



**The Official Publication of the
Philippine Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Task Force**

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EDITORIAL TEAM:

Editors: Maria Cristina S. Guerrero & Benedicto Q. Sánchez

Web Designer: [Lionel Valdellon](#) for PLUG Design **Contributors:** Delbert Rice, KEF

Ma. Cristina S. Guerrero, NTFP-EP
Genevieve Labadan, Noemi Solia, FVCTLDC

Benedicto Q. Sánchez, BIND
Isagani Santos, NATRIPAL

Contact details:

c/o UNAC, #18 Marunong St., Bgy Central, Diliman, Quezon City 1100, Philippines.

Tel: 02-925-4772; Telefax:

02-4360706. <http://www.ntfp.org>



The NTFP–Task Force (TF) members, WAI, FVCTLDC, NATRIPAL, Mangyan Mission and BIND are actively involved in developing the crafts–based livelihoods of their respective community

From Indigenous Materials

partners.

A recurring

problem for these local producer groups is finding a steady market for their products. Often, existing institutional markets, especially export markets, may place orders in the thousands or may have strict deadlines to meet. Individual communities have difficulty keeping up with such orders and tight schedules. The challenge is to find or develop a market that is regular yet one that does not provide too much pressure on communities to produce such that lifeways and cultures are heavily altered.

With this in mind, the TF thought of developing a line of products for the conference kit market. The rationale was that the conferences were plentiful in the Philippines both for the government and non-government sectors and that existing supplies of conference tokens and kits were often shoddy, unimaginative or overused. An assemblage of indigenous materials, from across the country crafted into made-to-order conference kits seemed like a niche market that would well suit the needs and capacities of local community NTFP producer and processor groups.

The TF has since teamed up with Kilusan Pinagkaisahan, Inc. an urban poor, self-help group of novelty item producers, to develop a line of conference items. This innovative new line of products includes folders, envelopes, binders, organizers, pens and penholders, scratch pads, picture frames, and many more. These initial products are made from abaca tapestries of the Higaonon of Bukidnon, buri mats of the Alangan Mangyan of Mindoro, and the bamboo ballpoint pens of rural communities in Negros Occidental. Other products are still being developed with other TF partners.

The conference kits have been well received and the TF is currently executing its first orders. In the future, the TF plans to expand its supplier base so as to provide a wider variety of designs and products to the market. This will also allow the TF to reach more producer groups. For queries or orders for conference kit items, please contact **Crissy Guerrero** at 436,0706 / 925-4772 (c/o UNAC) or at www.ntfp.org.

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Cobra In Colombo

Tackling the specific issue of NTFP certification and the general question of Exchange Programme expansion

By Delbert Rice

Several species of birds and reptiles had a very unique opportunity last September in Sri Lanka. They had a chance to study the life style of a group of Homo Sapiens from several different nations who held a meeting within their domain. The location was the Forest Garden in upland Sri Lanka. The group they were studying was the Steering Committee¹ for the Non-timber Forest Products–Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) for South and Southeast Asia. The chairman of the local research committee, a Cobra, indicated that although humans in general, are very destructive pests, this particular group was not as bad as most. Unfortunately, the Cobra failed to submit his ethnographic report in time for this publication so we only have the results of the meeting of the humans.

Certification Questions

The primary focus of the meeting was the problem of publicly identifying forest products that meet the standards of the NTFP-EP. The main question was: “Do we establish a certification system?”

What is certification?

Third party certification includes both an independent assessment of the forest management practices of an operation, according to pre-defined standards and criteria, and a verification



The NTFP -Exchange Programme partners from Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Philippines, and Netherlands meets to discuss certification issues at the Neosynthesis Research Center in Sri Lanka.

of the product origin through chain-of-custody monitoring and product labeling.

Why certify?

The goal of certification is to improve environmental, social and economic aspects of forest management by ensuring market access for responsibly produced products.²

The starting point for the discussions was the fact that NTFP-EP runs on 3 central themes:

- +Conservation of biodiverse forest environments
- +Protection of human rights (including land and resource rights) especially for forest dependents
- +Promotion of sufficient and sustainable livelihoods for forest dependents

The next point, which was discussed at some length, was the fact that there are other agencies that are already certifying forest products. One such group is IFOAM (the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements) that certifies organic products. This is in line with NTFP-EP's first central theme. A 2nd certifying organization focuses on fair trade (Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International - FLO) and a 3rd on sustainably produced forest products, especially timber (Forest Stewardship Council-FSC). The emphasis of these groups matches the NTFP-EP's second and third principles respectively along with the first.

In Sri Lanka, the steering committee's host, the NeoSynthesis Research Center (NSRC) elaborated on their system of Analog Forestry (AF). AF is used to restore ecosystems, "analogous in architectural structure and ecological function" to the original ecosystems than once existed in previously forested areas. According to the principles of AF, NSRC certifies products coming out of these systems as forest garden products. NSRC also promotes biodiversity and sustainability.

But the question of certification does not end with who can do the certification. Certification is usually very expensive and a certification program would require a larger organization and trained staff. That would cost money and most of the communities that the NTFP-EP works with could not afford such an expense.

Furthermore, it appears that certification is not a necessity for local marketing of recognized products since the customers already know the producer. The only reason for certification would be to increase sales to persons who are concerned about protecting the environment.

Thus the Steering Committee arrived at this decision:

1. The NTFP-EP will not establish its own certification program.
2. The NTFP-EP will encourage forest communities to have their products certified by whatever existing organization is most appropriate to them.
3. The NTFP-EP will work towards developing a logo to identify products

of partners.

Consolidate and Coordinate

The Steering Committee had to confront a second important issue. South and Southeast Asia is vast yet all the environments in all of these nations are important. Should NTFP-EP choose to expand as rapidly as possible or should it consolidate the benefits in the areas where it is already working? Due to financial constraints and the need to provide clear and instructive models, it was decided that the NTFP-EP should slow down on extending the program to many countries and consolidate the benefits in current areas of operation. At the same time, however, the Steering Committee encouraged its member organizations to promote NTFP-EP principles among other groups to promote the movement.

The cobra had no chance to observe the final sessions of the NTFP Steering Committee because they were held in Colombo. The SC was joined by a group of government, NGO and private sector representatives who are also interested in sustainable development. Overall, the meeting in Sri Lanka forged a strategic alliance between NTFP-EP and the NSRC and provided a venue to learn about the needs, experiences, and aspirations of each group.

The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be held in South India in the first half of 2002. Hopefully some other species of life on earth will become aware that a few individuals in the human family are not pests.

Notes:

1 The Steering Committee is composed of members from Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and India as well as partners in the Netherlands.

2. Elliot, C. 1999, Forest Certification: analysis from a policy network perspective. PhD dissertation. Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Laussane.

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Reasons To Celebrate *Commemorating Indigenous Peoples month in Palawan*

By: Isagani Santos - NATRIPAL

October has been recognized internationally as Indigenous Peoples (IP) month. The theme for this year during the IP celebration in Palawan was

“Renewal of Philippine Society through the Strengthening of Indigenous Peoples’ Communities”.

Though a series of activities had been scheduled for October, the highlight activity was the acculturated mass, policy and development forum and exchange of customary rituals which took place on October 14, 2001 in Bgy. Macarascas, Puerto Princesa City. Main IP participants were Tagbanua and Batak representatives from Puerto Princesa and Tagbanua from the southern municipality of Aborlan.



Indigenous Palaweños celebrate IP month with an exchange of cultural traditions, songs and dances in Macarascas, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.



Indigenous Palaweños celebrate IP month with an acculturated mass.

The whole day celebration began with a mass led by Tagbanua priest, Fr. Arman Limsa, that merged Christian rites with traditional ways of worship. An example was the offertory segment where customary offerings of tabad (rice wine), lotlot (rice cooked in bamboo), amik (rice cake), puso-puso (rice cooked in coconut leaves) and pinipig where also brought to the altar.

According to IPs present, this represented the cultural integrity of the IPs of Palawan.

The forum with government officials and NGOs followed after the mass.

Principal guests and speakers included City Council member Atty. Nesario Awat, former PANLIPI Legal Area Manager (LAM) for Palawan, and Atty. Simon Mesina of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC).

Atty. Awat reported on his resolutions in favor of IPs that have been approved by the city council. They are the following:

- + *The creation of a special committee for Indigenous Peoples*
- + *The allocation of P880,000 for the delineation and management plan formulation for ancestral domains in Puerto Princesa City, and*
- + *A request to the DENR to formulate guidelines to allow CADT claimants to transport their forest products while waiting for the approval and awarding of their CADTs.*



IP month also had a policy and development forum.

Atty. Mesina then updated the group on environmental issues in Palawan and ELAC's efforts to protect IP rights as well. Livelihood opportunities from the UNDP–COMPACT project was also explained especially for the stakeholders of the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (formerly the St. Paul's Subterranean National Park).

The day ended with traditional dances and songs. The mood was genuinely a happy one with the inspiring words from speakers painting a picture of future justice and development for the IPs present. This provided more reason to celebrate a month dedicated to Indigenous Peoples especially for indigenous Palaweños.

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Supporting Ancestral Domain Delineation Thru Development Cooperation

Close coordination and cooperation among community assistance groups help facilitate ancestral domain titling and planning

by: Genevieve Labadan, Noemi Solia, FVCTLDC

Four non-government organizations are working together to support the Higaonon of Agtulawon-Mintapod, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon in obtaining a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) and in formulating an Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP).

The CADT is an important instrument recognizing the indigenous communities in the Philippines as legal owners of their ancestral domains under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). On the other hand, the ADSDPP is the tribal people's plans to sustainably manage and protect the resources within their ancestral domains.

Through NTFP-EP networking, Legal Rights Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan (LRC-KSK), AnthroWatch (AW), Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID) and Father Vincent Cullen Tulugan Learning and Development Center (FVCTLDC) conducted an orientation on IPRA with the Higaonon community on July 17-19, 2001. The FVCTLDC and the Higaonons hosted the activity.



The young and the old, the women and the men of the Higaonons break into workshop groups to illustrate the vision each sector imagines for their community.

LRC-KSK facilitated the session on IPRA as a law that recognizes the

rightful ownership of indigenous people over ancestral domains.

Anthropology Watch (AnthroWatch) spoke on the importance and process of converting Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) to Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT).

The Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID) oriented the participants on community mapping as a powerful tool in securing the CADT. They highlighted the significance, basic procedures as well as their experience in community mapping with other indigenous groups.

PAFID technical team returned to Mintapod from August 29 to September 11, 2001 for the construction of a 3-dimensional map with the Higaonon. The Higaonon community took a long time identifying the areas (sacred ground, burial places, farm plots, etc.) not because they had difficulty with the map but that they were simply awed by the 3-D map, a miniature representation of their ancestral domain.



Community map-makers put in the finishing touches on the 3-dimesnsional map.

They were also anxious about the pananghid offered to the spirits of the soil, water and forest and even to Magbabaya, the maker of all things. They valued the map so much that they forbade people to step on it, trigger the spirits' anger and cast a gabâ (curse) on the defilers.

With FVCTLDC's help, the Higaonon chieftain and his men constructed a house for the 3-D map. After a series of rituals, a final singampo

was performed last October 9, 2001 to seek the spirits' final blessing on the mapping activities done in the Higaonon ancestral domain. The singampo outcome indicated that the spirits have given their blessing to the Higaonon community, especially the mapping activities. A smaller PAFID team returned on October 5-9, 2001 to complete the 3-D mapping, focusing on the section that the team missed out in the map the first time around.

After the 3D mapping exercise, it was reported that there had been lots of sick people in the community. The community blamed it on gabâ because the map had been stepped on by people especially the ones working on it. After the ritual singampo's outcome, the spirits had blessed the 3D map and future mapping activities.

NTFP-EP, AnthroWatch and FVCTLDC conducted census training and

ADSDPP workshop last October 13-17, 2001 in Kalabugao and Mintapod, respectively. A census is required within the ancestral domain to obtain the CADT. Moreover, information generated by the census can be used for future community development planning, with the accurate demographic data serving as the baseline.

The ADSDPP workshop focused on visioning and a review of customary principles and policies. The activity sought to validate, consolidate and revise aspects of the existing ancestral domain plans. Now, the Higaonons have a broad framework for developing more detailed plans per sitio (sub-village). Over the next few months, the vision and policy statements will also be shared, validated and supplemented through consultations at the sitio level.

During the ADSDPP workshop the community members decided to establish Ancestral Domain (AD) committees per sitio. These committees will take the lead in coordinating AD related concerns in their area especially in relation to the census, mapping and boundary delineation, ADSDPP, and information dissemination activities.

Pooling resources and working together has hastened the process, with the insiders and outsiders learning from the knowledge systems of one another. In the past, such unity and coordination was rare. Thus, the noteworthy, and new model of cooperation.



Higaonon scholars take the lead in community census activities.

Yet more humbling is the Higaonon resolve to claim their land, combining traditional laws with national legislation and modern techniques as the first step toward building a better life for present and future generations. All this toward their pursuit of a vision of a recognized and developed ancestral domain.

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Perverting Buffer Zones

The left hand taketh what the right hand giveth. That in a nutshell is what RA 9154, or the so-called Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park (MKNP) Act of 2001, does.

By Benedicto Q. Sánchez
BIND, Program Coordinator
MKNP PAMB Alternate Member

Indeed, declaring MKNP as a natural park is one big legal step toward protecting and conserving its biological resources and its aesthetic, socio-cultural, economic and ecological values. The State has enshrined as a policy MKNP's conservation and protection through sustainable and participatory development, advancing and protecting as a matter of principle the interest of its tenured migrants and honoring the customary laws of the indigenous communities, the Bukidnons and the Atis.

But what it gave, it takes away. In this instance, from the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 1992. The new law overrides the buffer zone concept, as defined by the NIPAS Act, thus setting a new (and very bad) precedent. In NIPAS, buffer zones are "identified areas outside the boundaries of and immediately adjacent to designated protected areas...that need special development control...to avoid or minimize harm to the protected area." (Section 4, c)



PNOC cleared the forest in Bgy. Mailoum for road building so they can prepare for their entry in the strict protection zone.

The Implementing Rules and Regulations further clarify that a buffer zone is an “extra layer of protection” (Section 6) “a social fence to prevent encroachment” (Section 10, f) into the protected area by outsiders. Moreover, “buffer zones should be treated as integral parts of the protected area in management planning.” (Ibid)

But the MKNP Act of 2001 no longer talks of a buffer zone as an extra layer of protection, a social fence, or an integral part of the protected area. It now talks of a buffer zone “as an area for exploration development and utilization of geothermal energy resources as well as other exploration activities...” (Section 5) That areas “within the buffer zone which shall not be used directly for the development and utilization of geothermal energy remain under the control and jurisdiction of the PAMB.” (Ibid)

In other words, the 169 hectares that the MKNP Act allotted for utilization in this “buffer zone” will not be used for protection but for extraction, and will be “excised” (as the Philippine National Oil Company) representative frankly put it during the PAMB October 25, 2001 en banc meeting) from PAMB, no longer part of its protection management plan but now a part of PNOC’s utilization plan!

And to think that these 169 hectares are situated in MKNP strict protection zone, located in an “old growth forest, dominated by mature and overmature dipterocarp and conifer species, such as almaciga, igem, malakawayan, lauan, tanguile, and other premium hardwoods and endangered softwoods and gymnosperms.” The Report emphasizes the site is “one of the most productive and highly diverse part of the park, as evidenced by its floral and faunal species...” that “75% (or 95%) of the area could already (sic) be categorized as ‘Strict Protection Zone’ because of its biodiversity content.” (DENR Composite Survey Team, Survey and Rapid Biodiversity Assessment Report on the Proposed PNOC Area Inside MKNP)

Furthermore, inserting such a buffer zone within MKNP’s strict protection zone emasculates the an expressed NIPAS prohibition policy on natural parks, “a relatively large area not materially altered by human activity where extractive resource uses are not allowed...” (NIPAS Act of 1992, Section 4, h)

The MKNP Act contains other objectionable provisions as well. It stipulates that the PAMB as MKNP’s policy-making body shall be composed of, among other elected and ex-officio members, “a duly-authorized representative” of the PNOC and that its Executive Committee will include “one from the PNOC-EDC.” (Article III, Section 10, A9 & B7) NGOs and POs have to undergo through an election process, with a five-year term of office, while PNOC is assured of a permanent seat, complete with voice and vote. So much for a democratic, participatory process!

Converting a segment of the strict protection zone of a natural park into a buffer zone not for protection but perverting it to mean resource utilization sets a very bad precedent. Its dire implication might extend to other Philippine national or natural parks management systems. Assuring big business of a permanent seat without undergoing a democratic selection process in a protected area management board is equally repulsive, an outright negation of democracy!

If implemented unopposed, the MKNP Act will eventually set the tone for the declaration of other protected areas as well. It will serve as the test case not only for Negros Occidental, but the entire country. Or even the world as perhaps a global test case. Today MKNP, tomorrow the world?

This not mere hysterical speculation for propaganda effect. Says the Repealing Clause, in chilling black-and-white, “All laws (*including the NIPAS Act?*), proclamation, rules and regulations inconsistent with this act are hereby *repealed or modified* accordingly.” (Section 24)

Filipino environmentalists will thus have the obligation, the responsibility to link arms to oppose the anti-democratic and anti-environmental sections of the MKNP Act of 2001. Only thus can these onerous provisions be redressed. Only thus can a repeat of this nightmare in other protected areas be avoided.

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Moving Mountain Development Issues Forward

by: Benedicto Q. Sánchez
Program Coordinator, BIND

The recently-held World Mountain Symposium (WMS) in Interlaken, Switzerland was Switzerland's kick-off event for the International Year of the Mountain (IYM) preparatory event for Switzerland and for the world's mountains. Held from September 30 to October 4, 2001 with the theme "Community Development between Subsidy, Subsidiarity and Sustainability," its outputs will be used for fine-tuning the country's sustainable mountain development (SMD) agenda.

But WMS's significance goes beyond the Swiss country agenda. Filipino SMD groups can learn enormously from it.

For one thing, it has helped open doors for the establishment of global alliances to help resolve internationally issues that have local and national implications. Among other things, it can help push for the mainstreaming of fair trade regimes over the "free trade" of mountain products. It can bat for the creation of compensation programs based on carbon sequestration credits and other global and national ecological services rendered by mountain communities for conserving and rehabilitating forests.

More importantly, WMS underscored the need for developing the



The author, in T-shirt, during the closing plenary session of the World Mountain Symposium in Interlaken, Switzerland from September 30 to October 4, 2001.

bottom–up and horizontal process of formulating a country SMD agenda for the IYM 2002 and the Rio+10 Summit in Johannesburg. A measure of such an agenda’s success is its metamorphosis into effective programs, projects and policies grounded mainly on best practices in implementing Agenda 21’s Chapter 13 and other relevant chapters.

Another is its capability of creating decision–making institutions for mountain communities and other external stakeholders to meet the challenges of improving their living standards while protecting mountain habitats. Mountain resources are more carefully managed when local communities have a major say in decision–making processes and a significant degree of responsibility over resource use.

Yet another measure of success is the SMD agenda’s capability to tap international organizations to focus on national mountain issues and to support the corresponding development efforts to address them. For at the end of the day, IYM’s long–standing advocacy, performance, and impact will bank most heavily on those working at the national policy–making level and has close ties with the grassroots. This includes various government units, businesses, environmental, social and cultural organizations and research institutions.

Having a firm grasp of local needs and priorities, these national organizations can confidently articulate and incorporate them into the Philippine SMD agenda, which it can use to interface and negotiate with international development and donor agencies to support national and community efforts.

Thus, building IYM national committees ensures that IYM events and activities are well–coordinated and effective. Moreover, these committees can and should ensure that sustainable mountain development remains high on their country’s development agenda, well beyond 2002.

It is thus within this context that WMS should be appreciated. The participation of Swiss SMD national and foreign experts, researchers, practitioners enable the country process to come up with concrete proposals for sustainable development of mountain regions for use by “local, national and international decision-makers.”

As of October 16 2001, 38 countries had established national committees and many other governments have designated national focal points for IYM observance. Early on, the Philippine government had designated the DENR Forest Management Bureau Director (FMB) as its IYM focal point. A parallel effort by civil society is also encouraged by FAO. It is hoped that these two initiatives will spark the process of building the Philippine National Committee of the International Year of the Mountains.

Those interested in being involved in the IYM activities may contact the

FMB, BIND, or UNAC.

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