

# Voices from the Forest

Issue No. 34 July 2018

NTFP-EP

non-timber  
forest products -  
exchange programme

## How it's done in Long Iman

A WALKTHROUGH OF THE  
PENAN RATTAN PROCESSING

see page 12



# Voices from the Forest

**Non-Timber Forest Products - Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP)** is a collaborative network of over 100 civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) whose mission is to catalyze the empowerment of forest-dependent communities in Asia towards the sustainable management of forested landscapes & ecosystems.

Voices from the Forest is the official newsletter of NTFP-EP. It is released bi-annually and contains regional and country forests and peoples updates from the NTFP-EP network.

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Cover photo by Joanna Sadi Mindun Musa  
(Curtin University): The women of Long  
Iman carrying newly-harvested rattan

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The 34th issue of Voices from the Forest is dedicated to stories about livelihoods and incomes of communities supported by NTFP-EP and its partners.

The social cohesion and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the Pala'wan community of **Brooke's Point in the Philippines** has been key not just in their entrepreneurial success but also in the conservation of their culture and natural ecosystem. However, there have been continuing challenges in their resin enterprises despite the food and financial benefits drawn from their cooperative.

A long time of peace and relative security have also meant that these communities have been allowed to develop their enterprises without much worry for life and limb. This is a different story for Mah Nyo of **Tanintharyi in Myanmar**. Long periods of political strife and armed conflict have meant that families have been more concerned about fleeing war torn areas than establishing economic initiatives. But Mah Nyo's participation in an EXCEED training helped her see the merits of community-based forest enterprises and inspired by the training, she set up 5 women led small businesses!

The situation is more complicated for other women-led communities. Mining has affected communities like that of Rosalina in **Leyte, Eastern Philippines** where farmers and fishers are left with years of decreasing harvest. In **Kakal-gur in Bastar, India**, military presence is commonplace and fear has kept most people from "rocking the boat" in any way. Despite this, the local people are bravely claiming their land rights, accepting whatever hurdles are in the way, even less than innocent public officials!

Positive stories of honey taste testing in **Xiengkhuang, Laos** which galvanize rural beekeepers with the knowledge of their quality product, have been helpful in the mainstreaming of forest products in more urban settings. This is similarly the case for the natural dye textiles of **Kutai Barat, East Kalimantan, Indonesia** which have been shared with elementary students and have made them more aware of their country's vast natural resources and traditions.

In this issue, we also explore safeguard tools that can further ensure the sustainability of community livelihoods through the assertion of their intellectual property rights.

Women leaders also ends this issue to continue the tribute to women across the years and across the continent. Kudos to Tilita, Inday and Denise whose quiet achievements motivate many other women to move forward with greater leaps and bounds on their own livelihood journeys!



# In Awe of Pewpenew

## PROFITABLE FORESTS MAKE STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Article and photos by  
Alejandra Carvajal and Earl Diaz, NTFP-EP Asia

Migas is part of the Palaw'an residing in Barangay Amas located along one of the buffer areas of the Pewpenew Mountain in Brooke's Point, Palawan.

High on the Pewpenew mountain, Migas points to the tree we have been looking for after several hours: the *Agathis philippinensis*. This tree which is native to the Philippines produces the almaciga resin, a key component of high-grade industrial materials such as paints, soaps, varnishes, and plastics. The tree that stands tall was a wedding gift from his father as an asset to provide to his children. Generations ago, the Palaw'an already knew about the valuable reserves they have in their forest.

Migas makes a gentle incision that quickly displays some drops that look like water. On the side, the tree has an older incision that has a bulk of accumulated resin which became an elongated solid stream that is known as tikap. The tappers described it as the highest quality of almaciga resin in the market.





TOP: Carly Saar, Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representative in Amas village

Tapping almaciga is a traditional activity which was commercialized through traders who had created a trading relationship that left them with minimal benefits. In 1989, they decided to take charge of the business by forming the Samahan ng mga Palaw'ano sa Amas, Brooke's Point (SPABP), a community-owned cooperative that trades the resin collectively.

Due to the long application process requiring complex requirements which consequently incurred costs that are difficult to meet, securing trading permits is considered unanimously by the community as one of, if not the most difficult part of the process. It was because of this hurdle that SPABP got into a partnership with NTFP-EP. Through this engagement, they began seeking long-term solutions to bigger market problems as a group.

SPABP's case offers several lessons for community-based NTFP enterprises.

"Keeping books regularly is still a challenge," says Analyn—a young member of the community who has been learning this role and hopes to study more about finance to keep helping her community. Getting more access to formal and non-formal education has proven to be key for SPABP's development.

Through NTFP-EP's assistance, support business and finance skills like bookkeeping, marketing, organizational development and quality control were also strengthened to eventually build the foundations of SPABP as a community-driven enterprise.

RIGHT: Panglima Edio Domino, carrying freshly-harvested almaciga resin on his back



*"I remember eating rice once a day before SPABP. Now we can eat rice three times a day," Carly shared.*



**Rolito Landuan**, a Palaw'an from Brooke's Point and the operations manager of SPABP shared their story during the **Communities, Conservation, & Livelihoods Conference** at Nova Scotia, Canada. In the conference, Rolito shared how the management of almaciga resin, a high-value NTFP found in the Palawan forests, sustains not only the day-to-day financial needs of the community but also their traditional way of life.

NTPF-EP linked them with different organizations where they were able to see how other communities overcome similar problems. Among the several capacities they have developed in these exchanges is that they are now able to classify the resin according to market standards. This has enabled them to support other communities from neighboring barangays in doing the same.

For SPABP, it is a work in progress. Bingur, the *bodega* (store house) manager says that they also lack capital to buy more resin from their partners. Having more capital would help them to profit more from scale economies. Although they have increased steadily, additional support on this matter would boost the enterprise.

After 30 years of hard work, they have consolidated a cooperative of 169 harvesters who can sell 4 to 7 tons of resin every three months, and are in a better position to bargain with new buyers to get a better price. The members of SPABP state that the additional income has a number of benefits in different areas such as food security. “I remember eating rice once a day before SPABP. Now we can eat rice three times a day,” Carly shared.

In addition, they state they now have more disposable income to go to the market, get more clothes, “phones with touch screen,” and “credit.” Although all the improvements can’t be attributed to the cooperative, the members agree that it played a significant role.

As an initiative that started a few years ago, they have carefully established the borders and purposes of each area using GPS technology. There is however no need to see the digital border: the difference on the state of the forest with and without *almaciga* is striking. The lower area without the trees is used mostly for *kaingin* (shifting cultivation) and coconut plantations. The area with *almaciga* is full of different trees and bushes that provide them with a myriad of services that range from food to shelter. It was evident that the families are not the only beneficiaries of the said enterprise. Given the Palaw’an community’s inextricable relationship with their forests, the diversity of natural resources in the area are better protected because they are the hosts of the resin trees.



SPABP and its members have been growing and are learning to improve constantly. They hold on to their values and the reasons as to why they exist. It’s not only the fair trading system that keeps the group together, but the sense of community. Sharing an area, a cultural heritage, and traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution that resonate well with their traditional ways as Palaw’an, has taken SPABP through difficult times.

Simple details in the business relationship are crucial to maintaining trustful relations between them: giving a receipt to the harvesters, sharing a cup of coffee, and offering them a place to stay after their long journey from the mountains makes the difference. This is how they remain competitive in the market, while strengthening their ties as an indigenous community.

Looking into the future, they are aware that raw *almaciga* is a commodity with a volatile price. Given this, SPABP has been developing long-term plans to establish a processing plant for marketing resin of lower quality. Although there is still a long way to go and a number of resources that they will need for this, they have a clear vision that they want to keep expanding in a sustainable way.

SPABP is a clear example that forest and communities can share welfare in a virtuous circle when in order to grow. In this, NTPF-EP is committed to support and link them to markets to keep the circle rolling.





# Strengthening women's solidarity

## A MOVEMENT AGAINST EXTRACTIVES IN ASIA

Article by Mayna Pomarin, NTFP-EP Asia

Photos by Earl Diaz, NTFP-EP Asia

Rosalina, a young woman living in a small but naturally endowed island of Manicani shares her anxiety over mining activities in her village. “Mining is like a woman being abused. After they get what they want, they leave it idle and worthless.” For a community that thrives mainly through farming and fishing, she fears the impact of an industry that will purge out the best from their land, ironically a government declared landscape and seascape protected area.

Meanwhile, miles away in the south of the region, we visited a small village in Rajasthan, India, where we were made first-hand witnesses to how the mining industry in a resource-rich town has taken out all the place’s beauty and richness, leaving behind a village that is waterless and dry. Mining has changed their landscape overnight and created a lake of wastes. Water is rationed. Women and children get sick. Women who complain are muted and even penalized.



TOP: Rosalina from Manicani Island

BOTTOM: The view from the Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corporation tour bus.

RIGHT: The participants of the skillshare in Palawan



Across country borders, we hear women speak of the same story, of the same impact on how the mining industry adversely affected their lives, while the promises of economic and social gains to the families were never felt. In the two learning exchange visits held in India in December 2017 and the Philippines last April 2018, we opened up spaces for women to speak and collectively analyze the implications of extractive industries to their lives as women, and as members of the community.

These events were co-organized by NTFP-EP, Dhaatri Trust, and Mongolia Women's Fund (MONES), with mines, mineral and People (mmP), Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (JATAM), and LILAK Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights with support from Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM). The project has launched 2 timely strategic exchanges of experiences, knowledge and field actions in this time of new feudal and patriarchal contexts. Through this project, we intend to catalyze and influence positive action, and support local and indigenous communities. Our solidarity here aims at strengthening women's leadership, voices and representation, and at pushing for an active link and support between women's rights and social mobilization of those affected by extractive industries.

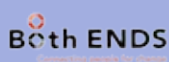


**Pastor Rice**  
**Small Grant Fund**  
for Community-based Forest Ecosystem Initiatives

The **Pastor Rice Small Grant Fund (PRSGF)** facility aims to support community-based projects.

Starting in 2016, the PRSGF has received funding from the **Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)**, a global program led by international women's funds and rights based organizations, FCAM, Mama Cash and Both Ends.

**GAGGA** GLOBAL ALLIANCE  
FOR GREEN AND  
GENDER ACTION







# EXCEEDing Expectations

## TRANSFORMING REALITIES THROUGH LIVELIHOODS

Article by Alejandra Carvajal, NTFP-EP Asia  
Photos by Mah Nyo, WWF Myanmar

Ms. Khin Nyo met some NTFP-EP staff for the first time when she attended the EXCEED training in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 2017. Back then, she had only been a few weeks in her position as the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Partnership officer at WWF Myanmar. Although her role didn't include specific enterprise activities, her organization decided that it would be important for her to attend the training to develop the livelihoods component.

In the EXCEED training, Mah Nyo learned how to form community enterprises, how social enterprises operate, key marketing concepts, the importance of systems of production, business planning and financial management. During the training, Mah Nyo was not only acknowledging these concepts for the first time but also supporting Naw Aye, a Karen language teacher from Kyike Phil Lan Community Forest Group, to understand the training herself by translating from English to Burmese.

"It was difficult. While some participants had attended other trainings before, it was my first time," shared Mha Nyo. Despite the challenge, Mah Nyo apprehended the concepts through the different methodologies that the EXCEED training

uses. She participated in the discussions and got to see the concepts applied in practice with the visit to an enterprise of sago crackers. She also met participants from different countries and shared similar contexts with them, despite the language barriers.

After returning from her training, she was convinced that a community enterprise could be "very beneficial for [the] community". The topic was included during the consultation process with the community, where they agreed to have the training aimed at developing enterprises on elephant foot yam, a tropical tuber that grows particularly well in their communities, and has recurrent demand for export due to its nutritious value.

*Top: Conducting the training in Pyar Thar Chaung  
Bottom: Where it all started--The EXCEED training in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2017)*







Top: Elephant Foot Yam

Middle: Graduation photo of the participants from Hein Dar Pyin

BOTTOM: A session in Leik Hla

The Karen have been selling this product for several years to local agents who later export it, mainly to China. With the enterprise, they want to make a systematic process for its management, and eventually export directly, in order to gain a more significant portion of the profit for the community.

Mah Nyo's task of re-transmitting enterprise knowledge was by far more difficult than learning the concepts, considering the context of the communities she works with in WWF Myanmar. They selected five villages in the Tanintharyi Region: Hein Dar Pyin, Kyauk Htu, Kyike Phi Lan, Leik Hla I and Pyar Thar Chaung. EXCEED learnings were going to an area that has suffered armed conflict for decades, restricting access to formal education and limiting economic development. As a result, in the group of 63 farmers, only 2 to 3 had the chance to finish high school. Mah Nyo had to translate the training to their specific context, while the training was also being translated from Burmese to Karen.

Nevertheless, the community proved to have a very clear grasp of the importance of finance and marketing. It was more challenging when they addressed concepts like management systems. The costing process was also difficult since this was something they have never done before.

Not only have they progressed on the understanding of the concepts, but with WWF, they already registered the 5 groups in the Small Scale Enterprise Department (SSED) and have created a governance structure for each of them to continue growing. Additionally, they are working on the management of the resource by planting it in their respective orchards, when in the past they used to collect it from the forest.

However, they still have a long way to go in producing a high quality product. Internally, they require more training, support, technology and capital to add more value. On a macro level, they also need better roads to take the product to the market, and communication services to contact potential buyers since to date, there is no reception in the area.

Meanwhile, Mah Nyo keeps in touch with them, even if her task of transmitting her knowledge is over. She keeps working "hoping it will lead to overcome the poverty of our villages," she says.

Her amazing job shows that it is possible to exceed the expectations, even in the most difficult contexts. All out admiration to EXCEED participants who keep on using their capacities to transform their realities!

## EXCEED ANNOUNCEMENT

### COMMUNITY LIVELIHOOD ASSESSMENT AND PRODUCT SCANNING (CLAPS)

FIRST STEPS TO COMMUNITY-BASED NTFP ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The next training will be held on 1-5 October 2018 in **Sri Aman, Sarawak, Malaysia** with a site visit to **Rumah Manggat Menyang Taih**. For more info visit [www.ntfp.org/exceed](http://www.ntfp.org/exceed).





# Claiming what's yours!

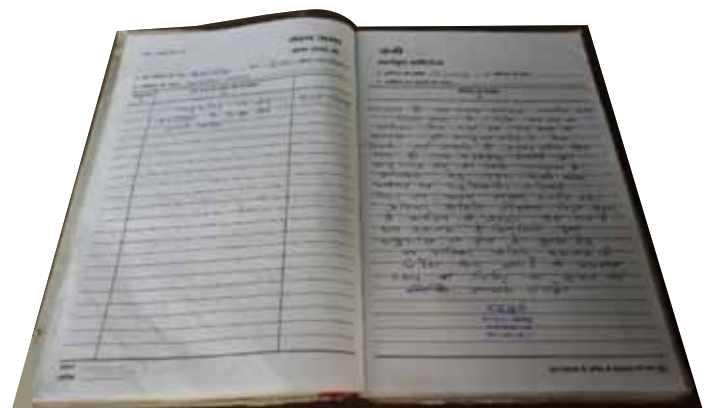
## UNREST IN KAKALGUR, BASTAR

Article by Madhu Ramnath, NTFP-EP India

On the 22nd of October 2017, Kakalgur village, which falls under the *panchayat* of the same name in Bastar, Chhattisgarh, went ahead and claimed their territorial rights. They had applied for their CFR rights about a year ago, having submitted the necessary documents at the Sub-divisional Level Committee (SDLC). Twice the *gram sabha* in Kakalgur had inquired about the status of their claim through the Right to Information Act, but there has been no response. And so, on 14th October, the *gram sabha* sat down to decide on a course of action, which was to mark their ancestral area in the forest – about 60 sqms – where they have historically wandered, hunted and fished, have shrines and other sacred spaces. Much of this has been put down in the map that has been submitted to the SDLC; more recently, on demand by the Forest Department, the various compartment numbers too have been indicated. Some of the Kakalgur territory overlaps with that of the Kanger Ghati National Park.

TOP: The Kanger river, the boundary in the north.

BOTTOM: The gram sabha resolution that decides to claim the territory (14.10.17).



A detailed version this incident is available in <https://thewire.in/164732/bastar-chhattisgarh-ativasi-culture/>





Top: The fake gram sabha resolution with forged signatures

Bottom: Fixing the claim along the boundary



The region around Kakalgur has been known for all the wrong reasons. Despite a simmering unrest that has been ongoing for more than a decade, it shot into prominence after the 2013 Naxal attack in Darbha Valley– the Jhiram Ghati massacre, and later several other lesser known incidents of similar vein. All these have made any discussion about rights, especially that of claiming ancestral territory, quite difficult; due to the “security” circumstances there is a sense of vulnerability in the people of the villages in the area. The process of mapping and explaining the FRA itself has taken about 5 years.

In May this year, the *tehsildar* had arrived in the village to demand that coffee saplings be planted in the revenue lands around Kakalgur. After much protest from the village this project has been called off, but as we now realize, not without consequences, as the *tehsildar* had left after threatening the people of the village. A few days after the proactive step of claiming their territory, the people realized that the register of the *gram sabha*, in which all resolutions are noted, had disappeared from the village. After some searching it was found that the secretary of the *gram sabha* had taken it with him without letting anyone know. While scrutinizing it, we found that a new resolution had been written – as if the people had claimed a miniscule area as their CFR, each area in a different compartment, all totalling to a miniscule amount of the area claimed – and the signatures of all the *gram sabha* functionaries forged. To address this issue, a report was sent to a local newspaper, Nai Duniya. In addition, a *gram sabha* was again called to cancel the false resolution and to dismiss the secretary. And finally, a first information report is being filed in the local police station against the secretary.

The peculiar situation of this part of Bastar – with its security forces patrolling the area, the people on the other side and their aspirations, the forest department and the *tehsildar*, and a territorial claim that is fairly large and includes some lovely forests – is a process that may be worth watching.

Many of the people working towards the claim, as well as the management of the area within it, come together as LEAF (Legal Environmental Action Foundation), a community-based organization. It would be helpful if larger support can be garnered through individuals and organizations active in this field, at least in the form of suggestions and ideas.



# How it's done in Long Iman

## WALKTHROUGH OF THE PENAN RATTAN PROCESSING

by Joanna Sadi Mindun Musa (Curtin University)  
Taro Ringgit, Dominic Langat Sigau  
(NTFP-EP Malaysia) and Earl Diaz (NTFP-EP Asia)

For the usual visitors of Sarawak Borneo, Malaysia, rattan baskets are common crafts that display the artistry of the country's indigenous groups. For the Penan communities living in Long Iman, Mulu, rattan is an important non-timber forest product that is used not only for their daily tasks but also for income generation. Due to its caves and rainforests, Mount Mulu National Park has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Understanding the importance of traditional knowledge on the management of rattan resources, the Long Iman women's group, *Pengepemung Modoo' Tanaa' ngan Baa'* (Preserving Forest and Rivers) along with Penan leaders conducted a documentation on rattan harvesting, splitting, dyeing, and weaving. The community shares this intricate process.





The rattan harvesting is carried out in Baa' Kejawang. It is located along the Tutoh River, 45 minutes away by boat from Long Iman village.

According to the weavers, only mature rattan vines are allowed to be harvested and they have been practicing this since the olden days. Therefore, only two to three vines from each cluster or *birai* of rattan are collected to ensure rattan rejuvenation and sustainability. Rattan collection is usually a tough task. It can be challenging for one person to do the pulling, hence many community members would help each other by climbing trees to cut the parts that are clinging onto trees.

Aside from the vines that are usually clinging strongly onto the canopies, its thorns add an extra challenge for them to harvest the rattan. This thorny layer and rattan bark are cleared using a machete to draw the rattan out of its bark. Then, the rattan is cut into even lengths, depending on the type and size of the product to be woven. For easier transport, soft rattan is usually coiled or rolled.

Two blades are embedded onto a wooden block to create a *kayeu katam*. Any type of wooden block can be used to make *kayeu katam*. This tool is used for smoothening and stripping rattan vines into uniform sizes.

The rattan is bent and snapped to get rid of the dried thin layer of the rattan skin, resulting in a clean and white rattan surface. This can also be scraped using the a small knife blade called the *nahat*. In order to form rattan strips, the rattan is first split into two or more smaller sizes, depending on the size and type of product to be woven. After dividing the rattan into equal sizes, the pith of these rattan strips are then extracted. These rattan strips are then stripped further to form finer rattan strips which are called *ihat*. These *ihat* are then dried under the sunlight sufficiently, for approximately



**Pengepemung Modoo' Tanaa' ngan Baa'** (Preserving Forest and Rivers Group) is the women's group for the community-based NTFP enterprise of the Penan in Long Iman. In 2016, the community decided to group together to strengthen their income generation initiatives so it can better support their day-to-day living. Beyond this however, the group aims to preserve their weaving tradition and their forest (lands) through this community-based NTFP enterprise.



two to three days. This to ensure the durability of the rattan strips (and product), prevent borers attack, and allow the strips to absorb natural dye thoroughly. That is used for making smaller baskets and backpacks.

The weavers of Long Iman only use natural dyes for their rattan handicrafts. *Ujung sebangat* (sebangat leaves) is typically used by them to produce black rattan strips. The leaves are boiled in water for three hours or more along with freshly collected mud to fasten up the dyeing process. After the boiling process, the mud is rubbed evenly onto the *ihat*. The mud helps the *ihat* to retain its black shiny color. It is then left to soak in mud overnight. Then, the *ihat* is rinsed and kept away from direct sunlight. This is to prevent the freshly dyed rattan strips from fading. For best results, the strips are left under the shade to air-dry.

*Bukui* is a traditional Penan rattan backpack. It is commonly used by them to gather forest products. The *betik* (motifs) on the backpack depicts patterns derived from their surroundings, taking inspiration from trees, animals, insects, and so on. Basically, the patterns that the weavers make are taught to them by the forest. The weaving of a *bukui* is tedious, and can take at least three days to complete.

The first step is to weave *ulat* (rings of the *bukui* that form the top rim of the backpack). In order to join these *ulat* together, firstly the rattan strips are weaved or braided on each *ulat*. Each *ulat* that has been braided with rattan strips are called *jah ulat*. Next is to join the rest of the *jah ulat* together. This process is called *ngerabit*. They also use a weaving tool named *kayeu jalan mesek* which is a flat wooden platform that eases the weaving process.

In order to tighten the *jah ulat*, the loops of the woven strips are pulled and adjusted. Weavers usually use *sulat*, a tool used to tighten gaps between rattan strips. A battery is also used to smoothen the surface of rattan strips during the weaving. Traditionally, a *pengelut* seed was used for this process.

The surface of the rattan strips have to be smoothened and flattened to ease the weaving process, and enable the weavers to detect any gaps between the rattan strips. Once all of the *jah ulat* are woven



together, the weaving of the motifs of the *bukui* slowly forms. After the structure (motifs) of the *bukui* is completely woven, the last process is to join the *lotok bukui* (base or bottom of the *bukui*) and the straps of the backpack.

For Long Iman, processing rattan is a very tedious task. It entails not just effort from an individual but from a community that is committed to preserving the ancient rattan tradition.



# Tilita, Loreta, & Denise

## APPLAUDING THE WORK OF PASSIONATE WOMEN

Article by Earl Diaz (NTFP-EP Asia)



Photo courtesy of Tilita

Tilita had big dreams of making it in the big city. As a young Dayak Benuaq girl, she has always been connected to *Ulap Doyo* weaving—a tradition that is usually passed on from mother to daughter.

Her practice in weaving came to a halt when she decided to go to Jakarta to be a nutritionist. However, she found herself going back to Tanjung Isuy, the village where she was born because she wanted to give back to her community. There, she started working at the community health center to serve patients.

She noticed that the ancient practice of weaving *Ulap Doyo* was slowly disappearing not only among the youth, but because there had been less *Doyo* leaves available in their village due to the growing number of oil palm plantations. Tilita realizes that *Ulap Doyo* is more than just a source of income. It is a priceless piece of their cultural heritage worth preserving for the future generations— a significant part of their identity as Dayak Benuaq people.

It is because of this burning passion that Tilita won Purse for the People's Gratitude For the Goddess Award. Tilita's noble work in her village is an inspiration to youth and women who can become leaders in their own ways.



Photo courtesy of ISTF

As a Tagbanua woman, Loreta Alsa believes that the hive is a gift given to the hunter by forest guardians. Thus, prayers and salutations have to be given to these guardians.

Lately however, there have been inconsistencies in weather patterns in the island of Palawan. And because weather greatly affects honey production, its supply has also been inconsistent, thus affecting not only the livelihoods of the Tagbanua, but also their connection to nature.

The documentation of their reverence for honey and other forest resources has helped in understanding the socio-ecological system of forest landscape protection in Palawan, Philippines. This complex relationship has been shared by Loreta Alsa and Denise Matias from the Center for Development Research at the University of Bonn during the Yale International Society of Tropical Foresters (ISTF) annual conference. The intellectual merger between the grounded experience of Loreta and the academic rigor of Denise helped them bag the top prize.

With specific focus on ecosystem services derived from the traditional honey hunting and their current set-up for honey buying, the research was geared towards innovating an adaptive strategy for sustainable harvesting protocols.





# Honey contest at Xiengkhuang province

## **BAN CHOY STUNG WITH THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS**

Article by Chinda Milayvong (TABI)  
Photos by Liina Shishak (TABI)

“The first thing that hit my tongue was sweetness but it was followed by something a little sour and... maybe a hint of galangal? This has a floral whiff and a beautiful amber color. Visually, this is free of defect, clean and clear. I’d say this one is my favorite,” said a participant during the first-ever Lao forest honey blind tasting competition. The tasting was held on the sidelines of the National Workshop on Lao Forest Honey that brought over 150 honey enthusiasts to Phonsavan, Xiengkhuang, on 21-24 May 2018.

All across Laos, small-scale beekeepers are producing forest honeys that are organic, healthy, and have unique characteristics and flavors. According to a recent national honey marketing study(\*), Lao forest honey sells for a higher price than commercially-produced honey from neighboring countries. There are signs of increasing commercial demand for Lao forest honey from both domestic and regional buyers.

As a superfood, honey from the forest of Laos which is usually produced by dorsata and cerana species are slowly gaining attention. However, it seems that local consumers are not yet aware of the uniqueness, high quality, and benefits of this Lao heritage product. Therefore, the National Workshop on Lao Forest Honey brought together farmers, as well as NGO, private sector and government workers to explore the opportunities available to — and to discuss the challenges facing — the sector. The blind tasting was part of the organizers’ efforts to create greater awareness of the unique characteristics of Lao honey, and to elevate participants’ appreciation for the product.

While there is nothing wrong with saying that honey tastes simply “sweet,” in reality the tastes of the different types of honey are much more varied and complex than that. The tasting competition was a way to start a conversation about the tastes of honey among producers, in the hopes that it will lead to more inspired marketing efforts that increase consumers’ interest in Lao forest honey.

Original article available at  
<http://www.tabi.la/honey-contest-at-xkh/>



The blind tasting was held over three days, during which 16 producers' honeys were sampled. The honey samples were displayed in glass cups and participants took turns dipping their spoons into each cup, sniffing them and inspecting their color and clarity. The products were graded based on four important criteria: flavor, aroma, color, and clarity.



After a tight competition, participants selected three honeys as the winners:

The winning honey came from Choei village, Phoukoud District, Xiengkhuang province. It was said to have an attractive sweet flavor combined with the fragrance of jasmine. It had a beautiful amber color and was clean to the eye.

The 1st runner up was honey from Phosy village, Paek District, Xiengkhuang province. It had a special, very sweet flavor, and a pleasing floral fragrance. It was a beautiful amber color and without defects.

The 2nd runner-up was honey from Naxay Charuen village, Chomphet District, Luang Prabang province. It had a balanced sweet flavor and the fragrance of an orange. It had a lovely golden color and a clean appearance.

It was a difficult decision to make because there was a diverse uniqueness among all the featured honey products. One particular honey that piqued the interest of many was the honey that had a hint of galangal.

What became clear to the participants was that if you take the time to taste honeys carefully, you can find distinct flavors in all of them. Surely, there exists honey being produced in some corner of Laos that will delight every consumer's tastebuds too — while also offering a gamut of health benefits. Next time you go to the market and see honey being sold, try them and perhaps you'll find your own favorite!



The National Workshop on Lao Forest Honey was organized by Organized by the Department of Forestry/Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in collaboration with National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute, The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI), Green Community Development Association (GCDA), and NTFP-EP.



## LAOS FOREST HONEY TASTING CONTEST



**Choei village**  
Phoukoud District  
Xiengkhuang province



**Phosy village**  
Paek District  
Xiengkhuang province



**Naxay Charuen village**  
Chomphet District  
Luang Prabang province.





# Traditional knowledge & cultural expressions

## ENSURING THE PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES' INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Article by Dazzle Labapis, Earl Diaz,  
and Edna Maguigad (NTFP-EP Asia)  
Photo by Earl Diaz (NTFP-EP Asia)

Ikat is a dyeing technique used to create patterns that employs the dyeing of the threads prior to weaving them into a fabric. While the origin of the word itself is Indonesian, the said weaving style is common to many world cultures. It is one of the oldest forms of textile production, more specifically for many indigenous communities in Asia. In a broader sense, non-timber forest products play an important role in linking these traditional cultural expressions to the bigger traditional knowledge picture.

The creation of these woven products goes beyond every thread and dye used to produce the textile. For creators, a product's value extends beyond the economic and transcends over to the spiritual and cultural. The creative prowess and innovative work and artistry poured into the individual components, intricate symbols and names that comprise these woven masterpieces fully characterize these products as an intellectual property.

With the dawn of stiffening market competition, many communities find themselves stifled with the dilemma of ensuring the protection of their cultural products from imitation and intellectual theft. Hence, a need to understand the importance

of securing the traditional knowledge and cultural expressions of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The intellectual property regime under the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) ensures the promotion of creation, dissemination, use, and protection of creative products through the Intellectual Property Rights system. Under this regime, traditional cultural expressions can be protected through various tools: Copyright, Patents, Trademarks, Geographical Indications, Unfair Competition, Industrial Design and Trade Services.

Although it is possible to provide protection for intellectual products using the tools that are readily available, these tools have limitations and gaps that need to be bridged. Because of the need to balance interests of the public domain, patents, when they expire after their limited protection time, could not be renewed. Copyright laws do not protect “ideas”—they do not preclude other creators from using the concepts of information revealed by another creator's work. There also exists a very fine and relative line between inspiration and infringement. These gaps result to blindly permissible infractions, allowing for the haphazard use of property



# HIVE

The NTFP-EP e-Learning Platform

*In early 2018, NTFP-EP launched HIVE, its e-Learning Platform. The first webinars produced was a three-part learning session on Intellectual Property Rights. It was from these learnings that Dayak Benuaq weavers have started discussing acquiring a geographic indicator for their ikat weaving.*



designs without understanding the creators' original intent. For example, the woven cloth of the Higaonon indigenous group in the Philippines represent a tradition of peace and gift-giving among communities in conflict. In reverence, Higaonon communities have traditionally restricted the use of the *Hinabol* on footwears or anything that is stepped on. However, many third party enterprises have marketed footwear products using hinabol accents.

With these existing limitations and gaps in the intellectual property regime, what does "protection" actually mean? In many ways through these tools, they could mean legal protection. However, creators and perpetrators should also have a say over access and use of their traditional knowledge by third parties.

The good news is that measures outside of the intellectual property regime can also be used. Legal measures, or positive protection, have been employed by different countries to ensure the protection: New Zealand's Trade Marks Act 2002, Cook Islands' Traditional Knowledge Act 2013, and Peru's Law No. 27811 of 24 July 2002. These examples emphasize the importance of a national-level protection.

Additionally, defensive protection tools also exist: an innovation like the Indian Traditional Knowledge Digital Library provides a safeguard for Ayurvedic, Unani, Siddha and Yoga systems of medicine in local languages preventing them from misappropriation.

Wielding knowledge management strategies prove to be useful in providing practical measures to protect intellectual property like best practices guides and community protocols. NTFP-EP Philippines for example, shared their experience on developing standards, research and community protocols for forest honey in the Philippines through the Philippine Forest Honey Network. This has led to documented experience and standards for having sustainable forest honey harvesting while ensuring environmental integrity and cultural empowerment.

In the broader livelihoods discussion, the nature and significance of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of indigenous peoples and local communities should be emphasized. Thus, understanding the intellectual property rights framework could prove to be helpful for communities and their development partners in recognizing, protecting, and promoting a fair and equitable market environment.





## GREEN MONTESSORI SCHOOL LEARNS ABOUT NATURAL DYES

Article by Roma (NTFP-EP Indonesia) & Wina (Borneo Chic)  
Photos by Roma (NTFP-EP Indonesia), Nindy (Borneo Chic),  
and Ami (Green Montessori School)

“I’ll go to Tanjung Isuy one day!” Fadil said as he really wants to see the origin of *tenun doyo* and meet the Dayak Benuaq weaver directly.

Fadil is one of the Green Montessori School (GMS) Jakarta students who participated in the Natural Dyes Workshop in their school last April 2018. There were 20 students (from 4th to 6th graders), 2 GMS teachers, and 6 teachers from neighboring schools who participated in the workshop. This event was a collaboration of Borneo Chic and NTFP-EP Indonesia together with GMS, which was aimed to promote NTFPs, especially natural dyes, to the students to encourage them in appreciating local products. This activity provided a space for students to explore more about the Indonesian culture and nature.

Through this workshop, the students were brought to “visit” Tanjung Isuy to see and experience the natural dying process of *doyo* weaving. The *doyo* leaf (*Curculigo latifolia*) is hand woven and made into fiber by Dayak Benuaq community in Kutai Barat district, East Kalimantan.







TOP LEFT: Explaining about the process of Doyo weaving.

BOTTOM LEFT: Naturally-dyed shibori and tassel designs

TOP RIGHT: Group photo! :)

MIDDLE & BOTTOM RIGHT: Students and teachers learning before and after the workshop

*Doyo* weaving is unique as it is produced traditionally through an intricate and lengthy process. Besides, the colors used for the weaving are natural dyes materials gathered from forest around the village: brown color from *ulin* powder, *nepo* bark, *ketungan* bark, *lai* bark, or otter root; yellow pigment from turmeric, *pemuda* leaves, *putri malu* leaves (*Mimosa pudica*), and mango leaves; pink is extracted from *terujak* leaves; black from guava leaves and *gerengak*; blue and green from indigo leaves; purple from *bekakakng* fruit/ *karimunting*; and a many other materials around the village that can be used as natural dyes.

To experience the natural dying process during the workshop, students and teachers tried some simple techniques for making motifs such as shibori and tassel.

The enthusiasm of the students was remarkable. It was through their curious minds that they were able to capture the range of information about doyo weaving and the natural dyes used. It was clearly shown during the presentation on natural dyes practices at the end of the workshop that many students were interested to buy craft products that were on display during the event.

“How difficult it is to make this. This is why *tenun doyo* is so expensive. I have high respect for the makers of *tenun doyo*,” said one of the students, as he now knows how complex it is to make *doyo* weaving.







# Paradigm shift that led to a ten-fold profit

## THE TALIPOT SUCCESS STORY

Article by My Baing (NTFP-EP Cambodia)  
Photos by Seng Sothea (NTFP-EP Cambodia)

*Talipot* palm (*Corypha umbraculifera* or more popularly known as “Traing” in Khmer language) grows in many provinces in Cambodia including Chhaeb district, Preah Vihear province. This plant has provided great benefits to Cambodia’s rural communities, especially for those who rely on NTFPs for home construction materials and daily kitchen stuff, etc. Recently, *talipot* palm in Chaeb District of Preah Vihear province has been facing serious threats of extinction due to overharvesting brought about by exports to neighboring countries like Vietnam. Market prices reached a low price of approx. 500 riel per kg (equivalent to 0.125USD / kg), with massive resource extraction looming over the past few years. Due to this demand, communities have raised serious concerns over the issue.





To promote the sustainability of *talipot* palm harvesting and to improve the livelihood of the forestry dependent communities in Sangkae, Chaeb Lech community forestry, and Chaeb Keut community protected areas, the second phase of Partners for Forestry and Fisheries (PaFF) Program through NTFP-EP Cambodia, conducted participatory Community Livelihood Assessment and Product Scanning (CLAPS) on this plant species in late 2017. The findings were that there could be a potential productive link between the abundance of talipot resources and the growing market for *talipot* palm-made chopstick in the locality. Through the discussion with the participants, the community expressed their interest in exploring better options for promoting *talipot*-based products to the market, as well as for future harvesting, under a livelihood improvement and sustainable resource management paradigm.

With such interest of the community on the product development and resource governance, an exposure visit was organized in 28 September, 2017 to visit local *talipot* palm handmade chopstick processing in Mon village, Anlong Chrey commune, Thalaborivath district, Stung Treng province.

“Currently, communities harvest talipot palm and sell directly without processing at 500 riels per kg; however, if it is processed into chopsticks (1kg of talipot palm can produce 10 pairs of chopsticks), it can be sold at 5,000 riels (ten times compared to the selling price in raw form). I have just realized this through the exposure visit to Mon village, Stung Treng province in September 2017, which was supported by PaFF/NTFP-EP. This is very interesting. I suggest to NTFP-EP to assist our community in forming a *talipot* palm producer group that will process *talipot* palm as a finished product to be sold, by adopting a sustainable way of resource harvesting.” said Mr. Hiem Kimhong, community forestry management committee member (CFMC) in Sangkae village, Sangkae Muoy commune, Chhaeb district, Preah Vihea province.

“In realizing that *talipot* palm is so important for chopstick markets, I will find any opportunity to report this opportunity in existing platforms such as the provincial community forestry program coordination (PCFPCC) or other meetings to ask for intervention on the current overharvesting of talipot palm for export to neighboring countries. In addition, I will lobby with those authorities to support our future talipot palm processing group in various means,” said Mrs. Bo Sokhom, community forestry management committee member in Chhaeb Lech village, Chhaeb Muoy commune, Chhaeb district, Preah Vihear province.

While still in its early stages, the initial steps towards sustainable resource management and livelihoods development have already taken. It’s only a matter of time that the Chhaeb district will make itself known for its *talipot* chopsticks!



TOP LEFT: Dried talipot palm ready for production

BOTTOM LEFT: A tall talipot palm

TOP RIGHT: Talipot chopsticks ready for selling

BOTTOM RIGHT: Preparing the palm for processing



# FEATURED FILMS & PUBLICATIONS

## FILM **KEEPING IT FLOWING: THE PALAW'AN ALMACIGA STORY**



Many indigenous communities inhabit and care for the last high biodiversity forests on Earth. Palawan island, known as the Philippines's last frontier, is home to the Palaw'an indigenous group. The Palaw'an residing in Amas village in the municipality of Brooke's Point, Palawan exemplify the inextricable link between culture and ecology.

With the potential of a traditionally-used valuable NTFP, the resin of *Agathis philippinensis* (almaciga tree), the Palaw'an community saw a window of opportunity for them to conserve their forests and make a living out of it.

As the community wants to preserve their forest and does not want to open up new areas for swidden agriculture, they realized they had to diversify their livelihood to address their growing population. With a strong collective will to protect their territories, they established their own community-based enterprise: Samahan ng mga Palawano sa Amas Brooke's Point Multipurpose Cooperative (SPABP).

## BOOK

### **FOREST BUSINESS INCUBATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOREST AND FARM PRODUCER ORGANISATION (FFPO) BUSINESSES THAT ENSURE CLIMATE RESILIENT LANDSCAPES**



Forest business incubation is a support process that accelerates the successful development of sustainable businesses in forest landscapes. While more than 7,000 business incubators exist worldwide, few serve forest landscapes. Low densities of educated entrepreneurs, high logistical costs, scarce infrastructure to distant markets, and few capable business mentors present major challenges.

Forest business incubation is also needed to help meet market demand for vital products in sectors such as green energy, lowcarbon construction, nutritious food, medicines, cosmetics and ecosystem services. It can also help pool lower-risk investment opportunities for financiers. But how can forest business incubation deliver a win-win-win for the economy, society and the environment? That is the question that this book seeks to answer – drawing on established literature and 11 forest business incubator case studies from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The case of NTFP-EP and its work was written by Emanuelle Andaya (Chapter 8, The NTFP Exchange Programme in Asia: working with forest-dependent and indigenous communities).



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