

JICA and Indigenous Peoples

Globalization is inevitable. No matter how we strive to avoid it, every person even in the remotest places will soon receive his dose of the outside world. How do indigenous communities cope with all the changes happening around them? Are they strong enough to fight against extractive pursuits like logging and mining that threaten their ancestral lands—their only source of life? This is where aid comes in. Humanitarian agencies do not have all the answers. But help in any form is much appreciated by indigenous peoples (IP). For despite the challenges that indigenous communities face, they are determined to improve their conditions.

As we celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous People on August 9, let us revisit two JICA-aided projects that benefit major indigenous communities in the Philippines: the Ifugaos and the Mangyans.

Livelihood for Ifugaos Health Care for Mangyans

The Ifugaos of northern Philippines are known for building the famous rice terraces, which they carved on the high slopes of the Cordillera mountains. These rice terraces created over 2,000 years ago are so impressive that they earned the distinction as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. The people and their land are inseparable; thus, both are called by the same name, Ifugao. As the Ifugao's source of life and art, the rice terraces have sustained and shaped them as a community.

However, the Ifugao Rice Terraces are suffering from environmental threats. This is mainly due to large-scale commercial logging and slash-and-burn farming. As a result, there has been a startling decrease in the volume of available spring water and deterioration of the rice terraces.

To avert these threats, JICA embarked on a reforestation project in Ifugao together with a Japanese NGO, the International Keeping Good Sannan (IKGS), and the Ifugao community. The project covered parts of Banaue, Kiangan, Hungduan and Asipulo. (continued on page 2...)

JICA and the 21st Century Association (21CA), a Japanese NGO, launched a project that will create a health and sanitation system for Mangyan Alangans, in April of this year. The project will benefit 6,500 Mangyan Alangans living in a village called Amnay, in the municipality of Santa Cruz in Occidental Mindoro.

Mangyan is the generic name for the eight indigenous groups found in Mindoro Island. Each group has its own tribal name, language, and customs. The group of Mangyan Alangans is one of them.

Most of the Alangans are poor upland farmers, with the means to plant only what is enough for their consumption. This includes a variety of sweet potato, upland (dry cultivation) rice and taro. They also trap small animals and wild pigs. Many who live in close contact with lowland Filipinos are able to sell cash crops like bananas and ginger. They are skilled artisans as well. The Alangans are semi-nomadic; they move once every few years. Hence, the concept of private land ownership (continued on page 2...)



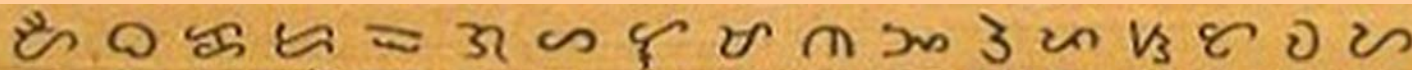
Ms. Kawata of JICA Hyogo and Mr. Nauyac performing an Ifugao dance

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Mangyan kids dancing in Amnay



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The project, however, took an unexpected turn. The project partners observed that in order to ensure a continuing interest in environmental preservation, basic needs of the family must first be satisfied.

As Mr. Reynaldo Lopez-Nauyac, a concerned citizen of Hungduan explained, *“not so many people are interested to plant trees because they have immediate short-term needs to sustain the family.”* This is why tree-planting participants are often compensated for their time off farm work. Based on this, the sustainability of environmental projects or the project’s lifespan beyond the presence of aid, therefore, partly relies on the community’s socio-economic state as well. Mr. Nauyac further explained that only when the people of Ifugao get enough income from the rice terraces will they be stopped from abandoning the rice terraces for “greener pastures”.

Hence, the project was expanded to include socio-economic development. One component is the production of a fresh-water fish that thrives in the rice terraces. Locally known as *yuyu* (weather loach), this fish has a worm-like body and grows to about 3 to 4 inches long. It is believed that Japanese immigrants brought the fish to Ifugao before the war. However, supply dwindled to near extinction due to the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and the spread of pests like Golden Kuhol Shell that eats newly-hatched *yuyus*. IKGS set up breeding facilities and helped train local farmers on *yuyu* breeding.

Another component is the creation of a learning village. Named after the local word for ‘spirit dwelling’, the Lagud Village Learning Inn provides young members of the community with the opportunity to learn more about their Ifugao heritage. They dance together, sing and recite lines from their traditional oral history. As these local teenagers learn to appreciate their own culture, they plant trees to protect their prized land and share these experiences with guests who come to stay at the village and participate in local activities.

The Lagud Village Learning Inn is a cluster of traditional Ifugao houses, perched on the top of a hill with a panoramic view of the mountains and rice terraces that lie around it. For its good location in the town of Banaue, and the unique experiences that it offers to visitors, it has begun to generate a modest amount of revenue from accommodation and food charges from tourists. This amount is used to send these young community members to school. This year, the project sends three of them to college.

In effect, the project empowers Ifugao communities to protect, preserve and enhance their forest through these supplemental livelihood means. JICA’s assistance will be completed by the end of this year but the project lives on under the care of its proud owners, the Ifugaos.



A Yuyu or Weather Loach (left) and its reflection take a shape similar to the ancient Philippine Calligraphy called Baybayin (below)

is new to them. For the Alangans, property only consists of clothes, necklaces, bolo, hatchet, medicine box, betel nut box, pigs, chickens, bananas, etc.

Like most Mangyans, Alangans are generally marginalized and isolated by the lowlanders. The heaviest toll of this marginalization is on health and nutrition.

A study undertaken by the De La Salle University entitled “The Health and Nutrition Situation of Children and Women in Indigenous Communities” shows that a great number of indigenous people have deficient diets due primarily to the increasing poverty in their areas. Depletion of their natural resources makes the situation even worse. The lack of potable water and sanitary toilets, combined with limited access to basic services, increases the indigenous people’s vulnerability to some diseases.

According to 21CA, malaria and tuberculosis are common in the Amnay Community. 21CA’s data likewise revealed that 6 out of 10 Alangans die before they reach the age of 18 due to poor health, nutrition and sanitation system.

Hence, under this project, JICA and 21CA will establish a health care center in Amnay. With the support of these organizations, Amnay citizens will explore the operation of a minority health cooperative, to ensure the project’s sustainability. Another unique feature of the project is the use of traditional medicine. The project runs from April 2008 to March 2011.

Prior to this cooperation between JICA and 21CA for health and sanitation in Amnay, the two organizations have partnered in another project on literacy promotion and livelihood improvement in the same area.



To the Ifugaos, “Lagud” means spirit world. The photo above shows the Lagud Village Learning Inn in Barangay Uhaj, Banaue. For reservations, please call 09164512604 Mr. Santos

Modern Indigenous

“We work with forest-based communities in using forest resources, in an optimal and sustainable manner,” Ms. Bing Decena of the Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) told the NGO Desk, when asked what the programme is all about. She further explained that members of this regional NGO-network pool and share their experiences and expertise in forest management.

For the NTFP-EP, the destruction of tens of hectares of forests each day is not only an environmental concern, but a social issue as well. With forest destruction comes the displacement of indigenous communities. Hence, NTFP-EP Partner NGOs initiate activities that not only support basic livelihood but also provide a strong incentive for people involvement in forest conservation.

From its humble beginnings as an informal group 10 years ago, NTFP-EP has grown to about 40 partner-NGOs from six countries: India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Their common denominator is their concern for forest-dependent communities, particularly indigenous peoples. These are the communities who gather materials from the forest as sustenance or as income resource.

NTFP-EP and local communities work together, with utmost respect for the integrity of cultural traditions. They strive to ensure that the benefits of their initiatives are equally enjoyed by all the members of the community.

For instance, it has been a give-and-take learning experience for NGOs like the Indonesian Forest Honey Network, the Bee Research and Development Center (Vietnam), the Keystone Foundation (India) and the Nagkakaisang mga Tribu ng Palawan (Philippines) on the concept “Saving Forests through Bees”.

NTFP-EP in the Philippines, where the NTFP-EP’s head office is located, created a lifestyle brand that promotes forest products to high-end markets like Europe, US and Japan. ‘Modern Indigenous’ or MODI, as the brand is called, has been featured in the Philippine Pavilion at the World Expo 2005 held in Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

As one of the designers said, “What attracted me (to MODI) was the fact that we can make a difference... in the way people perceive tribal craft”. In the same way, NTFP-EP aims to make a difference in the way the forest and its resources are perceived and utilized in modern times.



On the model is a MODI jacket hand-embroidered by a T'boli Artisan from Lake Sebu in Southern Philippines. She is sitting on a stool inspired by the Tabud basket of Mangyan Alangans. The seat, as well as the basket in her hand, is made from rattan and handwoven by a Mangyan Alangan Artisan. (Photo taken from www.modiphilippines.com)



Hurray! Indigenous peoples receive their CADT

KASAPI: Part of a Whole

‘Kasapi’ is a Tagalog word that means ‘member’ or ‘part of the whole’. But for indigenous peoples (IP) in the Philippines, ‘kasapi’ represents a grander, more meaningful value. It stands for Koalisyon ng Katutubong Samahan ng Pilipinas, Inc. (National Coalition of Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations in the Philippines), a national network of 250 community-based organizations that represent 64 of the country’s 110 ethno-linguistic groups. KASAPI strives for total respect for IPs’ rights to their ancestral land and cultural integrity.

Since its creation in 1997, KASAPI continues to engage the Philippine government at all levels to ensure the active participation of IP leaders in setting the national development agenda, particularly as it relates to IP rights and other specific policies that affect them. As such, KASAPI has a hand in the creation of the implementing rules and regulations of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA), as well as in the activities that the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) undertakes.

Recognizing the inseparability of land and people, KASAPI deems it a priority for all its members to earn their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) or Title (CADT). Hence, most KASAPI members have been awarded a CADT or are in the process of their application.

In partnership with different NGOs and support groups, KASAPI gets assistance in livelihood development and other social services for its members such as the construction of potable water systems, processing of non-timber forest products (through NTFP-EP), microfinance, agriculture production and marketing. KASAPI has likewise been implementing a scholarship program for poor but promising students from the IP communities. In the past five years, KASAPI supported the college education of about fifty (50) deserving students.

With KASAPI in the picture, IPs found it a little less challenging to integrate with the mainstream, and to indeed be part of the whole—an important and integral part that is.

I P F A S T F A C T S

According to the data from the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), there are more than 110 ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines, with an estimated ethnic population of 8 million¹ or 10% of the country's 80 million people. Half of them are in Mindanao (48.29%) and the other half in Luzon (49.47%), with a few 2.24% scattered across the different Visayas islands².

To this day, they still practice a lifestyle that flourished before Islamic and Spanish contact. Their arts and culture are the last remnants of a rich part of Philippine history. Hence, these indigenous communities are an important and integral part of the Filipino Identity.

¹ Source: www.ncip.gov.ph downloaded June 25, 2008

² Palawan, in this tally, is still considered part of Luzon

JICA Senior VP addresses Japan-RP NGOs at Symposium

JICA Vice President Kenzo Oshima addressed participants at the 2nd Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium held in Tokyo on July 17-19, 2008. More than 50 non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives attended the said event, of which 20 are from the Philippines and 30 are from Japan. The symposium, which coincides with the celebration of the 51st Anniversary of the Philippines - Japan Diplomatic Relations this July, aims to further the partnership among the countries' NGOs and related sectors. The event likewise provides a venue for talks about assistance for the Philippines' poor communities.

The governments of the two countries expressed their support for the event through Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, JICA, the Japan Foundation and the Embassy of the Philippines to Japan. Former Philippine Senator Juan Flavio Velasco delivered key talks on the theme "Democracy, Empowerment of the Poor and the Role of

NGOs". A member of Japan's House of Representatives, Mr. Taro Nakayama, and Philippine Ambassador to Japan Domingo L. Siazon graced the occasion as well. Other attendees included the representatives from the Philippines' biggest NGOs like the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA) and the Koalisyon ng Katutubong Samahan ng Pilipinas (KASAPI).

The Japan-Philippine NGO Network, Asian Community Center 21 and Philippines-Japan NGO Partnership organized this year's event, with funding coming from MRA House, Ohdake Foundation, The Tokyo Club, Risho Kosei-kai (Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace), Peace and Equity Foundation, Ramon Aboitiz Foundation and AY Foundation. The 1st Philippines-Japan NGO Symposium was held in Taguig, Metro Manila in November of last year.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Philippines is a country of 7,107 islands. It is not bizarre that it is gifted with people of diverse cultural heritage. This issue celebrates that diversity, as we introduce two NGO Desk projects and two NGOs working with indigenous communities.

We'd love to hear from you!

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