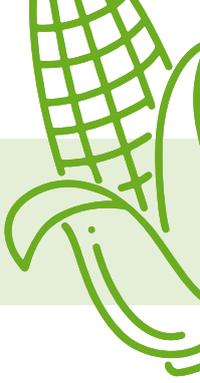


Theme 1

Food, Forests, and Farmers *Finding Sustainable Pathways for the Future*



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ABSTRACT

Perspective From the Ground: Indigenous Cultural Communities at the Forefront of Forest Conservation

by Archie Tulin

Globally, there is a growing recognition of the vital role of the Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) in keeping and maintaining the ecological integrity of our forests and in addressing the climate crisis. However, despite this growing recognition, most of the ICCs/IPs still face discrimination and are further alienated from their ancestral domains due to a variety of factors such as development aggression, presence of intrusive and extractive projects inside their ancestral domains, violation of their fundamental rights especially of their right to Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and the presence and enactment of inappropriate policies that serves to limit the exercise of their rights.

For instance, the Higaunon ICCs/IPs in the Kimangkil-Kalanawan-Sumagaya-Pamalihi (KKSP) mountain range in Northern Mindanao, since time immemorial, have been managing approximately 100,000 hectares of forested landscape. Their motivation to protect and conserve this forested landscape is grounded on their intimate connection with the land, which serves as their worship and sacred space, traditionally known as "*Pina, Tulungdanon, Patagonan*". These forested areas that are mostly primary forest are community strict protection zones. Accordingly, the Higaunon ICCs/IPs in KKSP have designated certain forested and adjoining areas as "*Bahaw-bahaw, Iglalaw, Salama*" i.e. traditional zones for hunting, farming, and gathering of a number of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for food security and livelihood needs.

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Despite having a clear delineation of their ancestral domain, Higaunon ICCs/IPs in KKSP face threats from development aggression and inappropriate enactment of policies. Consequently, the Higaunon ICCs/IPs work on the documentation and registration to appropriate registries of their ICCAs in KKSP in a bid to ensure the protection and conservation of their sacred areas as well as the recognition of their rights to their ancestral territory. Further, the women and youth engaged in community-based enterprise development activities, utilizing locally-available NTFP resources to promote sustainable forest conservation practices and secure sustainable livelihood opportunities for their members.

About the Author

Archie Tulin is the Resource Management Officer of Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) Philippines, a network of NGOs and POs in the Philippines working on forest conservation and enhancement of livelihoods to forest-dependent communities through promoting forest management strategies that are sustainable, culturally-appropriate and gender transformative. He has been working with the organization for the past seven years and is currently working with indigenous cultural communities in Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental landscape in Northern Mindanao.

Archie has been assisting these communities on NTFP-based forest resources management and providing technical assistance in the documentation and recognition of their ICCAs. He has an academic background on Environmental Management and a youth fellow of the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung's Academy of Political Management for young progressive leaders in the Philippines.