

# Voices from the Forest

Issue No. 35 March 2019

NTFP-EP

non-timber  
forest products -  
exchange programme

## Confidence in conflict resolution

THE CHANGKRAN ROY  
COMMUNITY FORESTRY EXPERIENCE

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

Being at the frontier of conflicts from large-scale development projects, local and indigenous communities come face to face with the pressure of not only making ends meet for their families but also the future of their communities. The year 2018 has been a host to various exchanges and learnings that elevate the discussion on community and tenure rights. The 35th issue of Voices from the Forest is a collection of these stories.

Equitable benefits and outcomes in community development are rooted in gender equality and strengthening and empowering the voice of women. All over, the world has come together in Johannesburg to form a collective voice against aggression. Maica Saar, a Palaw'an woman, shared her experience from the trip. After winning the Purse for the People's Gratitude For the Goddess Award in early 2017, Tilita, a Dayak Benuaq has bigger dreams of building a Cultural House for her village. She goes on a journey to the Philippines to learn about their ways and strategies despite their struggles on page 22.

On the cover of this issue is Changkran Roy, a growing community-based ecotourism site in Cambodia. However, encroachment and logging threats have made the area more prone to flooding hazards. The community members have taken it upon themselves to determine, manage, and resolve conflicts in the area by forming the Community Forestry Management Council.

The palm oil industry is moving very quickly, and communities are having a hard time keeping up. NTFP-EP Malaysia zeroed in on the growing sector as it creeps in Sarawak, including its nuanced costs, benefits, and complications.

Lok Panchayat shares about the Raakhan Raan—a 'young' conservation tradition in India. As a livelihood-based conservation tradition around Kalsubai Harishchandragad Wildlife Sanctuary, tribals have been using it in a way that marries tradition and livelihoods within a system of respect for resource rights and tenurial access.

ICCAs are gaining more thrust as it steadily draws in more champions in the region. In the recently concluded exchange visit to Bukidnon, Philippines, colleagues from Myanmar learned about the realities of combining technical and local knowledge within the context of advocating for ICCAs at the policy level.

Regionally, the CSO Forum has been delivering a grounded perspective of social forestry. However, challenges still exist at the country level. Updates from the recently concluded forum and mini-conference in Da Nang, Vietnam look promising.

While stories of success, challenges, and promises on the ground continue, the demand for these to be taken into account and acted on still exist on global platforms such as the UNFCCC COP24 in Poland and CBD COP14 in Egypt.



# All about the money and land

## **OIL PALM DILEMMA IN MALAYSIA**

Article by Andrew Aeria and Amanda Ng, NTFP-EP Malaysia  
Photos by Amanda Ng, NTFP-EP Malaysia

Palm oil is ubiquitous in everyday products. It is the most widely consumed vegetable oil and provides the highest yield from a smaller land area compared to soybean and rapeseed. In terms of land use, this makes it the most efficient of oil crops. The characteristics of the palm tree enable this to survive in tropical and humid conditions. The land clearance for the palm tree plantations took place mostly in rainforests with rich biodiversity.

Living with oil palm has become the new reality for many indigenous communities in Sarawak. The oil palm boom started at the 1990s with the total planted area in Sarawak reaching 1.56 million hectares which include 600,000 hectares of peat-lands. The state government aims to reach 2 million hectares by 2020.

Under the governance of Taib Mahmud, 1.5 million hectares of native customary right (NCR) land in Sarawak are regarded as 'largely idle or under-utilised.' Thus, incorporating the land with larger oil palm production entities is seen as the only feasible way to develop these idle lands and improve the livelihood of land owner. A joint venture scheme is introduced to encourage the involvement of NCR land into oil palm sectors where the landowner leases out land for 60 years (two cycles of oil palm plantation): with the private sectors providing capital and expertise, the government agencies like Land Custody and Development Authority (LCDA)

and Sarawak Land Development Board (SLDB) acting as trustees of the project.

The share of equity is 60% for the private sectors, 30% for the landowner, and 10% for government agencies. With Sarawak land policies and economic developments that emphasize large scale and smallholder plantation, the traditional land use and farming practices of communities have been under the pressure of conversion. The definition of an oil palm smallholder is that the planted area is less than 50 hectares, which can either be an independent smallholder or a schemed smallholder. From the year 2000 to 2017, the scale area for an independent smallholder has increased from 9,000 to 190,000 hectares.

Traditional land use has been the main farming pattern practiced among the indigenous peoples in Sarawak. This involved slashing and burning as parts of the shifting cultivation systems. Crops are planted in rotation in one field and left fallowed for a period; this allows the organic matter to be accumulated over time to generate potent soil as well. However, this traditional land use is seen as a drawback from the state's state point of view. In coping with the oil palm trend, numerous smallholders find ways to integrate traditional land management practices and crops into oil palm landscape on the one hand, while some want to remain as traditional farmers.



## Why some want oil palm, and some don't

Oil palm is a lucrative crop and can provide consistent cash flow for the planters. The easy and guaranteed market attracts farmers to prefer planting oil palm compared to other cash crops like rubber and pepper.

Fresh fruit bunches are harvested twice a month, and each harvesting can reach 2 tons for 2.5 hectares of oil palm plantation. In other words, oil palm planters earn at least RM1600 when the market price of fresh fruit bunches is RM460 per ton. It is one of the solutions for cash-starving



indigenous communities who live in the inner part of Sarawak. Because of these earnings, they are able to buy necessities such as food and support children's education. While traditional crops provided food for the farmers, they, unfortunately, provide little and irregular income because of the poor market access.

However, access to fresh fruit bunches buyers or mill and capital to establish an oil palm estate are also important factors that can influence villagers to plant oil palm. Building an oil palm estate is expensive. The cost of seedling, fertilizer, pesticides, vehicle, and fuel to transport the fresh fruit bunches to sell at the mill, and having to wait for a period of three years for oil palm to grow, entails having to deal with lot of uncertainty in terms of financial returns. Some villagers claimed it is too expensive to plant oil palm without capital like money and car, considering the distance of the plantation to the mill.

But there are some that find it easier to plant oil palm compared to other crops. Planters claimed that working in an oil palm estate is less laborious than planting rice in a paddy because there is less sun exposure with the lesser time on the field. Spraying pesticides every three months, putting fertilizer every two months, harvesting fresh fruit bunches every two weeks; the planters are able to use the time gap for other activities that can generate a side income for them. Some planters even hired other people to manage their estate. Planters that have received positive returns from oil palm want more by expanding the estate. Most of the elders and young generation of the village do not want oil palm because it is laborious, especially harvesting the fresh fruit bunches.

Oil palm also became a way to secure the NCR land title. With large oil palm companies liaising with the state government to get a Provisional Lease mainly on community NCR land, landowners defend their land by planting oil palm instead of this being taken away by the company and/or the state. Certain groups of planters lease the NCR land by participating in joint venture schemes and receive monthly rentals from the oil palm company. These landowners claimed that they engaged in a joint venture with some land to get a side income, while the rest are used for subsistence farming. Through this, they get a stable livelihood by adjusting land allocations for the two uses, especially during the downfall of fresh fruit bunches price.

## The other costs of planting oil palm

The implications of oil palm plantation as an alternative land use have provided income benefits to the smallholder. However, it has cost a negative impact on the environment and contributed to social and cultural changes. Generally, the oil palm smallholders have low awareness of food security risks, environmental impacts, as well as a global context of climate change. Despite their awareness of the dangers from oil palm pesticides and the poison of fresh fruit bunches thorns, they do not take sufficient safety precautions.

Planting oil palm has created a deep dependence among the planters on cash and market economy. Nearly all smallholders think they are economically better off with oil palm and are expanding the oil palm land holdings at the expense of the forest. The expansion of oil palm has led to the declination of forest area and loss of forest products, as well as river pollution due to biomass accumulation and pesticides and fertilizer runoffs.

The nutritional components of the communities' diets are changing. From a diversified menu of vegetables and fruits that can be found in the forest, the villagers have now turned to a food diet that is derived from cash-bought commodities. Food now is bought mainly from supermarkets instead of collecting from the forest and farmland. While this cycle poses a risk of food security among the smallholders during the downfall of fresh fruit bunches price, it also puts into risk the traditional knowledge of local villagers. The vast knowledge about forest flora and fauna retained by elders are not transmitted to younger generations, posing a higher chance of decline in traditional knowledge.

The out-migration of youth in the rural indigenous communities pose the problem of hollowing out of rural villages. The education system leads the youth to the city, making them uninterested in village life, and leaving the life of farming, let alone, oil palm farming. With this, the tendency of idle NCR land increases, which means provisional leases over NCR land to oil palm companies will also rise.

Oil palm also triggers the changes of dynamics in the village; it widens the gap between the rich and poor within the community. Exploitative relations, indebtedness, and significant wealth inequality within the villages have emerged. The rise of rich and individuals with oil palm income in the village

venturing into business within and outside the village have rendered them influential in determining the charges such as transportation fees, indirectly affecting the prices of rations sold in the village canteen.



## Where to now?

Palm oil can be found in half of the products being sold in supermarkets: biscuits, bread, ice cream, soap, shampoo, and makeup. On average, the global demand on oil palm is at 60 million tons per year, with a projection of 400% increase in the next 25 years. To say that the oil palm industry is lucrative is an understatement. But at what cost? Its scale has had serious long term social and environmental implications. At the core of many of the experiences is a narrative that stems from systemic inequality. The unjust practices and processes of land management go hand in hand with the lack of respect for the rights of indigenous and local communities in giving rise to more disputes that can be felt among all social strata.

This tall order requires a major overhaul not just of the oil palm industry itself, but the rest of the frameworks and system to ensure its sustainability. Much like how a particular focus on the definition of a 'forest' can play an important role in determining land use, that is not only sustainable environmentally, but also socially and economically.





Protecting  
“lunig et begtik,  
kerugtung et  
ginawa”

## ALMACIGA RESIN, OUR BREATH OF LIFE

Article by Maica Saar, Mayna Pomarin, and Earl Diaz

Photos by BothEnds

Growing up, my parents always told me about the value of our forests and our ancestral land. It is here where we get our traditional medicine which gives primary remedy to various illnesses.

Within our traditional lands are our uma (swidden farm) that represent our identity as indigenous Pala'wan. It is in these areas that we traditionally plant rice and other staples like sweet potatoes, bangkoka, cassava, and banana that keep us fed throughout the year.

Aside from farming, the Palaw'an communities perform many rituals and celebrations where we play the agong while we dance in our traditional tarek and serve our guests with our traditional food called lut-lut, mel-mel and siburan (rice wine).

The Palaw'an's bread and butter is a valuable resin from the almaciga tree. Thus, being able to sell the product to a market, has become one of our main



TOP: Maica Saar during the rally

BOTTOM: Resin from the Almaciga tree (bagtik)



community livelihoods. “Lunig et begtik, kerugtung et ginawa” (almaciga, our breath of life) - is a saying the Palaw'an community takes into heart. With a lore that narrates the importance of the tree, we as Palaw'an people have taken it upon ourselves to become stewards, not just of the almaciga trees but also of the forest it belongs to.

These significant cultural activities and their inextricable link to our ancestral lands represent our Palaw'an identity--a territorial space where we have lived for a long time, such that the practice of our culture is meaningful only within the context of our territory. This is why we cannot be blamed if we continue to protect and save our land, our forests, our source of life, from encroachment by destructive projects bannered by economic developments such as mining.

Recently, a number of our community members have succumbed to the perils of the mine. It has wickedly crept and slashed our century-old trees, poisoned our waters, wounded our peoples once united to protect our living and only cultural heritage. We are wounded but embers of hope and solidarity of resistance against a strong enemy is what's binding us, as we fight the threats to our home.

My recent trip to Johannesburg to join a gathering of women and feminists around the world has been both inspiring and appalling. Since it was my first long adventure, I was wide awake from excitement while on the plane, for most of the duration of the trip. When we landed, I was mesmerized by the beauty of the place. The elegant houses spoke about how rich the country was, as a kind of place where you really do not feel the poverty.

However, as we moved further out of the city and talked to the locals, we started to see how the mining industry has taken the best of their sanctuary. Many were resettled and uprooted from their homes because the lands have already been mined. In exchange, they were given shelters which I thought were decent-looking. However, the inaccessibility to clean and safe water, clean air and their traditional livelihoods were their biggest challenges.

The other delegates also shared their experiences of big mines entering their lands. Mines have driven people out of their lands, and they are suffering. Like many communities facing the same situation, I learned how indigenous peoples are killed in Latin America because they fought for their land.

But instead of feeling hopeless, I felt the rage fueling my desire to resist, to influence and educate my fellow Pala'wan, most especially the youth. “It has driven me to resist how mining depletes our rich land and culture. It's motivating to know that we are many. Women are strong because of our collective voices.”

The collective experiences of women around the world, within the context of mining and other destructive industries, is a wake-up call to everyone. As Dr. Seuss' Lorax puts it, “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.”

Even in our youth, we will not remain still. We cannot turn a blind eye on this. I am calling on everyone to resist destructive mining. Save our forest, save our territories, and think of the future of our next generations!





# Putting the declaration into action

## LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE ACTION

Article by  
Dazzle Labapis and Earl Diaz  
Photos by Earl Diaz  
NTFP-EP Asia

The release of the latest IPCC report is a forewarning of the limited time we have in keeping global temperature rise at a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius. While this target is still achievable, it will require a greater sense of urgency to fully commit to an unprecedented change in investments and actions.

While majority of the countries have pledged its commitment through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, it only constitutes a third of what is needed to significantly curb the trend according to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. Such huge ambition requires fast tracking the development and operationalization of the Paris Rule book to clearly define the scope and implementation.

“The process of negotiation at the international level is not as easy as we thought it is,” as emphasized by Emmy Primadona of KKI WARSI. This is apparent in the disagreements on consensus building that are largely based on scope, structure,

limitations, accounting, and even approaches in achieving the NDC per country.

Increasing ambition also means going beyond, and engaging the non-state actors such as the non-government organizations, local communities and indigenous peoples who stand at the frontline of protecting forests and other important ecosystems.

The Paris Agreement has been successful in recognizing this, evident in Decision 1/CP.21 on the establishment of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP), and in the different parts of the agreement (e.g. Par. 118, 117, 121). This has continued with the introduction of the Talanoa Dialogue and the establishment of a facilitating working group for the LCIPP to develop its work plan for full implementation in Bonn during the COP23.

While there is significant progress, it remains slow.



As part of the Indigenous Peoples Day of the 24th Conference of Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC in Katowice, Poland, NTFP-EP teamed up with European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability (ECOLISE) and Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) in an effort to continue the discussion on the role and contribution of indigenous peoples and local community initiatives for enhanced climate ambition and transformative change.

The side event presented cases, research results and evidences of low carbon initiatives, mechanisms, platforms and practices that are already contributing to climate action and need to be supported from the ground up.

For NTFP-EP, Atty. Edna Maguigad shared the importance of social forestry on climate change, and the need to champion and promote traditional ecological knowledge, systems and practices for climate change adaptation. When their rights have already been acknowledged, enough support has been provided, and an enabling environment already created, indigenous peoples and local communities can continue contributing greatly to the Paris Agreement.

Despite these community-led initiatives, there are still challenges that hinder them from sustaining their valuable role. To date, many governments do not recognize the rights of many indigenous and local communities to their own land, rendering them vulnerable to displacement. Furthermore, the tedious financial process that cascade from the national to the local, and the cumbersome reporting mechanism are additional layers to an already problematic premise.

There is much work towards inclusivity into the overall national and international sphere of climate decision making and climate actions. Oftentimes, this initiative starts small.

“Small is beautiful. Because many times, the real change starts from small. It is more flexible to experiment, to change and to take risks. It is important to make changes when facing the challenges” Mr. Luca Jahier, the president of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) remarked. It is critical to protect and support local communities and indigenous peoples work on climate, to ensure that the transition leaves no one behind. They are important partners in achieving the Paris Agreement.



*Local communities and indigenous peoples are the stewards of our forests for many generations. They are also at the forefront both of managing the natural resources and being among the most vulnerable stakeholders to the impacts of climate change. There is growing evidence that demonstrates their important potential and role in contributing to climate action.*

*Through its networks and platforms within and beyond ASEAN, NTFP-EP elevates the discussion on the importance and contribution that local communities and indigenous peoples can do for climate action.*



# Indigenous peoples in conservation

## CBD COP14 RECOGNIZES THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF IPS

Article by Tanya Conlu and Earl Diaz  
NTPF-EP Asia

In 2003, the delegates of the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress made significant progress on expanding the discourse on protected areas. Historically, indigenous peoples' and local communities' traditional relationships with their territories have been seen as conflicting, and in contrast with the 'conservative' way of managing protected areas. These are evident in the high instances of repression towards indigenous peoples and local communities, as their territories often overlapped with state-sanctioned protected areas.

An outcome of that Congress were the Durban Accord and the Action Plan (2003) which put forward a new paradigm that transformed the understanding of protected areas from one that is mostly state-centric, to a more conducive space governed by many other key actors, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

***The definition of an OECM and related guidance is still a work in progress, yet there is general agreement in the Task Force about the core difference between a protected area and an OECM. Specifically, while protected areas should have a primary conservation objective (i.e. aim to promote the in-situ conservation of biodiversity), the defining criterion of an OECM is that it should deliver the effective and enduring in-situ conservation of biodiversity, regardless of its primary management objectives. This is a crucial distinction, which will help improve the recognition and support for ICCAs that are not managed for conservation, but nevertheless contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.***



In 2018, a major milestone was reached during the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) as 196 countries adopted the definition of “other effective area-based conservation measures” to include the recognition of indigenous peoples in biodiversity conservation, specifically conserved areas, or ICCAs. This recognition will set the international basis for indigenous peoples to claim their rights over the lands which they protect and conserve.



*LEFT: The iconic gate of the Ras Mohammed National Park*

*TOP: Bedouin community showing participants how to make traditional bread*

*BOTTOM: Conference delegates exploring the earthquake crack at the Ras Mohammed National Park*



Egypt hosted 2018's COP14 which included a three-day Nature and Culture Summit, which presented experiences and best practices on linkages between biological and cultural diversity, and how the combination of the two contribute to human resilience and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Over 200 participants from the Conference attended the Summit, and key messages from the Summit were delivered by the ICCA Consortium's Council Member Ghanimat Azhdari at the plenary.

The Sharm el Sheikh Declaration on Nature and Culture called on parties to engage the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in conservation of biodiversity. This entails the recognition of their rights to territories, natural resources and customary sustainable use.

Ras Mohammed National Park, a Bedouin community-managed area which received the IUCN Green List certificate was highlighted in the Summit. Because of its coral reefs, mangroves, and other resources, the park has become an exemplary case of sustainable tourism, not just in Egypt but with the rest of the world.

ICCAs or “territories of life” also got the spotlight in side events during the Conference, including one which showed examples of ICCAs overlapping with Protected Areas. The year 2018 ushers in more concrete steps towards an inclusive conservation-one where protected and conserved areas are distinct but also complementary. This can only be achieved through the identification, recognition, and securing of both protected and conserved areas under the diversity of governance types. But it means a more concerted effort in changing mind-sets, policies, and approaches.

For more on the results of the COP14, [tinyurl.com/MongabayCBD](https://tinyurl.com/MongabayCBD) and [tinyurl.com/IUCNCop14](https://tinyurl.com/IUCNCop14)



# 7 Years of the CSO Forum

## A CASE FOR OPTIMISM IN ASEAN

Written by: Dazzle Labapis and Earl Diaz  
Photos by: PanNature and NTFP-EP Asia

The contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities towards the protection and sustainable management of forests can be harnessed fully if they are given the proper platform that supports and recognizes their rights.

On its 7th Annual meeting, the CSO Forum reiterates its commitment to sustain its work to engage the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF). Back when it started in 2011, the CSO Forum has since worked its way to developing a forestry that is more people-centered forestry, climate-resilient, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals in the ASEAN region.

Since its initial engagement, the CSO Forum has been presenting a grounded perspective of social forestry and climate change governance models. These assessments have been expanded through consultations and documentations of best practice and key principles of effective governance.

Today, while the advances made in social forestry in each of the ASEAN member states took various forms and made impacts at varying levels, it has become evident that Southeast Asia as a region, is progressing in terms of platforms, policy, and practices. At the regional level, the social forestry network has been elevated to a regional working group in ASEAN. The working group has become a key driver of people-centered policies and programs on forestry in the region.



However, amidst the progress and achievement, the CSOs also believe that a lot of work remains to be done, especially in the establishment and enforcement of laws and regulations that ensure communities' access and tenurial rights to their customary lands. The CSO Forum drew attention to the lack of systematic and inclusive assessment of tenure in countries and how it has led to overlapping management and jurisdiction over land in distinctive contexts.

Dr. Phu Hung, the AWG-SF Focal Point for Vietnam and the Director of Technology and International Cooperation, VNFOR-EST, Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development (MARD) emphasized that such mechanisms are key to moving forward effective and inclusive national policies: "Regional and national policies in forestry need to embrace a multi-stakeholder and participatory approach, which involve important key non-state players, including private sector, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, networks and coalitions, communities, and research institutions."

Despite the challenges, the CSO Forum has reached different platforms, successfully voiced out the civil society issues and recommendations, and contributed to the development of the ASEAN Agroforestry Guidelines and the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry. Beyond 2019, the CSO Forum aspires to sustain what it has been reaping over the past 7 years.

In order to expand its reach and influence beyond ASEAN, the CSO Forum has to continue working together with much optimism to truly represent the interests of local communities and the indigenous peoples. Given the existing strides and the propensity of country governments and development partners to reform initiatives towards the recognition of tenurial rights, the CSO Forum sees a lot of windows opening up in remaining true to its vision of having people at the center of forestry in the region and beyond.

## **Naw Dah Htee: LANDESA Myanmar / POINT**

**Indigenous Community Conservation Areas and territories (ICCAs) have only just begun but is slowly gaining traction. There is a continuing history of conflicts arising from conflicts in land governance and forest conservation in their country. While indigenous peoples continue the practice of shifting cultivation, at present, customary land tenure is still not recognized in Myanmar. At this point, community forestry still has limitations to protect indigenous peoples land and resource rights against large scale developments in the country.**

## **Te Sokkhoeun: Star Kampuchea**

**Related conflicts among community forestry farmers and indigenous peoples in the process of demarcating boundaries of their management areas. It was recommended that there needs to be the creation and involvement of demarcation committees that will be inclusive of stakeholders in the process of apply for mapping of community forestry or indigenous peoples protected area. A complication for indigenous peoples in Cambodia is the long and tedious process of filing their application with another line ministry to check their legitimacy as indigenous peoples, before they can even apply for their customary land title.**

## **Ngo Van Hong: FORLAND, Vietnam**

**In Vietnam, multinational investors on forestland resulted in land grabbing and has greatly contributed to conflicts among communities. Despite the law saying that there should be equal rights, rights remain limited for indigenous peoples. He recommends that local communities and indigenous peoples should be able to monitor what is happening in the implementation of forestry and related laws that affect their well-being.**



# Confidence in conflict resolution

## THE EXPERIENCE OF CHANGKRAN ROY COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Article by Soviriya Chheong  
Photos by Socheat Kouy,  
NTFP-EP Cambodia

Almost a hundred kilometers away from Siem Reap is a community forestry site that is gaining popularity because of its unique characteristics. Changkran Roy offers plentiful activities that are in tune with the surroundings. Tourists are invited to do trekking, camping, swimming and bird-watching. Being one of the few remaining patches of evergreen in the country, Changkran Roy community forestry is filled with diverse flora and fauna species that are known to be of valuable use to the locals in terms of food, medicine, and even in culture.

**LEFT:** Ms. Chhoeun Sokdy, Chief of the Changkran Roy CFMC

**RIGHT:** Community patrollers during their shift

However, Changkran Roy is highly vulnerable to drought and flooding because of the illegal logging activities by outsiders in the nearby areas. Based on the participatory capacity and vulnerability assessment conducted in Changkran Roy, the conflicts have been mapped and categorized to the following:

- Small scale conflict: between individuals or a few families conducting illegal activities (mostly illegal logging) within the community
- Medium scale conflict: between and among groups of families involved in forest encroachment and illegal logging or wood commercialization
- Large scale conflict: forestland encroachment for cassava plantation and land commercialization from neighbouring land owners



As a solution, the Changkran Roy has formulated the Community Forestry Management Committee (CFMC), a crucial body in the prevention and mitigation of conflicts in the area. The committee has initiated activities that helped disseminate the threats of logging and encroachment, which allowed the locals to intensify their patrolling effort in ensuring their community forestry area is protected. While these activities have started prior to the legal designation of the forest area as a community forest, being granted with a legal status allowed for the enactment of the community forestry regulations more quickly, effectively reducing conflicts, and prosecuting offenders. Up to now, the involvement of local communities in these activities remains to be strong.

To intensify their success, the CFMC also started doing boundary demarcation through the preparation of firebreak and access road in the community forestry area. This allowed the members and other villagers to be more aware of the scope and bounds of the community forest. Additionally, guard stations have also been installed to support the patrolling activity based on the plans made with other villages.

The facilitative role of CFMC was key in the conduct of meetings attended and participated in by the district and commune representatives, and the regular reports submitted to the forestry administration. Support has also been provided in the development of the agreements, plans, and regulatory documents that are used to support the community forestry implementation and conflict management.

CFMC's efficiency in prevention, mitigation, and resolution of conflicts can be attributed to the effective collaboration among key stakeholders: the local community, provincial, district, and community authorities, and the forestry administration. Ms. Chhoeun Sokdy, Chief of CFMC is proud at how Changkran Roy can be a good model for conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution: "Conflict isn't much of a concern as we are confident we can resolve the conflicts within our community forest because the process is clear to us. We are also glad to have strong collaboration and support from the line department and the local authority."







# From Tanintharyi to Bukidnon

## THE PHILIPPINES ICCA DOCUMENTATION EXPOSURE TRIP

Article by Eh Htee Wah  
Photos by: Saw One Star

*In August 2018, members and honorary members of the ICCA Consortium in Southeast Asia and West Austronesia gathered for four days for a meeting in Palangkaraya, Indonesia to discuss strengthening the regional network through capacity building among others. One of the priorities brought forward by several countries was acquiring skills in ICCA mapping and documentation. Based on country action plans, several mini-exchanges were prioritized as follow-up activities using the UNDP Small Grants Programme (SGP) ICCA Global Support Initiative (GSI). To have a better understanding of how ICCA documentation is done with communities, a few participants will have an immersion to have an in-depth learning of the tool, and also of approaches in working with communities. The first batch will be for two Burmese participants to learn skills from NTFP-EP Philippines staff as they conduct their field work in Bukidnon, Philippines.*

In October 2018, I had the opportunity to join an exposure visit to the Philippines to learn about mapping and documentation of ICCAs. The trip allowed me to learn a great deal about both the technical and community-driven aspects of ICCAs. While I had some knowledge of ICCAs from my own work in Tanintharyi Region in Myanmar, this trip gave me greater depth of knowledge, by learning how to combine technical and local knowledge together, the ways in which ancestral domain titles and ICCAs have been lobbied for in the government, and the challenges they are still trying to overcome.



## ICCA Documentation

One of the key learnings from this trip was practical knowledge on ICCA documentation. This included gaining a deeper understanding of the concept of ICCAs, understanding the importance of the interconnectedness between the community and their ancestral territory, and gaining the practical knowledge to map and document ICCAs. Further, we also learned about the steps to register ICCAs at the international level.

I learnt that in Tanintharyi Region, we are already practicing ICCAs, and our communities already have a very strong understanding of this concept. People live harmoniously with the forest, and have a strong relationship with their ancestral territories. Through our trip, I learnt how we can help communities to document their ICCAs and support them to secure them by registering them internationally.

One component I learned was that documenting biodiversity inside ICCAs is a key part of the process. On the trip we conducted resource inventories. We learned how to measure carbon stocks, and we conducted transect walks. This was really an important learning for me, as in Tanintharyi Region we work to support communities to protect their forests but we do not have much technical knowledge. We also learned

about REDD+ and the process of measuring carbon. However this is very different in Myanmar, where the laws and policies are completely different.

The other key component to documenting ICCAs was documenting the cultural aspects, such as local knowledge research, and local customs and systems for resource management. We have already been supporting communities to document their local knowledge, customs and practices, but will continue to do this, with the knowledge and inspiration from communities in the Philippines.

This knowledge was really useful for me as someone who works with indigenous communities. It helped me to reflect on what I have already done, and also to identify the gaps in our work in Tanintharyi, and learn about how to fill these gaps.





## Advocacy for ICCAs

In Myanmar, a lot of the work that we do is advocating at the regional and national levels for recognition of indigenous territories, and the rights of indigenous communities to live with the forest.

It was interesting to know the Philippines country context and the ways in which indigenous territories have been recognized in a national law through the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA). However, despite a legal foundation of IPs having the right to manage and conserve natural resources within the territories and uphold the responsibilities for future generations, it is still very complex. Even though ancestral domain titles can be obtained, these territories are still not safe. In order to improve tenure security over their

territories, they are now trying to register their lands at a global level. While in Myanmar there is no institution to represent indigenous peoples, the Philippines has the National Committee for Indigenous People as a government representation at the national level.

We also learned that the Philippines government is now conducting 10 pilot projects for ICCAs, and an ICCA bill, which has not yet been approved.







## Moving forward

However, I also realized that even though ancestral lands have been recognized, there are still many challenges in the Philippines. These challenges are rapidly changing cultures that are eroding their customary systems. There are also problems with the nearby armed group – a context very different to Tanintharyi Region in Myanmar, where the armed group, the KNU is fighting for federalism and democracy for our Karen people.

No country or community is perfect, and everywhere there are challenges. One ICCA that I learned about in the Philippines got completely taken over by eco-tourism, leaving only two hectares of land for the community inside their

territory. I also learned that while the FPIC process is very good on paper, it often does not work that way in reality, given the many problems with the approval of bad projects in indigenous territories.

The Myanmar context still has a lot of room to grow for dialogue and participation. The civil society movement has been advocating hard for the government to recognize indigenous peoples and their rights over their territories, and their potential to contribute to meeting national targets. Without these, we will not be able to fully implement ICCAs to the extent or with the security that has been achieved in the Philippines.



# Unfolding the 'Raakhan Raan'

## **A LIVELIHOOD-BASED CONSERVATION TRADITION OF TRIBALS AROUND KALSUBAI HARISHCHANDRAGAD WILDLIFE SANCTUARY**

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Chalisgaon Dangan is, geographically, the rugged mountainous element of Akole Taluk from Ahmednagar District, India. This once densely wooded area is traditionally inhabited by tribal communities; Mahadev Koli and Thakar. Like other traditional forest dwellers, they too live in cultural harmony with the surrounding landscape and its forests. More so, they conserve and protect a broad spectrum of biodiversity through their traditions like sacred groves (Devrai), Totem trees (Vansh-vruksh), Waghdev (Tiger deity of forest), etc. No wonder, in spite of growing urbanization pressure, the finest and unscathed forest patches from the Northern Western Ghats are located in this area.

Local communities have an Agro-Pastoral lifestyle and have been rearing threatened cattle breed 'Dangi' for centuries. 'Dangi' is a unique breed which can work in difficult terrains and even during sustained torrential rains. This breed is limited in its distribution to 13 taluks (hereditary estates) from 6 districts of Maharashtra and Gujarat. This cattle is a precious resource as it supports agricultural operations, family nutrition and provides petty cash during scarcity. No wonder, cattle custodians are very keen to ensure fodder security especially during draught months. 'Raakhan Raan' is a tool for the same purpose.



Shri Budhaji Wale is a knowledgeable person from the local community who first introduced the authors to this tradition. Raakhan Raans are privately owned grassy meadows which are protected from open grazing and other disturbances like fires. Protection enables complete undisturbed growth of grass species which are harvested systematically only after seed dispersal. Isolation of such patches for decades show many visible and logical benefits to the surrounding ecology. They reduce soil erosion; improve soil depth, percolation, vigorous fodder growth, vast grass diversity, food and shelter to many wild species, etc.

Unsupervised cattle grazing by locals have exposed most of the landscape to drastic degradation and reduction in quantity and quality of fodder. On the backdrop of overexploited natural resources, Raakhan Raans are a more sustainable approach to ensure fodder security; they indirectly support and protect grass species to flourish and regenerate. Not only grass species, it is likely that these grass sanctuaries support many wild herbivores, ungulates, lesser mammals, grassland bird species etc.

With a view to understanding the socio-economic drive of this tradition, we conducted a door to door survey in sampled hamlets of the area. This study gave insights on the land, area, tenure and ownership, age of this tradition, uses of the produce, harvesting patterns and proportions with respect to the Raakhan Raan, etc. This study has brought to light a very different conservation tradition which has never been actually studied, and not even previously mentioned.

Raakhan Raan is a relatively young conservation tradition against traditions like 'Devrai' which are almost as old as the human race itself, but it has a very clear livelihood perspective. This tradition needs to be intensively studied, incentivized and replicated in areas where there are pastoral communities and degraded grazing lands.



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## LEARNING FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Article and photos by Tilita Renata

As a Dayak Benuaq woman, I dream of building a “Rumah Budaya” (culture house) for my village in Tanjung Isuy. In my experience in Kutai Barat, I noticed how a lot of the children are starting to lose interest in the Dayak Benuaq culture and traditions.

In 2018, I had the pleasure of going on an exchange visit to the Philippines. The experience allowed me to see some of the indigenous cultural houses and programmes in the country. The trip was eye opening for me, it’s still fresh in my mind.

I saw how committed the indigenous peoples in the Philippines are in maintaining their culture despite their struggles. Learning how they built their cultural schools and manage them, it was uplifting to see that both the young and old are involved in maintaining their culture and championing the collective trademark of products like the T’nalak.

My vision of building a “Culture House” or “Heritage Center” became larger and stronger, the more I learned about the experience in the Philippines. The fears, doubts, and desperation about not being able to realize this dream that have disturbed me all this time have left me.







**The visit took place from September 9-15 2018, and I traveled to the Philippines with Ms. Yayuk Sri Rahayu (Chairperson of the Kutai Barat Crafts Council), Ms. Yuyun Diah Setiorini (Deputy Chairperson of the Kutai Barat Crafts Council), Mr. Akhmad Sofyan (The Planning Office Head of the Kutai Barat Local Government), Mrs. Kresensia Rikam (Kutai Barat Culture expert) and Ms. Crissy Guerrero (NTFP-EP representative). Tilita was able to visit various cultural centers and historic places such as Intramuros, the National Commission for Culture and Arts (NCCA) - Manila, The School of Living Traditions -Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, The Living Heritage-Gono Tembul, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato and Pamulaan (Center for Indigenous Peoples' Education) - Davao.**

I learned many things about local struggles and efforts to start building heritage centers. One does not need to wait for big things to happen. One should just start from the simplest things that can be done right now. It's not just about the physical space for a building, but about the spirit behind preserving our traditions and culture. We do not only pass on heritage to our biological children, but we pass it on to all younger generations coming after us. We need to change our mindset about preserving tradition and culture.

In talking about a culture house, there needs to have a discussion about staying true to our traditions and culture in the face of embracing modernity. What is important is making people aware that tradition and culture is not about luxury and beauty, but about the true meaning that one receives from learning more deeply and practicing more truthfully one's traditions.

We should never think that tradition and culture will remain forever if we do not look after it. Looking more inward and critically we will realize that there are many things that are beginning to disappear in our traditions. Soon enough, we may not find them anymore.

The culture house that we are envisioning and struggling for is not about an expensive building with artifacts. It is about cultivating a sense of tradition and culture with younger generations so they can better appreciate and internalize their traditional ways and culture. If we don't start now, will tradition and culture be able to compete against all the "richness" and sophisticated modernity that is becoming more and more present in all societies?

It is this spirit that I will bring back and share with the people of Tanjung Isuy, my beloved village. We will build and manage "Rumah Budaya" or "Culture House" together, one that will be loved and appreciated by all.



# FEATURED PUBLICATIONS



BOOK

## CSO FORUM REPORT 2018



BOOK

## ENRICHING THE PALATE VOL. 2

The CSO Forum has come far as a regional platform for knowledge sharing. Back in 2011, it started with 10 organizations in a brown bag discussion with ASEAN Member State Representatives in Brunei. Today the CSO Forum has over 60 organizations hailing from 8 countries from ASEAN, collaborating with key stakeholders towards common goals. The CSO Forum has succeeded in bringing together diverse organisations driven by the common goal of mainstreaming people-centered actions in thematic areas of social forestry and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Over the years, the CSO Forum made significant progress in 8 countries in Southeast Asia, with particular focus on four key thematic areas. This report provides a detailed overview of the CSO Forum's achievements in each of the thematic areas at the regional and national levels.

Various foods are gathered from the forests by a vast number of communities as supplements to staples. For most of the tribal and forest dwelling communities, a substantial amount of their foods are directly procured from their environment. In some cases, these staples have not been officially recognized in India. The adivasi people of India are currently facing various factors regarding wild foods: the inadequate documentation of edible species, dwindling knowledge on culture, and the migration among the youth, which lead to huge gaps in the knowledge on forest foods.

The NTFP-EP India network partners have been documenting these wild foods for years. The second edition of Enriching the Palate is a much improved compendium of species and information on collection and use, status and spread across the country.



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