to Develop Own Sciences and Technologies*, which recognizes the full ownership and control and protection of cultural and intellectual rights of IPs/ICCs.

Under Section VII of IPRA, the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) was created as “the primary government agency responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies, plans and programs to recognize, protect and promote the rights of ICCs/IPs.”

Other programs and institutions were also crafted for IKSP promotion and development including, but not limited to: (1) Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC) (R.A No. 8423, 1997) to accelerate the development of alternative health care that are safe and cost effective; (2) National Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPed) Policy Framework by the Department of Education Order No. 62, series of 2011 to promote the right of indigenous peoples to basic education that is responsive to their context, respects their identities, and promotes the value of their indigenous knowledge, skills, and other aspects of their cultural heritage; and (3) National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) which is mandated to coordinate policies and programs on the preservation, development and promotion of Philippine arts and culture, intergenerational transmission (such as the Schools of Living Traditions), among others.

Status and Trends in IKSP

Persistence and Continuity

Despite more than 300 years of colonization⁵ and present day discrimination and marginalization, IKSP continue to persist. Such persistence and continuity are attributed to IKSP's inextricable link to the existence of indigenous peoples and many of which embody the (very) concepts of sustainability.

“Ang lupa ay buhay” or “land is life” is a popular adage for indigenous peoples to reflect their views that their land is the source of their sustenance that have nurtured them for generations. Loss of land is equal to loss of life. This is the core inspiration among indigenous peoples to fight for and protect their lands from plunder and exploitation.

To sustain the watershed and ensure its functionality as provider of water, other services and resources for people's wellbeing, indigenous forest management systems are asserted. These include the Ifugao *muyung*, the Bontok *tayan*, the Western Mountain Province *saguday/lakon/batangan*. Common to all systems is the practice of planting choice trees to assist a growing natural forest/make a forest/enhance a forest, protection and regulation tree cutting. The Tingguians' *lapat* system, for example, declares portions of the territory off limits for some years to allow for regeneration or in some cases, as a method to protect certain plant species. These management systems put off pressure on the watersheds.

Indigenous women continue to be custodians of indigenous knowledge. As bearers and carers of the younger generations, indigenous women are the conveyors of traditional knowledge, skills, practices, values and Cosmo vision to their children and grandchildren. Taking on vital roles as food producers, gatherers and providers, indigenous women have exceptional knowledge on edible and medicinal resources, seed selection

and seed storage, not only when to plant but where best to plant. These are essential in guaranteeing food for their families and affords them significance in the continuity of indigenous knowledge and practice of sustainable agriculture and food systems consistent to their concept of well-being.

According to Ina Changani of Dananao, Kalinga, “For every eco-niche of the rice lands, near the rivers, in the shaded and exposed areas, near the home site—are certain rice varieties that suit the place, hence we maintain our diverse rice varieties.” The Dananao community takes care of more than 35 traditional crops that are vital for the nutrition of the community.



⁵ David Daoas et. al. Efforts at Protecting Traditional Knowledge: The experience of the Philippines presented during the World Intellectual Property Organization Roundtable on Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge (World Intellectual Property Organization: Geneva, October 7, 1999).

Dibabawon Indigenous Food System

The indigenous food system of the Dibabawon in Mindanao is connected to family-based reforestation and indigenous agroforestry. Their community has a land zoning system where they practice backyard farming by planting root crops, rice, peanut and cassava. They preserve their seeds in a small hut called *lukong*. A ritual called *sawit* is done during the harvest and performed by the *babaylan*. During the ritual, the community is called to eat. Solid waste management is also practiced and composting is undertaken in their backyard.⁶



Other robust practices include monitoring and learning by doing. Monitoring involves close observation of what is happening in the forest and in the farms, changes in weather and other events, which helps community in their decision-making processes. Learning by doing is one among the many indigenous ways of learning and knowing specially in the transfer of knowledge and skills of traditional occupations.

⁶ Annabelle Otao and Melba Relon. "Program on Human Rights, Food and Nutrition Security (Presentation)", *Narrative Report: In Person Stage. Bolivia, India, Peru and the Philippines* (FIMI and FAO: Indigenous Women's Global Leadership School, 2015-2016), 60.

Experience of the Guinaang Tribe of Pasil Kalinga

Venecio Lingbawan

“Monitoring events and observing our lands is one of our daily occupation. Around mid-2000, we observed a marked decrease in the yields of our crops especially our legumes and fruit trees and decrease in the population of the birds with some species even leaving. We pondered and recalled that we planted Gmelina in the 1990's in our *ba-ang* (agro-forestry areas) and *uma* (rotational agricultural lands). On close examination, we found out that there are very few plants that grow (if at all) underneath the Gmelina tree and we suspected this may be the cause of decreased yield. But we had to wait for the trees to mature before cutting and removing their roots. This was around 2010. By 2015, we were able to recover the desired yield of some of our fruit trees and revived our legume production. We also observed the return of the birds such as the *aggaongan* (humming bird), *samote*, *bulbilittan* (small birds), *bulilising*, *ilongan*, *kasi* (green parrot), *balog* (pigeon), *tilin* (rice birds), *martines* (dove) and crow. Our collective action restored biodiversity in two of our important land-use areas.

Review of some studies revealed that Gmelina is an invasive species that hosts insect pests *Ozola minor* and *Attacus sp.* which feed on flowers, and leaves of plants. They also leave pathogens which cause stem cankers in plants.”



Learning by Doing: Traditional Farming Skills Through Intergenerational transmission among the Ata-Manobo

“To prevent the erosion of the Ata-Manobo farming system among the younger generation, Liza, like other parents in their community, usually brings along her children with her to their farm especially during weekends and summer vacation. She wants her children, who are mostly going to school, to learn their traditional farming skills from her and her husband. When they grow up, she is confident that her children can also earn a living by practicing their traditional farming skills.”⁷

⁷ Angelina B. Ortiz. “Ensuring Food Security through Traditional Knowledge”, (Asia Indigenous Women’s Network: Baguio City, 2016-2017), 48-49.

External Threats

Despite laws and programs to protect, promote and develop IKSP both in the international and national levels, threats caused by external and internal factors also persist. These include:

Loss of Lands and Territories

In the country, 230 of the 447 large scale mining permits are located in ancestral territories of indigenous peoples covering 542,245 hectares which is 72% of the total land area covered by extractive industries. These include 5 coal mining permits in the Andap Valley Complex and several provinces in Mindanao (IWGIA, 2019). Such extractive industry, mega dams and expansion of monocrop plantations, among others, have and continue to displace indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands and territories resulting to loss and weakening of indigenous resource management systems.

Prevalence of a Westernized Educational System

The formal educational system since colonial times, projects the view that “indigenous ways of life are backward and that indigenous knowledge and skills are inferior or invalid when compared to western science.”⁸ This ingrained a discriminatory attitude against IKSP and has “suppressed native sensibility.”⁹ Formal schools continue to use textbooks with discriminatory messaging against indigenous peoples in spite of the government’s Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program.¹⁰

Conflicting Policies and Programs

As lands and territories serve as anchors of IKSP, secured tenure is an important ingredient for IKSP to thrive and develop. However, even after more than 20 years of IPRA, securing legal recognition and effective control of resources by indigenous peoples is hampered by conflicting laws, e.g., the Revised Forestry Code (PD 705).¹¹ Also, despite the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Act (TAMA) of 1997, indigenous birth attendants have been disenfranchised of their knowledge and skills in reproductive, child and maternal health care in the implementation of

⁸ ECIP, Indigenous Peoples’ Education: From Alienation to Rootedness, consolidated report by the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

⁹ Web.nip.gov.ph/plcom2018/sites/default/Philippines_culture based-education.pdf.

¹⁰ Go, A. C. (2018). Errors in our textbook. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/113181/errors-in-our-textbooks?fbclid=IwAR2Lh7EGQNmGDwhKCjX-z-ItF-OzIKOe4-WOVb2BulU75PVyEExmfb4vdvo>.

¹¹ David De Vera. *Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines*, A Country Case (paper presented at the RNIP Regional Assembly, Hanoi, Vietnam, Aug 20-26, 2007), http://www.iapad.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/devera_ip_phl.pdf.

the Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN) program. This has resulted to the criminalization of some indigenous birth attendants and citizens as local government units interpreted this into “No Home Birthing Policy.” While the intention of these policies and programs may be good, the strategies are not sensitive nor appropriate in the indigenous peoples’ context, thus, invalidating IKSP.

Imposition of “New” Inappropriate Programs and Technology

As IKSP is seen as inferior and backward, modern ways are imposed or indiscriminately promoted in indigenous peoples’ communities like the mono-crop agriculture that requires high external agriculture input. Traditional agriculture which cares for the soil and environment and promote agrobiodiversity, (i.e., diverse diet from the wilds and farm lands), gives way to the modern agriculture that poisons food, land and water, and sometimes introduces genetically modified organisms and invasive species, e.g., BT-Corn, golden apple snail, etc.



Armed Conflict and Militarization

Indigenous peoples are mostly found in rural areas where armed conflicts are waged and are often caught between warring factions. Militarization disrupts their everyday life with imposition of curfews, restriction of movement, food and economic blockades and sometimes displacement. Depending on the situation, people have to adjust their methods and practices to whatever can be done to cope in such a situation. This phenomenon stagnates and distorts knowledge system and practices. Like in rotational agricultural areas, some areas have to “rest” to allow for re-generation but as people cannot go far from their settlement, the same lands have to be cultivated repeatedly, thus over-exploitation of the land happens.



Intolerance of Some Organized Religions

Indigenous peoples believe in a Supreme being, the Creator who gifted people with natural resources and the ancestors and nature spirits whose dwelling places must be respected. Such belief contributes to the protective and conservation mechanism that is accorded to the different parts of the territories which sustain peoples’ food and livelihood. These belief systems are expressed in rituals which are also venues for family reunions. Some organized religions criticize indigenous belief systems and their recruits veer away from indigenous expressions of their spirituality.



Internal Threats

Aside from the disintegration of IKSP brought by external factors, there are internal threats within indigenous communities that aggravate the weakening of their knowledge systems, culture and values.

Loss of Traditional Avenues for IKSP Transmission

A lot of IKSPs are dependent on and are inspired by the resources in the community and the primary indigenous ways of learning and knowing by doing, actual observation and participation. Loss or fragmentation of lands significantly decreased certain resources which often result to less chances to practice IKSPs. The lack of practice of IKSPs also means loss of opportunity to transmit these.

Increasingly, the wisdom of the respected elders, the culture bearers and other holders of traditional knowledge are seen as obsolete and thus are ignored.



Outmigration

Due to lack of basic services including tertiary education and employment opportunities in rural areas, young and able-bodied community members migrate to other areas for education and work. Among indigenous women, employment overseas as domestic helps, factory workers and other blue-collar jobs, has been a common resort. Such diaspora and the absence of people in their communities contribute to the breakdown of practice and transmission of IKSP.

Changing Values and Perspectives

The interplay of both external and internal threats, the increased access to transportation and communication and connection to cash economy, impacts a significant change in the social milieu of indigenous peoples' communities. The adoption of mainstream culture, and "new" ways (e.g., a new religion, modern farming, western medicine) are also changing the views and perspectives among younger generation, weakening IKSP and creating intergenerational gaps.

Many of the above-mentioned threats manifest lack of recognition and respect to the rights of indigenous peoples. The overall impact is the disintegration, erosion, weakening and stagnation of IKSP and in worse cases, the loss of IKSP. Indigenous language, which is the storage of IKSP "which connects IPs with their past, identity and ancestry," for example, is being lost by the minute.¹²



¹² Gregorio, N.A., 2020. Why Baybayin and Indigenous Languages are Still Relevant to Filipinos, SBS Filipino, (updated) January 10, 2020.

Initiatives for the Protection, Promotion, and Advancement of IKSP

Since time immemorial, indigenous communities continue to struggle for the continuity of their culture, knowledge systems, practices and technologies. While some do these on their own, many have formalized their indigenous organizations and linked with other indigenous peoples' support groups and friendly government bodies to generate support and/or mobilize resources to protect, promote, develop and advance their IKSP through preservation, innovations and enhancement, assertion and revitalization. To a great extent, these initiatives are part of indigenous peoples' assertion of their rights to lands and resources and to self-determination.

Protection, Promotion through Research and Documentation

Recognizing that oral tradition has its limitation and that many knowledge holders are dying without transmitting the IKSP that they hold, many indigenous peoples are doing research and documentation on the various aspects of IKSP. Research and documentation are carried out not only to preserve IKSPs but also to initiate revitalization, innovations and promotion of such. Moreover, with the implementation of the IPED Program, documentation and research also serve as inputs to the the indigenization of the formal education curriculum.





Excerpt from the Project Research and Documentation of Indigenous Concepts and Values on Sustainability among the Kankanaey of Payeo and Besao West, Mountain Province, Philippines

The concept and values on sustainability start with the *ili*, the territory that is inclusive of the different ecosystems and land uses—ricefields (*payeo*), forest (*pagpag*), pine forest (*batangan*), river (*ginawang*), grazing land or pastures (*pastolan*), sacred sites (*papatayan*) and residential areas. This extends to the *umili*, the members of the *ili* whether they are currently residing in the territory or are elsewhere.

Sustainability is seen as protecting, managing and nurturing the *ili* by the people and the *ili*, in turn, will also nurture and protect the people. The concern of the *ili* for their members and the obligations that the members have towards their *ili* continue to be alive, expressed and felt.

Og-ogbo and *binnadang* (helping each other) are practiced when preparing rice fields and building houses. Without strings attached, everyone is *mabka* (help out) for *depdep* or putting out forest fires (*puo*) and in *askay* (search and rescue) when someone is missing or has disappeared.

The Kankanaey values of *inayan* and *lawa* forbid any act that causes harm or injury to anyone or anything, living or non-living, as they believe that everything is interconnected. *Inayan* is the local version of the golden rule. “If you do something bad or harmful that goes against the interest and good of the *ili*, its members, the land and environment, something bad will also happen to you.”

It is actually a command of “don’t” but on a deeper level, it speaks of respect, justice, unity, ethics, sharing and helping other persons or things.

It has been mentioned by the informants that these practices are weakening and disintegrating, along with the language terms that express these beliefs and practices.

Documenters: Jill Cariño, Josefa Isabel Tauli and Ana Kinja Tauli (2019)

Enhancement/Innovations and Development

Knowledge of indigenous peoples continues to develop through time. These are results of communities' dynamic adaptation to changes in situation and to address new challenges, including innovation and development in traditional occupations like, farming, weaving and pottery, among others.

For about fifty years, indigenous communities advocated for a culturally sensitive education that are reflective of their cultural context, aspirations and concerns.¹³ In response, some groups, aside from their advocacy work, set up their IP Education Programs and developed their own modules and curricula for indigenous peoples' education even before the National Indigenous Peoples' Education Policy of the Department of Education in 2011.



*Innovations in farming systems:
learning by doing among the youths.
(Photo credit: Pidlisian Tribe
Organization)*

Learning and knowing from Ancestral Domain Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta (SPA) in General Nakar, Quezon

One initiative is that of the Sentrong Paaralan ng mga Agta (SPA) in General Nakar, Quezon Province. They were able to develop a curriculum that makes use of the whole ancestral domain as the classroom and where schedules of subjects are aligned with the seasons of the year. The first and second quarter are themed, "life is rooted in nature" - the children are taught with the different principles and perform different activities connected to water resources during the first quarter. By the second quarter, they pursue experiential activities linked to land/forest resources. "Agta's life is rooted in family" is the theme for the third quarter where their life cycle from birth to death are discussed. Craft making and building houses are also taught. The last quarter is devoted to their community life wherein the interrelationship of the Agta with their ancestral domain is discussed.

¹³ Victor, M.L and Yano Belmer, Actualizing the Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Education: A Policy Initiative in the Philippines.



Enhancing Formal Education through the Indigenous Peoples' Education and Learning Systems (IPELs) of the Silingang Dapit sa Sidlakang Mindanao (SILDAP)

Established in 1986, SILDAP established its IPEL's program in its areas of operations where there is absence or lack of schools. Aside from meeting the DepEd standards for academic performance, IPELs had to meet the demand for IP sensitive education as well. It developed modules on Culture, Values and Identity; Lands Territories and Resources.

As of 2018, SILDAP reported significant achievement shown in the communities of Mansaka, Mandaya, Manguangan, Ata-Manobo and Dibabawon that it serves:

1. Most of the graduates became leaders of their own communities and have developed confidence to express their issues and concerns and facilitate community processes towards realizing their common aspirations;
2. Decreased number of youth going to cities to work as house helpers who are prone to human trafficking, drug addiction and engagement in other illegal activities;
3. Minimized cases of early marriages as one of the major causes of dropouts among IP teenagers;
4. SILDAP was instrumental in the passage of the DepEd Executive Order no. 62, series of 2011. It provided inputs to the DepEd in conceptualizing the IP education and culture-based instructional materials appropriate for the development of knowledge and skills of indigenous peoples; and
5. Turned over 9 community schools to DepEd as it expands to other remote areas not yet reached by government schools.

Enhancing Community Research

Some partner communities of Tebtebba are enhancing their monitoring and information methods through their project on Community-Based Monitoring and Information Systems (CBMIS). The CBMIS makes use of indicators/themes most relevant to indigenous peoples as priority areas of research, e.g., lands territories and resources including biodiversity and ecosystems, IKSP including customary governance, resource management, values, and implementation of human and indigenous peoples' rights; e.g., self-determination, among others.

It makes use of both indigenous and modern methodologies in data generation, data/information storage and monitoring systems – from the tradition of actual observations, storytelling, sharing of experiences to focused group discussions and key informant interviews and to the use of smart phones, geographic information system (GIS) mapping and geo-tagging among others.

CBMIS is being promoted to help improve decision making process, development planning, implementation and evaluation, advocacy and networking work in indigenous peoples' communities.



Revitalization and Re-living IKSP

The erosion and weakening of IKSP create and bring in other problems in community relations and solidarity. It makes people realize that the solution to some of their problems can be addressed through the revitalization of their IKSP.

Asserting and Revitalizing the Késéfenangguwit Timuay or Timuay Justice and Governance of the Téduray and Lambangian Peoples

The revitalization of the Késéfenangguwit Timuay or the Timuay Justice and Governance (TJG) the indigenous political system (IPS) or traditional form of leadership and governance system and conflict resolution mechanism of the Téduray and Lambangian peoples started in 1990 with the documentation Késéfenangguwit Timuay: *Ukit* or Constitution, *Tégudon* (creed and/or litany of good and bad practices of the Téduray and Lambangian), *dowoy* (penal provisions), guide for the Baglalan (*tribal title holders*) on leadership and guide of Kéfédéwan (Tribal or Customary Justices) for the task of Tiyawon (tribal judicial procedures).

Guiding Principles in Tribal Leadership

1. Refa Lowo – Malapit na ugnayan ng tao sa lupa at kalikasan dahil ang mga ito ay itinuturing na karugtong ng ating buhay at katawan
2. Ang kolektibong pamumuno at kapangyarihan ng mga Baglalan ay nagmumula sa mamamayan ng kanilang nasasakupan
3. Komunal na pag-aari sa mga gubat, ilog at iba pang likas na yaman na nasa loob ng teritoryo
4. Pantay na kalagayan ng tao sa lipunan. Ang lahat ng tao ay anak ng Inang Lupa kaya hindi pwedeng gamitin ng tao ang kapwa tao bilang tuntungan para maging mas mataas sa lipunan
5. Kefiyo fedew (good feeling) – ang anumang pagbabago na hindi nakapagbibigay ng *good feeling* sa tao at sa pamayanan ay hindi kaunlaran
6. Lumut Minanga: Pluralismo o bukas na pagtanggap ng paniniwala at kaisipan ng ibang tao o grupo nang hindi bumibitaw sa prinsipyo at polisiya ng tribo
7. Kusang paggawa – Ang paglilingkod ng mga Baglalan sa TJG ay bukal sa kanilang kalooban at hindi nangangailangan ng kabayaran

Translation of the principles: (1) closeness and good relations with land and nature; (2) the collective leadership and authority of the tribal leaders emanates from their constituency; (3) communal ownership of resources within the territory, (4) equality (5) peace of mind as basis of justice and development - change should always create GOOD FEELING. If not, then it is not progress but rather, a regression. (6) progressive pluralism - being open to other ideas but never compromise principles and policies of your people; (7) voluntary work

Completed in 1994, the Késéfenangguwit Timuay was adopted by the community in 1995 and was made fully operational on October 29, 1997.

Gains in strengthening their IPS include, but not limited to:

1. the communities became more effective in their collective action in defending their lands against illegal logging activities and threats of nickel mining;
2. practice of their indigenous justice system and customary laws;
3. TJG and its customary laws were recognized by the Muslim Autonomy Act No. 241 (Tribal Peoples Rights Act) in 2008. Following rules and regulations governing registration of acts and events concerning civil status of indigenous peoples or the National Statistics Office (NSO) Administrative Order No. 3, series of 2004, TJG started issuing certificates of live birth, tribal death certificates, and tribal marriages in 2010 among its constituents.

Interfacing and Promotion

The Maeng of the municipality of Tubo, Abra were also faced with the challenge of maintaining their culture and tradition amidst modernization. As a solution, they interfaced their *dap-ay* system or their indigenous political structure with their Local Government Code in 2015. The interfaced form of government modified the structure of the Maeng's local government where the voice of the council of elders are considered in the planning and decision-making processes in the municipality. This guarantees that the communal ownership of land remains and any development activities within their ancestral domain obtain community's free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

The integration of IKSPs in the health care system is also worth highlighting. In Mountain Province, an Ordinance (Number 096) was enacted in 2010 that established the Mountain Province Pinagpagan Community Health and Social Development Team in all barangays of the province. This aims to adopt and integrate policies on health and other social development programs of the provincial government. The ordinance was adopted by the municipality of Sagada but subsequently called it Community Social Development Teams (CSDT).

In barangay Madongo, one of the activities that the CSDT has done was to incorporate the indigenous and alternative health care practices to the formal health services provided by the government to the community. Examples of this include: the use of *bakget* (or traditional belt) for a woman who has just given birth, *gebbaw/gobbaw* or naming ritual when the umbilical cord of the newborn is detached and the *lang-ay* system where the newborn child is breastfed by other women if the mother is not immediately capable.

They also adopted measures to promote good health and nutrition status of the community. These resulted to the stronger participation and involvement of barangay officials and improved the health and sanitation situation of the community. For this reason, they won first place in the Search for Best Community Health team in the Province in 2012 for showing how the community was able to fuse traditional and modern practices for better health system.

IKSP and the Youth

Given Indigenous peoples' experiences of historical discrimination and the multiple threats and challenges to cultural integrity, IKSPs are at various stages of erosion as knowledge holders are declining in practice and numbers. This creates a gap in the transmission to, and therefore, appreciation of IKSPs among the youth. This is especially true among indigenous peoples with continuing experiences of grave discrimination. But given space and opportunities, indigenous youth have expressed interest in learning more and understanding indigenous knowledge and culture as can be gleaned from some of their reflections in various activities conducted by Tebtebba and partners.

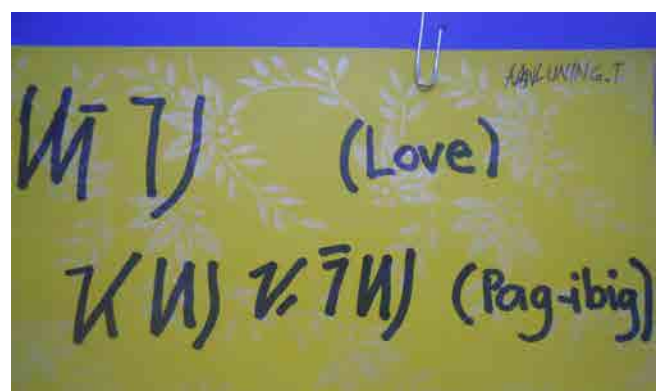
"The Hanunuo Mangyan children and youth participants mentioned many aspects of their culture they wanted to learn about, including those they say they are already knowledgeable about such as *tarok* and *Surat Mangyan* (indigenous system of writing). This shows that they want to continually increase their knowledge and understanding of various aspects of their culture. Other commonly mentioned are *daga ginurang*, *suyot* (folklore), *dagyawan* (community solidarity and mutual labor), *pamag-uhan* (a celebration connected to the first batch of harvest) and *sagda and panagdahan* (rituals and ritual sites)."¹⁴

*"I want to have an education oriented towards the Talaandig culture. I have noticed that knowledge on our culture is being lost. One of the reasons [why rituals are ceasing] is because of the arrival of [Western] religion [i.e. Christianity], because it is in conflict with the traditions of the Talaandig. For example, the pagpamuhat is not being respected as it is considered bad and is against the law. However, the truth is that the [tribe]/peoples' traditions and way of living precedes this religion (referring to Christianity)."*¹⁵

- 16-year old Talaandig youth from Miarayon, Bukidnon

"It is good to know our ways of life. It is the one that makes us different from others. Like, we know the different tasks that are needed to work the rice land, that our friends and young relatives from Baguio don't. It gives a good feeling when you can teach something new to a friend. But other than that, we also like to learn more of our values and culture."

- a teenager from Pidlisan tribe in Sagada, Mt. Province,
January, 24, 2016,
Orientation on Video Production



¹⁴ Abigail Kitma and James Alim. "Children and Youth Component" draft, PAGSASALINLAHI 1 Research (UNICEF-Tebtebba: Philippines, February 2020).

¹⁵ Ibid.

Recommendations

A. For indigenous peoples and indigenous communities

1. Strengthen unity to be able to collectively address the threats that have plagued their development since time immemorial;
2. Harness both individual and collective capacities to contribute to arresting the trend of IKSP erosion and dis-integration and to make a transformative change for IKSP advancement.
 - For the young people, proactively seek the knowledge holders and elders in their communities to know their tales, legends, songs, riddles, livelihood systems, (e.g., farming, bead works, arts and crafts, clothes designs), to listen and document these, to continue the tradition of learning by doing the livelihoods that have sustained indigenous peoples for generations and help in the needed innovations of these.
 - For the elders, build/rebuild their confidence as transmitters of knowledge from their ancestors to the young, engage the youth and impart IKSP to the younger generation but also allow them to learn new things outside their communities.
 - For the indigenous peoples in the teaching profession, take every opportunity in the implementation of IPED to facilitate a process of re-affirming identity and strengthening cultural knowledge and skills.
 - For indigenous peoples to practice and promote use of mother tongue in their communities, foremost, as part of their identity and support to the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE). “Research stresses that children with solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities and their knowledge and skills transfer across languages.”¹⁶ Indigenous communities are encouraged to initiate the making of their own dictionaries as there has been little work on these.



¹⁶ <https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/Mother-Tongue-CG.pdf>.



B. For policy makers, planners and decision makers

1. The laws that recognize the inherent and collective rights of indigenous peoples must be fulfilled. While there is strong legal framework, with supporting implementing rules and regulations for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, there are gaps and discrepancies in the implementation that needed to be addressed.
2. Implement the free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) as prescribed in the IPRA and FPIC guidelines or as prescribed by the customary FPIC process of indigenous communities. Even after more than 20 years of IPRA, FPIC which is also a fundamental value, has been plagued with onerous dealings that sometimes result to further human rights violation.
3. Full and effective participation of concerned indigenous communities in the research and documentation of their IKSP must be ensured at all times. Research should be an educational process that facilitates a community/collective analysis of the matter being researched and that community be the first to benefit on the knowledge produced.
4. Provide support to indigenous community programs for the initiatives that they are doing - research and documentation, innovations and curriculum development, among others.
5. Build collaborative partnerships between indigenous peoples' communities and concerned stakeholders for the development of culturally appropriate educational curriculum that considers indigenous ways of learning and doing (e.g., connection of children to actual places in their ancestral domain and to their own histories) and in the development and most crucial, the implementation of ancestral domain sustainable development and protection plan (ADSDPP) or the comprehensive land use plan (CLUP) within indigenous peoples' holistic perspective.



Despite more than 300 years of colonization and present day discrimination and marginalization, indigenous knowledge systems and practices continue to persist. Such persistence and continuity are attributed to IKSP's inextricable link to the existence of indigenous peoples and many of which embody the (very) concepts of sustainability.

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