Touching Lives: CID's Encounters with Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines

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Manila, Philippines
It is an honour to bring you the latest publication commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that focuses on Canada’s involvement with indigenous peoples’ (IP) communities in the Philippines.

Touching Lives: CIDA’s Encounters with Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines gives us a comprehensive visual and narrative account of eight impressive projects Canada has initiated with local IP groups.

Canada’s long-standing development cooperation program with the Philippines focuses on the thematic areas of good governance, sustainable development, environment, basic needs, and livelihood and enterprise development. The book shows how these themes were woven in the context of the development projects.

As I have seen from my visits to almost all these project sites, the initiatives that the Government of Canada has embarked on have truly touched the lives of the residents and families in the areas benefiting from the program. From my meetings with local government officials and ordinary townsfolk, it is a humbling experience to learn what those CIDA projects have done to change people’s outlook in life from despair to optimism.

Canada and the Philippines share the similarity of having indigenous peoples. It is our advocacy to facilitate development and cultural efforts so that our peoples can learn from one another and ensure that our mutual interests of peace and prosperity are achieved.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Philippines-Canada Cooperation Office for its excellent work in putting together this outstanding publication.

Peter Sutherland
Ambassador
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ilipino,” as it is widely known today to the outside world, is mainly the identity of the dominant majority of Christians – their mores, systems and conventions. But anywhere from 12 million to 20 million of the country’s estimated 80 million population belong to indigenous cultural communities or indigenous peoples (IPs). They are mostly found in the uplands, as opposed to the “lowlanders” – the basically Christian majority occupying the lowland areas, specifically coastal areas and inland plains.

The majority (61%) of the IPs are in Mindanao, 33% in Luzon, and the remaining 6% scattered across the different Visayas islands. The IP communities can be classified into three broad categories: (i) the sedentary farmers in Northern Luzon, commonly referred to as “Igorots,” (ii) the Negritos in Central Luzon and the Visayas, who traditionally lived on hunting and gathering, and have today shifted to swidden farming (slash-and-burn agriculture), and (iii) the Lumad in Mindanao, regarded as the original inhabitants of southern Philippines until the introduction of Islam in the mid-14th century.
Such classification is arbitrary, employed in an attempt at an ethno-historical and “racial” description of the IPs. At the same time, the classification process is an oversimplification because within these categories are further sub-ethnic groups and identities. For example, the term “Igorots,” which originally stood for “hill people,” refers to the mélange of IPs found in the mountain ranges of the Sierra Madre and Cordillera, and the adjoining Caraballo Mountains. In this vast area covering at least eight provinces in three regions are numerous distinct IP communities including the Bontocs and Ifugaos who engineered the extraordinary, steeply contoured rice terraces found along the “edges” of the mountains (now a UN World Heritage site). They also include the Kalingas, who are further distinguished between Northern and Southern Kalingas.

The more commonly known “Negritos” are the Aetas in Central Luzon, the trusted tutors in jungle survival of the American forces throughout the forty years the United States maintained military bases in the Philippines. They also include the 400 or so members of the Batak found in Palawan island. The Batak are believed to be remnants of the Aetas who settled in Palawan more than 10,000 years ago.

The Lumad are one of the three major population groups of Mindanao, the two others being the Christian migrant settlers from Luzon and the Visayas who came to Mindanao in the 1920s, and the Muslims, collectively referred to as Moro or Bangsamoro. The Lumad are further divided into 13 sub-groups which have been assimilated, in varying degrees, into modern society. They are mostly found in the hinterlands and comprise the 5% to 6% of Mindanao’s population. The Christians dominate the region (75%), followed by the Muslims (20%).

These IP communities represent the spectrum of “acculturation” with the lowland Christians. Some, like the Bukidnons of Mindanao, intermarried with lowlanders; others, like the Kalingas in Luzon, remained more isolated from lowland influences. The art and culture of such communities are the last remnants of a mix of indigenous traditions that flourished before Islamic and Spanish contact.

Until recent times, the IPs remained separate from the “mainstream” society and were of interest only to academics. However, both the majority culture and the government have a better understanding and appreciation now of the differences of indigenous communities and no longer believe these differences to be something to express and proclaim only during special occasions and festivals. With this change is a total overhaul of the development and governance strategies adopted vis-à-vis the indigenous communities. Indeed, from one of conquest or outright hostility during the colonial times, to neglect by the immediate post-colonial administrations, official policy toward
The IPs are divided into seven major territories:

* Region 1 and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR): a mixture of wet-rice and slash-and-burn (swidden) cultivators concentrated in the Cordillera mountain ranges

* Region 2: wet-rice and swidden cultivators as well as hunters-gatherers found in Cagayan Valley and the Caraballo range

* Rest of Luzon (Regions 3, 4 and 5): the hunting and gathering Aeta (or Agta) group and sub-groups in the Sierra Madre range, the Zambales range, Quezon, Polillo island, and Bicol region (provinces of Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Albay and Sorsogon)

* Island Groups (including Mindoro, Palawan, Romblon, Panay and the rest of Visayas): communities engaged in swidden agriculture, hunting, fishing, gathering and trade

* Western and Northern Mindanao (Regions 9 and 10): communities found along the coastal lowlands and hinterlands of the Zamboanga peninsula, and on the plateaus of Bukidnon

* Central Mindanao (Region 12): communities occupying the mountainous slopes of Davao, Bukidnon and Cotabato, and the upper headwaters of the Davao, Tinatan and Kulaman rivers

* Southern and Eastern Mindanao (Regions 11 and 13): communities along the Davao Gulf and the interior hinterlands of South-eastern Mindanao

indigenous communities and their role in nation-building has been completely turned on its head.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Philippines today is acclaimed for its policy of recognizing the indigenous communities’ right to their “ancestral domain,” embodied in the Indigenous People's Rights Act. “Ancestral domain” refers to the land and natural resources that indigenous peoples have traditionally used as their area of domicile and the basis of their economic and social life.

The road to the indigenous peoples’ success in securing a policy environment friendlier to their struggle for their ancestral domain and a role in charting their development – on their own terms – has been long and arduous.

Pre-colonial Times. The indigenous concept of land use and ownership, prior to the Philippine experience of 300 years of Spanish colonization, was basically one of collectivism. Among the Manobo and Hanunuo groups, land was communally owned by the people forming the community. The Ifaloi concept was shared ownership with the gods, ancestors, kindred and future descendants. To the Subanon, only their god had the right to own land, similar to the Kalingas who saw themselves only as caretakers of the land. The indigenous peoples' strong attachment to their land and resources led to intermittent boundary disputes (the so-called tribal wars) with other groups that violated their territory.

The IP communities maintained social and political structures to regulate their relations within, as well as with outsiders. Although these relations ranged from cooperation to conflict, the dichotomy of majority-minority, and the consequent problems of marginalization and discrimination were absent at the time, noted a study published by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The majority-minority conundrum presented itself only during the colonial period.

Spanish Conquest. Spanish colonization of the Philippines in the early 16th century focused on opening the IP areas to agriculture and converting the inhabitants to Christianity. The Spanish colonial government was ordered to open gold mines in the mountains even as it tried to control trade in the lowlands by forcing people to cultivate tobacco. Their subjects were forced to live in pueblos. Those who rejected this and retreated into the hinterlands were called remontados, from the Spanish verb remontar meaning “to flee to the hills” or “go back to the mountains.” For confederating and resisting Spanish intrusions, the natives of the mountains were called tribus indipendientes (literally, independent tribes). They were labelled barbarians, pagans and other derogatory names – an attitude that even the assimilated Christians in the lowlands would eventually internalize. Thus began the majority-minority dichotomy.

The Spaniards introduced laws that contradicted customary concepts of land
The Philippines is home to more than 140 ethno-linguistic groups speaking 171 different languages and dialects. The traditions and values retained by the numerous indigenous cultural communities contribute to the country’s cultural identity and uniqueness.
use and ownership. They introduced the Regalian doctrine of land grants from the King of Spain – therefore, private ownership – and titling. The unassimilated indigenous peoples, however, continued their customary practice of collective ownership and use of land and other resources.

**American Period.** The Americans essentially retained the concept of the Regalian doctrine after purchasing the Philippines from Spain in 1898. The Americans usually labelled the tribal people as ‘pagan tribes’, ‘cultural minorities’ or ‘hill tribes’ and reintroduced a reservation policy comparable with that applied to the American Indians. The Americans gradually occupied the areas that were never brought under the Spanish flag in the previous era.

The new colonizers took a deep ethnographic interest in the indigenous peoples and this has contributed over the years to the literature on indigenous communities. The Americans also introduced the notion of public lands, mineral lands and timber lands over which the colonial state claimed jurisdiction. Communal landholdings were not legally recognized and private land titles were issued in accordance with new legislation.

To the indigenous peoples, these were again incomprehensible notions.

**Post-Colonial Period.** According to the Philippines’ first Constitution (1935), all agricultural, timber and mineral lands of the public domain, waters and minerals, coal and petroleum, and other natural resources belong to the State, and indigenous communities were progressively dispossessed of their lands. In 1957, the Philippine Congress created the Commission on National Integration to foster the “moral, material, economic, social and political advancement of the “non-Christian Filipinos” or “national cultural minorities” by mainstreaming them into the body politic. A presidential decree issued by president Ferdinand Marcos in 1975 declared the ancestral lands as “alienable and disposable,” to be identified and subdivided into family-sized private plots. From sovereign stewards of their territory in pre-colonial times, by the 1950s and 1960s, by a series of edicts, the indigenous communities became illegal occupants of “public lands.” They were accused of environmental destruction, specifically deforestation, due to their practice of kaingin (slash-and-burn) agriculture.

**The Turnaround.** Through the Aquino government in 1986, a shift from the policy of integration to one of pluralism took effect. The 1987 Constitution “recognizes and promotes the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development” and “protects the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands to ensure their economic, social and cultural well-being, as well as their rights “to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions and institutions.”
Indigenous communities are characterized by a subsistence economy. The cycle from planting to harvest is performed collectively. There are also indigenous practices in the management of communally owned land and resources such as forests and water bodies.
The Office of Muslim Affairs, the Office for Northern Cultural Communities and the Office for Southern Cultural Communities were created. Environmental and forest conservation policies began displaying a two-track approach: the recognition of the indigenous communities’ ancestral domain claims and the delegation to them of the responsibility for rehabilitating, protecting and managing the natural resources within their domains.

**Policy Environment**

As a Bagobo elder put it, the indigenous communities of the Philippines now have a tool to secure their territories – the fountainhead of their identity – the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA) or Republic Act No. 8371. Enacted in 1997, the IPRA is designed “to recognize, protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples.” Inspired by the International Labour Organization’s Convention No. 169, IPRA embodies the promise of more equitable sharing of resources and benefits with indigenous peoples, it is one of the world’s most comprehensive and progressive legislations regarding indigenous peoples.

The IPRA identifies the rights of IPs as:

- **Right to Ancestral Domain and Land** – the rights of ownership and possession of IPs to their ancestral domain
- **Right to Self-Governance and Empowerment** – the inherent right of IPs to self-governance and self-determination and respect for the integrity of their values, practices and institutions; the right of IPs to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development
- **Social Justice and Human Rights** – the principle of non-discrimination, the right to equal opportunity and treatment, the rights of indigenous peoples during armed conflict, the provision of basic services, and the special protection of the rights of indigenous women, children and youth
- **Cultural Integrity** – the right of IPs to preserve and protect their culture, traditions and institutions, and the State’s consideration of these rights in the formulation and application of national plans and policies

The IPRA also created two key enforcement mechanisms: the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the agency responsible for the formulation and implementation of the policy, plans and programs to protect the IPs; and the IP Development Fund Facility, which supports the process of establishing the indigenous communities’ domain claims and ensures the availability of the most essential services to the IP communities.

The IPRA also clarifies certain basic but contentious issues and concerns surrounding indigenous peoples. Inherent in the law’s definition of IPs is the recognition of such important factors as historical continuity, self-identification, group membership and most especially, the indigenous peoples’ attachment to land and territory, or ancestral domain.
Many indigenous communities have maintained their traditional socio-political systems where decision-making is often by consensus, and the opinion of a Council of Elders holds much weight. The elders usually determine the distribution of farmland among the different households. Rice continues to be the dominant crop in the uplands. Among the rice-based products indigenous communities are known for are rice wine and rice cakes including a type made from sticky rice and molasses, instead of sugar.
The law recognizes the IPs’ right not only to transfer ancestral land or property among members of their community, but also to redeem those acquired through fraud.

A significant feature of the IPRA is the requirement of “free and prior informed consent” – which refers to the consensus of all members of the IPs to a program, project or activity in their ancestral domain that any external party – be it a nongovernmental organization or a private commercial entity – intends to pursue. The community’s consensus, according to the law, should be obtained free from external manipulation, interference and coercion, and secured according to their customary laws and practices.

The IPRA attempts to correct historical oversight and omissions. Notwithstanding its best intentions, however, the law is not without loopholes.

In 1998, a year after its enactment, the IPRA was challenged in the Supreme Court on constitutional grounds. The petition questioning the legality of the IPRA was premised on three points: (i) the law violates the Constitutional principle that all natural resources belong to the State; (ii) the law deprives the State of control over the exploration and development of natural resources; and (iii) the law threatens to strip private owners of their properties.

The 1998 petition was dismissed in 2000, but in December 2002, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People raised some experts’ observations that the IPRA may lead to “contradictory or ambiguous interpretations that do not fully favour indigenous rights.”

In spite of its weaknesses, the IPRA is the first of its kind in the world. It is still in its infancy, and many challenges lie ahead. However, the Philippines has shown a remarkable example in the defence and promotion of indigenous peoples’ rights.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS
Poverty remains a serious and widespread problem in the country, with official estimates putting poverty incidence at 35% – that is, 35% of the population are unable to meet the minimum basic needs of shelter, food, health, education and livelihood. An important question is, are the indigenous communities disproportionately poor? Are they poorer than the “majority” lowlanders?

The absence of disaggregated data making use of the conventional denominators of human and social development – income, literacy, mortality, etc. – makes this a difficult question to settle, but the ADB study that extrapolated national-level statistics to come up with a profile of five “indigenous regions” (regions where indigenous peoples constitute at least 40% of the population) confirms this.

For example, the average income in the five regions – the Cordillera
Indigenous or traditional knowledge in the Philippines revolves mostly around health care, agriculture, forestry systems, mining, arts and crafts, and music, dance and literature. These knowledge systems and practices contribute to the protection of the ecosystem and the search for sustainable development.
Administrative Region (CAR) and Region II in Luzon, and Regions X, XI and Caraga in Mindanao – is substantially lower (42%) than the national average. In the case of the CAR, poverty incidence remained the same over a decade, while in Region X, this even worsened from 1997 to 1998. It should also be noted that except for Region II, poverty in the rural areas is deeper than it was 10 years ago, underscoring the extremes of Philippine agriculture: the meagre returns from the indigenous communities’ small, rain-fed subsistence farms in contrast to the profitability of the high-value, high-input cash crops of the large plantations.

The heaviest toll of the marginalization of indigenous communities is on health and nutrition. Malnutrition is a common problem. According to “The Health and Nutrition Situation of Children and Women in Indigenous Communities,” a study of the De La Salle University, poor nutrition, especially among the children and mothers, is often a direct or indirect cause of common, preventable illnesses and deaths." The IPs have deficient diets due primarily to the increasing poverty in these areas, which is aggravated by the rapid depletion of their natural resources.

The study found IPs to have inadequate protein, vitamins and minerals, and an excess of carbohydrates and starchy food. The lack of potable water and sanitary toilets, combined with limited access to basic services, increases the IPs’ vulnerability to malaria, dengue and H-fever. Diarrhoea and cholera are sometimes fatal. Cases of poisoning from eating root crops not prepared for human consumption have also been reported.

A common feature of indigenous communities is the low educational background of their members. This is hardly surprising because even though the Constitution directs primary education (Grades 1 to 7) to be compulsory and free of charge, the proximity of school to home is punishing, demanding that the children trek three to 13 kilometres down to the school and then back up to their homes after classes. In addition, IP children go through the standard curriculum with an embedded worldview and cultural values different from their own.

Yet, such education is critical if a community wants to complete their ancestral domain claim as soon as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>IP population (in %)</th>
<th>Regional Poverty Incidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region XI</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region XII</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region II</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the worsening poverty and lack of livelihood sources, a growing number of indigenous people, mostly women, have entered overseas contract work as caregivers and domestic helpers. More than 50,000 indigenous women are estimated to be working abroad now, leaving behind their children and husbands.
possible. The compilation of background documents proving ancestry alone requires more than basic literacy. Because of insufficient funding, the government cannot even support a community’s mapping exercise, which requires a high level of engineering skills. The IP communities are, to a large extent, left to their own devices and must therefore have members capable of completing the necessary paperwork.

A thirty-year old secessionist war in southern Mindanao and the communist insurgency has exposed some IP regions to the violence of war. The UN Special Rapporteur’s 2003 report on his mission to the Philippines cited examples of arbitrary detentions, persecution and killings of community representatives, mass evacuations, hostage-taking, destruction of property, summary executions, forced disappearances, coercion, rape, food blockades, illegal detention, physical assault, harassment, torture and threats suffered by IPs.

A basic concern of IPs, whose survival is fundamentally dependent on the bounty of their natural environment for their subsistence, is the extent of environmental degradation of all the ecosystems – upland, coastal and plain. Large-scale logging operations, mineral extraction, chemical farming, and blast fishing and trawling have depleted the forests, croplands and seas.

Satellite data confirm the disappearance of forests throughout the Philippine archipelago since the logging boom of the ’60s to the extent the average forest cover is now less than 20%. But the minimum requirement to restore natural ecological processes, according to experts, is 54%. Fifteen of the country’s 18 major watersheds are degraded, characterized by soil erosion, erratic stream flow and declining groundwater tables. In Metro Cebu, the ecological deficit is alarming: from zero forest cover to 70% soil erosion. The rampant use of destructive fishing methods in the loosely guarded municipal waters has left only 5% of the Philippines’ reefs in excellent condition. The fish catch has also declined significantly.

Despite the challenges at the policy level and the range of issues that the IPs face, the reality on the ground is that in pockets of the Philippines, IP communities are determined to improve their conditions and secure their welfare with external assistance such as CIDA’s. The Matigsalog children of Davao City are able to pursue their studies with the use of a curriculum that also promotes their indigenous values through storytelling. Also in Davao City, a participatory mapping project established baseline information on the Bagobo subtribes occupying the Talomo-Lipadas watershed so these communities regain the agency to address the most urgent development issues and needs facing them. In Zamboanga City, a sense of expectation pervades the Bajao in new homes that combine the community’s affinity with the sea with basic sanitation facilities and culturally sensitive livelihood activities. Subsistence organic
The “life events,” from birth to death, are marked by rituals upholding the sanctity of life and a conception of death as a process of joining the spirit world of one’s ancestors.
farming has become more sustainable for the Ata-Langilan in Talaingod, Davao del Norte with modest capital support including ploughs and working animals. In Maragusan, Compostela Valley, the Mansaka are major actors in the municipality’s development plan, from waste management to reforestation to ecotourism. In the North, subtribes of the Igorots are reaffirming the convergence of an indigenous identity and traditional customs with the principle of equitable relationships from a gender lens. In Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat province, the Dulangan-Manobo are more confident and active in their barangay’s affairs and development projects after a series of capability- and confidence-building activities with their Christian and Muslim neighbours. Finally, the “tri-people” advocacy of peaceful co-existence between Christians, Muslims and Lumad in Mindanao is a vibrant way of life and a tangible governance tool in Upi, Maguindanao, ancestral domain of the Teduray.

NOTES:


The Matigsalog
Marilog District, Davao City
The nearest public school in Marilog, a district of Metro Davao, is nine kilometres of hiking and trekking over difficult terrain. The children have to wake at the crack of dawn, sometimes as early as 4 a.m. to walk to school. Then they begin hiking back up home upon dismissal at 3 p.m. Their young, usually famished bodies are exhausted by then. Few are able to get past the first two grade levels. To the Matigsalog parent and the child, there is more sense in bringing the children along to the forest to gather abaca fibre or mobilizing them on the vegetable plots.

In 2001, with support from CIDA’s Philippines-Canada Development Fund (PCDF), the NGO Ilawan Center for Peace and Sustainable Development (Ilawan) completed the construction of a school for the Matigsalog in sitio Contract, Marilog district with a grant of PhP2.1 million. (See page 74 for information on the PCDF.)

Ilawan is headed by Ben Abadiano, a Ramon Magsaysay awardee for emergent leadership (the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize). He was recognized by the Magsaysay awards.
for his work over the past 20 years with indigenous communities, specifically for the Mangyan school-of-living-tradition project in Mindoro that he initiated when he was a student. Ben was drawn to the community of 500 Matigsalog households because of the determination they showed to contribute their labour in building a school.

Called Pamulaan (which means seedbed in the Matagsilog dialect), the school consists of: (1) the main classroom; (2) the resource center/library cum conference hall, and (3) a museum. The project also included the purchase of learning supplies and materials. An interesting detail in the project's expense report is the purchase of children's footwear, prompted by the observation of one PCDF staff during a monitoring visit to the project.

“C'mon, get them some slippers,” Serge Villena, a PCDF staff, whispered to Ben. Serge was startled by the Matigsalog children's bloated stomachs, and instinctively realized that these were on account of worms as the children run around barefoot, reserving their slippers for school and special occasions. Serge made a quick accounting and forecasting. Slippers would cost only PhP50 a pair, and there are less than 50 children to buy these for. The school, when finished, will be empty most days anyhow if the children are always sick. The slippers became a necessary expense.

The classroom is a 90-square-metre structure that can be separated into two partitions by an accordion-style wood divider. The boys and girls on the left partition are noticeably bigger than those on the left. The smaller children are aged between 6 and 9; the bigger ones are from 10 to 12 years old. "But in terms of skills, the two groups are basically the same. Both are just learning to read, write and count. Only, we have to divide them
The students file out of the school for lunch. In an hour they will return for their afternoon lessons, or for a storytelling session. Inside, the “small group” occupies one half of the room and the “big group,” the other half.
The museum features a tree pole for the staircase and a basement that doubles as the children’s storytelling space. Books and other learning materials donated by the project are now available to the children in the library, while in the past, even access to paper was difficult.
because the big ones tend to dominate the sessions when we put them together,” teacher Anna Lynn Labanon noted.

The resource center/library also serves as venue of the community’s meetings. The museum showcases murals on the Lumad of Mindanao as well as some Matigsilog artefacts and crafts. The museum’s basement, which has an overhead clearing of more than five feet, doubles as the children’s storytelling space. Here they often gather and take turns retelling the stories often heard from the elders – stories of people and nature, and of communities weathering their problems.

“This is the first project that has been organized for us,” one Matigsilog elder said to Ben, “that not only provides an essential need but also recognizes the value of our indigenous ways.”

Per the Department of Education’s approval of Pamulaan, accreditation would be incremental: As long as the students pass the accreditation test, then Pamulaan is conferred formal accreditation for that grade level. By the next school-year, if they pass the next grade level’s accreditation test, then Pamulaan is accredited for this as well. And so on, per school-year.

So far, Pamulaan is approved by the education department to hold grades 1 and 2 classes, as well as the first to third years of high school.
When Ben first met the community, the Matigsalog were wary. They had been promised too many things for too long— with nothing to show for it. But during the closing ceremony of the 2004-2005 school-year in March, all the Matigsalog in attendance—adults and children—cried unabashedly. It was the first time, they explained, that any Matigsalog child managed to complete a full school-year. In the past, when the rainy season came, the children simply dropped out of their classes from the sheer distance of the public school.

Around Pamulaan are the vegetable gardens that the children and adults tend to—sources of additional food and income for the community so that the school becomes sustainable. An old woman, who appears to be in her 70s but cannot tell her exact age, stands up from the “pechay” (Chinese cabbage) when she was approached. She has no grandchild or even a distant relative attending Pamulaan but is one of the most active helpers in maintaining the garden. “I just like the idea that our children can attend school now, that’s why I help.”
Thick fog often hovers over the community. In the afternoons, it usually rains. In the mornings, the adults volunteer time to maintain the surrounding gardens. Because they are always muddied, the children’s slippers, purchased by Ben Abadiano (L) on Serge Villena’s (R) urging, have to be removed before they enter the classroom.
The Ibaloi, Kalanguya and Kankana-ey Loakan and Lucnab Districts, Baguio City
icky Makay, now 54, married when she was 19 years old to another Ibaloi. It was a union that her parents and her husband’s aunt had arranged and, under Ibaloi rules, could not be broken. Vicky, for example, wanted to continue her studies but her parents were already impatient. “Back out would have been the bigger shame. My family would never have taken me back,” she said.

Leaving the marriage was not an option either. “Separation was unthinkable,” Vicky said while shaking her head.

For Vicky, who is now based in Loakan district, Baguio City, the three-day gender sensitivity training she attended, however, confirmed for her the twin imperatives of choice and action that should be available to all women. Organized by Igorota Foundation, the training is Igorota’s partnership with the Baguio City local government in a project called “Localizing Gender and Development Mainstreaming.” The project is a recipient of CIDA’s support under the agency’s Gender Equity Fund (see page 74 for information on the GEF) and includes capacity-building activities such as the training...
that local government representatives and community leaders like Vicky have attended. The inputs gathered from these are envisioned to help articulate the city’s Gender and Development agenda, and identify projects and services for women in response to their issues.

Vicky has four children and is a proud grandmother to two toddlers. Contrary to the socialization of Ibaloi women, she assures that marriage will be a choice for all her children and that they are free to choose whom they want to marry.

“I also realized from the training that we women can do what men can. If the opportunities are not there for the men to be good providers, you get out there and look for ways to fend for your family, and you can,” Vicky said. “We were always at war before. You know how it is with us women, especially when there’s little money and there are children to feed. But after some time, you have to just let go.”

These women have become more creative and enterprising. The children will have to take turns in attending school, for example, or a child may have to stop for a semester as the parents buy time to save for the next. Vicky and her friends have mastered the art of coping. “Happily, we’re not tight with the budget all at the same time, or else we’d be dead,” one of Vicky’s friends said.

In Lucnab, another district of Baguio City, the facilitator’s differentiation between gender and sex during the gender sensitivity training struck barangay secretary Cris Perez. The distinction between biological and gendered roles illuminated to him the preconceptions he had of men and women in general, and his wife in particular.

Cris has become a more understanding partner to wife Jerlyn and a more approachable father to his five children, he said. “I now more willingly share in
Vicky Makay’s grandchildren and neighbours. The two other Ibaloi women point out the areas in their own homes reserved for the traditional cañao ritual.
A portion of the majestic Cordillera panorama, which is dotted with numerous indigenous communities collectively called “Igorot”
the housework. I help her with the laundry, and I’m proud of it. On purpose I stand out there in the yard so that the other men will see me doing the laundry, sometimes with her, sometimes just by myself, and hopefully they realize it’s not something to be ashamed of.”

There should be more gender sensitivity training and gender advocacy projects for men, Cris added, not only to reduce the incidence of violence against women but more important, to change the mindsets of men.

“The facilitator also reminded us of the toll of childbirth on a woman’s body,” Cris said, “which is why men should shoulder even more of the housework after a woman delivers.” He recalls a tradition among the Kalanguya of the in-laws’ performing the housework for a household where the woman had just delivered a newborn. “Not even the woman’s family members, but her in-laws,” he said. “Unfortunately it’s also a tradition that many seem to have forgotten and must be revived.”

The series of gender training, according to Igorota’s program coordinator Marge Balay-as, has also reduced drinking among the men and idle talk among the women.

As a member of an indigenous community, the Kankana-ey, while being a gender advocate, Marge is too familiar with the “debate” surrounding gender equity and ethnic studies, the contention of some being that gender equality is an imported concept that conflicts with indigenous norms and customs, and therefore should not be imposed on indigenous communities.

But Marge, before joining Igorota, was a volunteer for an International Labour Organization study called “Management
of Ancestral Domains,” an experience when she saw for herself the “streaks of gender inequality even though both men and women are seen as nurturers and providers.”

In one community, she said, she asked a woman and a man belonging to the council of elders to step up and join her in front. Then she asked the discussion participants, “If you had a problem, would you approach the male elder or the female elder?” Everyone chose the man, this appeared perfectly all right even with the woman elder, as if this was the natural and only correct choice.”

Advocacy for indigenous communities’ rights, it has been argued, should focus on the communities’ collective survival and welfare, because to focus on the subjective rights of individual members will be distracting, divisive, even dilatory.

But as a gender advocate and Kankana-ey, Marge sees no dilemma.

“For me, it’s really here [she brings her right palm to her breast to refer to the heart]. It is really, really difficult to bridge [indigenous] culture with a gender perspective. You can’t enter a community and just drop your gender framework on them. It is an excruciatingly slow process where you must first learn their culture, their systems and processes, their ways of naming so that you neither anger nor insult them. Only then can you, little by little, start suggesting changes in the not so desirable parts of their culture.”

The most important lesson is that the decision and desire to change has to come from the community. “Honestly, I’m not at all pained. I am happy. My gender perspective has deepened my worldview and identity as an indigenous person.”
Barangay secretary Cris Perez; the community leaders of barangay Lucnab; and staff members of the Igorota Foundation including Marge Balay-as (right). Multiple roles: Not be deterred by their domestic tasks, three women across generations tend to their wards while participating in a focus group discussion. Note the indigenous Cordillera baby carrier made from a locally woven blanket wrapped around the infant and then slung around the mother's neck.
The Ata-Langilan
Talaingod, Davao del Norte
The Ata-Langilan community of 53 households in the hinterlands of Talaingod, Davao del Norte is almost untouched by modern influence, not even television. No instance of mixed marriage seems to have taken place from as far as the elders can remember, even though a few have managed to attend college and work in the city.

The Ata-Langilan’s most striking characteristic is the strong sense of collectivity, evident in how everyone seems to know what is going on with the rest. Even the dogs are communal responsibility. “If you have no extra food but I do, then I will feed the dog. And the following day, if we both don’t have any, then somebody else will,” one man said.

The experience of CIDA’s Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) with the Ata-Langilan confirms the difficulty of traditional small-scale farming for a poor IP community without the necessary credit, extension and other support systems in place because although the community has secured the title to its ancestral domain, which covers some 90,000 hectares, the members do not have the means to buy their most immediate farming inputs. (See page 74 for information on CFLI.) It should be noted,
moreover, that the vast expanse of the Ata-Langilan territory is solid rock. A very limited area is arable.

The option of subsistence farming for the Ata-Langilan is also challenged by high transport costs. In bringing any excess rice and corn to the mill, the community has to fork out PhP1 per sack for the motor-cab, another PhP1 to bring this back home for packing and storage, and then another PhP1 to haul the sack to the market to sell.

Set in barangay Dagohoy in Talaingod, 13 kilometres of steep roughroads from the neighbouring town of Kapalong, the project entailed the provision of capability-building, technical and capital assistance to make the Ata-Langilan’s subsistence farming more tenable and sustainable. The specific form of assistance was the distribution of carabaos, goats, ploughs, and rice, banana, corn and vegetable seedlings. The Ata-Langilan prefer to plant only indigenous varieties as farming is organic, rain-fed, and essentially for their own consumption. “We grow white, black, brown and red rice, and our coconut is more fragrant,” the people said.

Before the project, the farming of upland Ata-rice was a dying practice, but the communal farm has been instrumental in its revival. The Ata-rice is an indispensable commodity for the Ata tribe as it is used in almost all of the community’s rituals and ceremonies.

The community elders, all of them men, decided on the distribution of land parcels of the communal farm, with a household getting from one to three parcels to till, according to need. The Council of Elders also divided the community into clusters.

An Ata-Langilan elder, also considered the community’s weaving expert.
Snapshots: Ata-Langilan members gather on the community's ritual grounds; an elderly woman inspects her freshly harvested tubers; and curious women and children oblige an equally curious camera.
Elements of the sustainable farming project — goats, carabao, and seeds, seedlings and technology; NGO workers atop the pen coax the goats with grass stalks.
as a way of regulating the use of the 20 sets of carabaos, iron ploughs, harrows and bolos. The families take turns in using these during land preparation.

Income from working the communal farm has also allowed the families to save rice and corn for the observance of Indigenous People’s Day in August 2004, and the occasional purchase of meat and other food items. Twelve couples were also able to finance their weddings from their farm earnings.

The carabaos made the women’s task of land preparation lighter and faster. “Ah, the carabaos make such a big difference,” the mothers said. “We used to be so exhausted after working in the farm but now we have more time and energy for our other chores.”

Some of the 85 native goats distributed have also served as a food supplement, injecting a welcome change in the community’s daily fare, which typically consists of rice or tubers. With the goats, the people are able to have meat every now and then. The goats also provide the manure that they apply to their crops as growth boosters.

There are also 15 bigger and slower hybrid goats, crossed from local and imported breeds, which the Ata-Langilan discovered to be prodigious milk producers. The milk has alleviated the high incidence of malnutrition among the children substantially. So now, the goats are carefully tended in an elevated pen under the indigenous ipo tradition of caretaking of animals.

The Ata-Langilan, as with a few other Lumad groups such as the Bagobo, follow the ipo tradition of animal care and protection wherein animals that are gifted or entrusted to a family are treated as members of the family. In this case, the animals are not raised for their commercial value alone, and cannot be sold off or given away as dowry by the recipient. “In fact, the recipient family takes even better care of the animal, which may have been the original owner’s pet, than its own pets because the kindness shown to the animal is a reflection of the family’s respect and esteem for the donor,” an advocate explained.

This principle of kinship and social support underlying the custom of ipo is not unlike the importance that tribes in Africa attach to animals entrusted to them by neighbouring clans, usually in times of adverse conditions such as an epidemic or prolonged drought.

When the carabaos and the goats purchased for the sustainable farming project arrived, the elders immediately reminded the community that the animals were being assigned for their use and to their care under the ipo. The goats – whether the natives or the hybrids – were not to be sold off until they had been propagated. The hybrids have so far produced eight offspring, and the community awaits with a sense of thrill the kids that one is about to have any day soon.
The Mansaka
Maragusan, Compostela Valley
A valley surrounded by mountains towering 2,000 to 9,999 feet above sea level, the municipality of Maragusan in Compostela Valley is nestled in a rainforest. Less than one-fourth of its total land area is used for production as the town is 75% mountainous. Its original inhabitants were the Mansaka who today comprise only one-fourth of the population, the second biggest ethnic group after the Cebuanos (about 65%) that began migrating to the area in the 1950s. Displaced from their ancestral domain by migration, logging and mining, the Mansaka were dispersed in the different barangays of Maragusan, including the Mansaka Village, a five-block settlement in the town center.

Today, the Mansaka are among the poorest of Maragusan’s population. The local government unit (LGU), however, mobilizes them for several of its poverty-reduction programs. Many Mansaka, for example, are employed by their barangays in waste-recovery facilities where they sort the recyclables from the non-recyclables for dispatch to a main materials recovery processing center, a centerpiece of the LGU’s development plans. In addition, the majority of the forest guards of the LGU’s 309-hectare reforestation project are also from the IP communities.
Portraits of the Mansaka: Residents of the Mansaka village of different generations; and the Maragusan’s main waste processing facility, a centerpiece of its development plan and one of the municipality’s big employers of Mansaka.
Through the local water district office, the LGU has also made water available free of charge to the residents of Mansaka Village.

Elsewhere, the IPs are also visible. For example, Patricia Orquiera, of mixed Pantukan and Mansaka ancestry, minds the “Botika sa Barangay,” one of five village drugstores established by the LGU to cater to the pharmaceutical needs of the IP communities. Here, she earns an allowance of PhP1,000 monthly, which supplements the income of her husband from being a farm labourer and occasionally, a carpenter. Her earnings help buy the rice, soap and other immediate necessities that the family needs.

While Patricia may have a working knowledge of herbal medicines, her work at the barangay drugstore has also exposed her to the community’s common health problems, including malnutrition. Many Mansaka children, she said, suffer third-degree malnutrition because they do not eat on time, or of sufficient quality and quantity. She tells her neighbours with malnourished children, “You feed them vegetables you can grow in your backyard, you don’t need to give them something fancy.” Patricia is also able to advise them of any vaccination campaign or supplemental feeding that the LGU offers.

The LGU’s adoption of GPS (global positioning system) technology will hasten the process of delineation and titling of the Mansaka’s ancestral domain. The introduction to the benefits of GPS technology, including a comprehensive Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP), is one of the results of assistance from CIDA’s Local Government Support Program (LGSP) in formulating the municipality’s legislative-executive agenda. (See page 75 for information on the LGSP.)
From cradle to grave, the community is tied to the land. A typical setting in Mansaka territories is a group of five houses, with the main house in the center occupied by the parents, and the surrounding four to five houses occupied by the married children and their respective families. The farms are usually adjacent or across their homes, and the sacred places of burial of ancestors are within the vicinity.

According to a University of the Philippines (UP) scholar, the Mansaka language has no equivalent of the word “territory,” and they have no concept of land ownership in the same way this means to the lowlanders – in hectares or square metres. Instead, the determination of boundaries was by tradition since the land occupied by a particular home and farm was transferred from one generation of Mansaka to the next. According to the UP study, in the past, all a Mansaka father had to do was to call the children and point out to them the plot each one should farm. “That is the area you must till.”*

The principle of collective stewardship – not ownership – of land was also seen in the tamba, the Mansaka custom of placing a coffin-like box at the entrance of a farm plot or the approach to fishing or hunting grounds to which the Mansaka in charge wanted others’ access restricted. The Mansaka believed violation of the tamba would anger the spirits guarding the area and bring about immediate misfortune, sickness or death, and withhold any yield from a farm, forest or river under a tamba.

The Mansaka’s main occupation remains subsistence agriculture – particularly rice and corn. Many of them, however, are unable to sustain rice or corn cultivation due to the high cost of inputs as well as the rising prices of basic commodities. They depend instead on gabi (taro roots) and kamote (sweet potato), which entail less expense to grow, for their daily food requirements. The LGU’s successful delineation of the Mansaka’s ancestral domain and application of an ancestral domain title will restore to the community their customary rights over the land that lies at the core of their being and sustains them.

Maragusan’s LGU, which LGSP has cited with a Kaagapay Seal of Excellence in Local Governance, has many other development plans with the Mansaka’s participation and welfare in mind, including eco-tourism. The attractions are there – easy hills and difficult mountains for climbers, caves for spelunkers, a huge lake and a generous sprinkling of waterfalls, and hot and cold springs for everyone else. The Mansaka’s direct involvement in such a development plan in their area is a clear affirmation of respect for their intrinsic affinity with the land.

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The local government’s planning and development officer and rural health worker; one of Maragusan’s scenic waterfalls tagged for ecotourism development; and the information technology team using the municipality’s GPS technology.
The Bajao
Sangali District, Zamboanga City
Basic Needs

The Sea: Cradle of Home and Heart

Sophia Alipuddin, 40, is indescribably happy about the housing settlement that 70 Bajao families now occupy in sitio Tungbato, in Sangali district, a 10-minute boat ride off the fish port of Zamboanga City. “It’s different here. We are different here. There seems to be more unity now. We are happy, in our hearts.”

Their new homes, she said, portend other good things to come, including livelihood opportunities that will extricate them from hunger.

Sophia and her husband Roming de los Reyes have six children aged between 1 and 7. Often, the family makes do with just one meal a day.

Roming is a fisherman occasionally finding work as a “baradero” – a labourer on the big fishing vessels that are out to sea for a full month. In this case, his take-home pay totals around PhP600. “Where will PhP600 take us if for the next month the vessel is on dry dock?” Sophia asks.
Sophia’s father was also a fisherman. “Before, the fish were everywhere. There were none of those launches yet then,” Sophia recalls. “But now, of course, how many thousands, millions, of people are there in Mindanao?”

Sophia herself sometimes hitches a ride on a cousin’s banca from where, not having the basic hook and line as tools, she must dive for lato or seaweeds. “Often that’s all we have for the day.”

Known as sea nomads or sea gypsies, the Bajao, in the past, lived almost entirely on water in their boats. They are acknowledged to be excellent fishermen and banca makers. In adverse weather or whenever threatened by groups encroaching on their territory, the Bajao would let their boathouses simply float.

In the early days, it is said, when an aging Bajao felt useless and a burden to the family, he or she would ask to be left on one of the many islands and sandbars dotting the Celebes Sea to “disappear quietly.”

The Bajao were once a people proud of their ways. From miles, their rituals and weddings performed on the sea could be heard accompanied by the indigenous tambul (drums), kulintangan (guitar) and agung (gongs). The women performed the traditional igal dance on the sea, in their boats. Today, however, only a few Bajao families remain living in their boats. They are mostly found in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu at the southern tip of the Philippines. Their boathouses are open prey to the ruthless “saitan” or sea pirates who take not only their catch but also their fishing.
The housing settlement in various phases of construction. Some of the beneficiaries contributed labour as counterpart contribution to the project.
Sophia Alipuddin and her brood of six; two of the Bajao elders; and a significant feature of the new culturally sensitive Bajao settlement is that it also provides several public toilets that the households share.
equipment and, for the better-off boathouses, their bancas' motors. The terrorist group Abu Sayyaf known to roam the mountains and waters of Basilan, on the other hand, reportedly harass the Bajao for food.

The majority of an estimated 70,000 to 100,000 Bajao population like Sophia and Roming have otherwise been forced onshore where they have set up their stilt houses on the seaside or, in the case of Sangali, the river's mouth. Although safer from the marauding saitan, they are disenfranchised from their life support – the sea.

The Bajao housing settlement in Sangali is a partnership between the Philippine government's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Zamboanga City government, and CIDA's Philippines-Canada Development Fund in a project called “Project Hope for Bajao Families.” (See page 74 for information on the PCDF.) The project includes the construction of core shelters in three sites, barangay Tungbato in Sangali district of Zamboanga City, and barangays Kulaybato and Bato in Lamitan, Basilan province. (The island of Basilan is thirty minutes off Zamboanga City by pump boat.)

Beyond the provision of shelter, Project Hope is a comprehensive development plan of re-integration and re-discovery targeted at building culturally sensitive Bajao communities. The plan takes into account not only the Bajao's need for livelihood opportunities and increased access to basic social services and facilities,
but also interventions to improve the Bajao's sense of self-worth and pride, an equally urgent agenda. A commissioner of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples once described the Bajao as “the most marginalized of the indigenous peoples' communities.”

With the stewardship of the city government, the barangay council is intent on pushing the other components of Project Hope. The pursuit of an ancestral domain claim for the Bajao is the stakeholders' latest success. [The title to 179 hectares of the mangrove area in Sangali awarded to the Bajao was secured weeks before this was written.] The people are also eager about the prospects of electricity and literacy classes in their new community.

“We know nothing. Most of us are illiterate... no read, no write,” Sophia said. “When we are on land, we cringe at a barking dog owned by a Christian. That’s why I miss my father so much. He promised that for as long as he lived, he would send me to school.” The memory brought Sophia to tears.

Having reached Grade 6 before her father died, Sophia, indeed, is one of the most educated in the community. Of all seventy certificates of ownership to their new homes that were given to Project Hope beneficiaries in Sangali, only three were signed in script; the rest bore thumbprints.

But more important, the Bajao are excited about the ongoing consultations to determine the livelihood and training needs of their families. “We have been asked about our plans, what we believe we’re good at,” Sophia said. “Although my father was a fisherman, my mother was a vendor, she kept a sari-sari store. That’s why I believe I’ll do well with my own sari-sari store.”
A barangay councillor of Sangali organizes the certificates of ownership of the new homes. Note the thumbprint on the certificate. Present during the turnover ceremony in February 2005 were Ambassador Sutherland (with a new homeowner) and various DSWD and LGU officials.
The Bagobo
Talomo-Lipadas Watershed, Davao City
People and Watersheds: Mapping the Balance

Mario “Jabi” Vargas, a staff of CIDA’s People Collaborating for Environmental and Economic Management (PCEEM), listened intently to a Bagobo leader, his eyebrows furrowed in deep thought. The Bagobo was explaining how the Lumad of Mindanao have been “forced out” and “hemmed in” – forced out of their territories by development aggression, but “hemmed in” by environmental protection initiatives that disenfranchise them from their natural environment. “The law on National Integrated Protected Areas System completely disallows the cutting of trees in protected areas where some IP communities are found. This may be good, but the law also deprives us of wood for our own consumption,” the Bagobo cited as example.

Later after the forum, Jabi reflected on PCEEM’s mandate of watershed protection. “Our job is to bring the different interests together, encourage dialogue and ensure participatory decision-making,” Jabi said. “But not only that. Along the broad and strategic concerns such as land use and water use, we also have to address the immediate survival concerns of the people, including the small farmers and IPs,” he noted. (See page 75 for information on PCEEM.)
Responding to the needs of the IP communities occupying the Talomo-Lipadas watershed, however, is easier said than done as there was no baseline data on these communities that PCEEM could use in the beginning. Such information on the Tagabawa, Ubo, Klata communities, all subgroups of the Bagobo, is critical to PCEEM’s “multi-stakeholder” approach to watershed management.

PCEEM was prompted to carry out cultural mapping to determine the conditions of the IP communities in the 38,000-hectare watershed area, considered an environmental hotspot. The project covered the identified IP settlements in 19 upland barangays (11 in Talomo and eight in Lipadas), and utilized a survey and participatory rapid appraisal methods, including focus group discussions, to gather the necessary information on the IPs. The participation of the community at each and every step was important, the principle being that the community members have the most intimate knowledge of their conditions, including the watershed they live in. The mapping project therefore allowed the Bagobo communities to define their own issues, aspirations and development goals.

In all, the census surveyed 2,724 IP households (2,119 in Talomo and 605 in Lipadas) based 600 metres and above. “We wanted a more comprehensive survey and cover the entire Talomo-Lipadas watershed,” said Marcel Goño, executive director of PCEEM, “but we just didn’t have enough resources and time.”
A common Davao sight: a billboard at the entrance of a banana plantation advising the schedule of aerial spraying of chemical inputs; examples of farm management techniques to prevent erosion such as intercropping bananas with durian, and canals to trap the soil carried down by rainwater; farmers in the watershed area in action during a demonstration-teaching session.
Farmers working together to protect their livelihood and the watershed; an inspection team crossing one of several springs in the area.
The mapping project revealed that indigenous peoples comprise almost one-third of the total population in the watershed. “Our engagement in watershed protection has made it clear to PCEEM that in spite and because of their absence, the IPs are very much in the picture,” Jabi said.

Seven of every 10 households rely on farming for income although of the total number, only 39% in Lipadas and 43% in Talomo own the land they till. The productivity levels vary widely, with majority citing lack of capital, pest infestation and poor soil fertility as the most common problems encountered. The rest are tenant farmers operating under fixed sharing arrangements with the landowners or farm labourers paid daily wages. The traditional sharing of produce with the owner is called nilima, that is, four parts for the owner and one part for the worker. The harvest is reckoned either by sack or cavan.

Whether owners of their farms, tenants or seasonal labourers, the majority of the IPs live below the poverty threshold. The average monthly income is only PhP3,833, or not even one-third of the established poverty index in the region of PhP11,000.

The IP settlements subscribe to a concept of stewardship – instead of ownership – of the land, which is common among indigenous peoples. The vast Lipadas watershed, for example, was the ancestral homeland of the Tagabawa, and in the community’s memory are important places that serve as referents to the group’s collective identity including mountains, hills, burial grounds, ritual grounds and other physical monuments. According to the elders, they use just enough resources to survive and limit their economic activity in any given area to two planting seasons a year to give the land time to replenish or regenerate. They exhibit deep reverence for their natural environment in general, and continue to ask permission from the spirits guarding the rivers if they can catch the fish and frogs in the waters.

Another significant discovery of the cultural mapping project is the threat of loss of indigenous knowledge systems, cultures and practices. Although the adults in 71% of the IP households can speak and understand their traditional language, the proportion of children who do so is much lower at 37.2%. The elders decry the disappearance of traditional practices, including communal sharing of natural resources.

The vast area of Talomo-Lipadas watershed has seen, over time, bountiful harvests, long droughts, tribal wars, invasions, waves of migration, and the encroachment of big corporate interests. With the information the cultural mapping project gathered, a powerful tool is available to PCEEM and other advocates in helping the Bagobo address their problems and chart the course of their development.
The Dulangan-Manobo Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat

Partnership in Productivity: The Building Blocks
Ely Ungot, a Dulangan-Manobo from barangay Chua in Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat province, learned to stay on the very edge of the road whenever he would pass Christian territory. Like the other Lumad in his village, he learned to keep a low profile, with head bowed, whenever he ventured out of the village. As children, the Dulangan-Manobo were raised believing that if they had to choose between a Christian and a Muslim to approach at all, it would always be a Muslim. But that would change, eventually.

“It took months before I could convince him to speak up for the Lumad,” CO-Multiversity organizer Mimi Pimentel said. CO-Multiversity is the partner organization of CIDA’s Philippine Development Assistance Program (PDAP) in a project called the Mindanao Program for Peace and Development (ProPeace). ProPeace is one of the joint efforts of Canada and the Philippines in the rehabilitation and peace-building effort in Mindanao. (See page 75 for information on the ProPeace.)

ProPeace, established in 2001 as Mindanao grappled with the ravages of a “total war” declared by president Joseph Estrada the year before, supports the development
initiatives of the Muslim, Lumad and Christian populations. In short, ProPeace is a “tri-people” response to the situation in Mindanao. It is premised on the belief that the conflict in Mindanao is not one borne by social, ethnic, religious or cultural differences, but by the scourge of widespread poverty.

“You can look at conflict from a socio-cultural to a religious perspective, but for PDAP, we see the issue as poverty. ProPeace is a recognition of the poverty context of the war, which is why our main strategy is also livelihood and enterprise interventions,” said Jerry Pacturan, PDAP’s managing director. “So, whether the community is purely an IP group or a combination of two or three of the population groups, PDAP may enter the picture because we want to address the issue of poverty and contribute to the community’s livelihood development.”

The communities supported by ProPeace are in various post-conflict stages of peace-building and development, just like barangay Chua where the three sectors are relishing newfound solidarity and oneness, a far cry from a time when ethnic prejudices and fears held sway.

With assistance from Propeace, the Daguma Range Tri-people’s Federation, the network of people’s organizations in Chua organized by CO-Multiversity, is engaged in a host of livelihood and enterprise development activities. These include a solar dryer for the peasant organizations, two cooperative stores run by the women’s groups, and goat dispersal for the youth association. Before these initiatives could commence, however, CO-Multiversity conducted several “culture of peace” seminars, first separately with the three different groups, then in joint sessions.
A Manobo mother and her children; CO-Multiversity staff Mimi Pimentel; youth volunteer Joannee Mendoza; and the initially "reluctant" Manobo spokesperson Ely Ungot.
“It was frustrating because Ely was articulate when the Lumad met among themselves. You could see his leadership potential stand out. But our tri-people meetings would start and end with him, as representative of the Lumad, saying not a single word,” Mimi recalled.

Finally, Mimi sat Ely down to convey the urgency of a Lumad voice. “I thought to myself when I watched and listened to the Christian and Muslim representatives, ‘They are not much older than me, not much different from me. Their issues are similar to ours. They worry about the same rat infestation that destroyed our crops. If they can speak out, I should try to as well,’” Ely resolved.

The key, Mimi reflects, is constant personal encounter, in spite of and precisely because of the people’s prejudices and differences. Mimi and her colleagues at CO-Multiversity did not tire of gathering the residents of Chua for the sessions, even if at first blush these appeared to be “idle chats.” Neighbours began to realize their similarities, as well as differences, with one another from the constant sharing of their respective beliefs, practices and customs, and the exchange of personal stories. “I knew we were okay when the three groups could afford to joke about their differences and laugh together,” Mimi said.

When she saw practically Ely’s entire community coming down the road to attend the federation’s first general assembly, Joannee Mendoza, a Christian youth leader of Chua, could not believe her eyes. Even now, her voice falters when she remembers. “I was stupefied. They were all there – old men and women, the adults, the children. They even brought with them the infants and laid them in makeshift cribs tied to the posts,” she said. The Lumad were quiet, Joannee noted, but the sight of so many of them leaning against the wall was overwhelming.

Today, when Ely and the other Dulangan-Manobo from his village bump into their Christian and Muslim neighbours in the footpaths, market, the motor-cab depot or the double-tire bus, they trade updates about their different projects, aside from updates on their private lives. They celebrate one another’s achievement and lament one another’s misfortunes in unity. A few months ago, a Dulangan-Manobo’s pregnancy complication set off the whole barangay in a panic search for a habal-habal or skylab (local terms for an improvised motorcycle) to bring her to the health center in the town proper. It turned out to be a life-threatening ectopic pregnancy treated in the nick of time.

Indeed, the divisions have melted away and the reality of peace is gelling in Chua. In the meetings held outside the barangay, Mimi added, the Christian and Lumad participants take care of asking the question for their Muslim companions: “Are you serving us pork? None of us here eats pork.” Sometimes, Mimi would spy a Muslim break into a shy smile.
The vegetable depot for the farmers of Chua; a typical outhouse; the usual modes of access to and from upland villages in Mindanao such as Chua, fully packed jeepneys and “skylab” motorcycles improvised to hold one driver and as many as four passengers.
The Teduray Upi, Maguindanao

Mainstreaming Diversity as a Window to the Future
ne rainy afternoon in October 2002, in Upi, Maguindanao province, the truck owned by Alex Peñalosa, fell into a ravine and turned over four times. Six hitchhikers died on the spot; while eight others suffered fractures and other injuries and had to be rushed to a hospital in Cotabato City.

All the fatalities and injured, including the driver, were Muslim; Alex, who also manages a small store of agriculture supplies, is Christian.

That same night, the families of the hitchhikers were upon Alex and his family, demanding payment in damages and for medical expenses. The demand started at PhP120,000 per casualty, excluding the expenses to be incurred for the kanduli, the Muslim commemoration ritual of the death anniversary held on the third, seventh, 20th, 40th, 50th and hundredth days. In Cotabato City, Alex’s sister was constantly asked for money for the meals of the families of the injured. “I was never more scared in my life. All sorts of fears – I was ruined, bankrupt... I was dead, I was going to spend the rest of my life in jail,” Alex said. His wife was distraught.
Mayor Ramon Piang visited the Peñalosas that night and assured the couple of assistance from the local government unit (LGU). Mayor Piang, who is on his second term, had inherited a municipality beset by intense conflict relating to property ownership and politics. Upi was at one time a town where the constituency of Christians, Muslims and Teduray was used to taking the law in its own hands. The mayor deputized two policemen to ensure the Peñalosas’ safety. Then he asked Alex if he needed the Advisory Council’s intervention, to which Alex agreed straightaway.

The Advisory Council of Upi, which was the main campaign platform of Mayor Piang, is a combination of the traditional Council of Elders of the Teduray (44% of Upi’s population) and the Council of Elders of the Maguindanaoan Muslims (23% of the population) with present-day arbitration mechanisms to represent the Christian sector of the population (33%). Created to settle local disputes amicably, the council is an echo of the indigenous decision-making and policy-setting mechanisms revered by both the Teduray and the Muslims. It is composed of two Teduray elders (called “Kefeduwan” in the Teduray dialect), two Muslim elders and two Christians chosen by their respective sectors in consultative assemblies. Its establishment was facilitated by the intervention of CIDA’s Local Government Support Program in determining Upi’s development needs, and building the governance capacities of the local chief executives and municipal employees. (See page 75 for information on LGSP.) “Of course we would know what we need to do, but our plans wouldn’t have been as well laid out, and we wouldn’t have been as systematic with our implementation,” Mayor Piang said.

Although the council sits en banc in hearing and mediating cases, if the protagonists in a particular case are both
The tri-people face of Upi: Two members of the women's egg-production cooperative; Vice-Mayor Abdul June Salik, a Muslim; a Christian barangay captain; a Teduray Kefeduwan and member of the Council of Elders; and a Teduray woman community leader.
Teduray members in their daily attire and in indigenous costumes worn during special events and celebrations.
Teduray, the Kefeduwan preside. Likewise, if the parties involved are both Muslim, the Muslim elders preside the proceedings, and if the parties are both Christian, the barangay justice system takes over. If the parties are from the different sectors, their respective elders arbitrate, together with the barangay officials if Christians are involved.

In envisioning an Advisory Council, the mayor’s Teduray origins played a role. “I also wanted to avoid the cycle of retaliation behind the *rido* (family and clan feuds) and to make room for important customs of the Teduray such as the *kitas demaluwas* and *se egud kenugew*,” Mayor Piang said.

The *kitas demaluwas* and *se egud kenugew* are Teduray rituals where the participants slightly shave off the edge of their nails into a bowl of water and all drink from this. “These are rituals as powerful as a blood compact,” Mayor Piang added.

A clear measure of the people’s preference for traditional, non-antagonistic settlement of disputes was that the notion of an Advisory Council met no resistance. “They have neither the money for lawyers’ fees nor the time for the slow progress of court hearings,” one council member explained.

The Advisory Council can best be described as the institutionalization and harmonization of the customary laws of the Teduray and the Muslims with the existing penal codes. It is, in effect, the cherished self-determination of the Teduray and Muslims in action, albeit in synchrony with modern-day law.

Mediation generally takes a day, “with a lot of caucuses and asides” between an
elder and his constituents taking place in the course of the hearing. The elders exercise their suasion over their respective communities. “We do a lot of persuasion and advising, sometimes even admonition,” one council member said.

A ground rule in the Advisory Council’s mandate, besides the constituents’ direct endorsement of its members, is the contending parties’ mutual commitment to uphold its final decision. When such a final decision has been reached, the Advisory Council secretary translates this to a written document signed by all the council members, the complainant, the defendant and Mayor Piang. The decision is then considered binding.

Otherwise, the dispute reverts to the standard justice system of barangay mediation or police investigations and, failing a resolution at either level, moves on to formal court litigation.

Four years since the Advisory Council was constituted, police cases have declined by 35%.

The council’s caseload varies from land disputes to physical injury, rape, and dowry disputes. Between the Teduray, the disputes are usually related to property boundaries. By far, however, the most difficult case encountered was that of Alex and the Muslim fatalities.

The council convened two days after the accident, although the two Muslim elders began consultations with the families soon after this, explaining to them the principle of, and provision for, damage payments in case of death stipulated in the civil code. The mediation hearing lasted almost six hours, from 5:30 in the afternoon until an hour before midnight. As a gesture of goodwill, when Alex was asked to give an additional cavan of rice per family of the Muslim fatalities on top of the agreed indemnity, he offered to give a little more than the cash equivalent of this.

“We spent the last two hours of that night signing the final document, with the sheer number of parties involved in the case and the corresponding number of copies to sign,” the elders noted.

Today, Alex is a walking testimony of the efficacy and wisdom of the Advisory Council. “I tell everybody, ‘If you have a case, go to the elders. Don’t waste your time, go to the elders.’”

There is a glow not only in Alex’s face, but in that of every Christian, Muslim or Teduray of Upi that can only come from within – from a deep satisfaction in the present and an abiding hope for the future. There is a sense of security as one walks in the streets or plaza well into the night, owing mainly to a culture of peace that has taken root. In taking the brave step of mainstreaming the people’s respect for, and celebration of, diversity through the tri-people Advisory Council, Upi is carving the path toward a peaceful and prosperous Mindanao.
At work and at play: Two boys in the market, one still at his task of carrying bananas and the other finishing off the reward for his efforts, a slice of watermelon; Teduray children being children in their home.
CIDA Programs Covered

**PHILIPPINES-CANADA DEVELOPMENT FUND (PCDF)**  
**1988-2005**

The PCDF has been generated from the sale of selected Canadian goods covered by Canada’s Commodity Assistance Program since 1988. The program is managed by a board composed of representatives from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and CIDA, as well as civil society. Its priorities are: basic social services, peace education and development, livelihood and micro-enterprise development, community development, governance, and infrastructure support. PCDF finances, in part, the Local Government Support Program and the ProPeace.

**GENDER EQUITY FUND (GEF)**  
**1995-2005**

The GEF supports initiatives proposed by CIDA, NGOs and other civil society and development-oriented organizations to increase women’s participation in economic, political, social and environmental decision-making, and eliminate gender-based discrimination against women’s participation in development. The GEF was established also to complement CIDA’s capacity to integrate a gender perspective in its policies, programs, projects and activities. It supports projects geared to dialogue on policies relating to gender equality, research to deepen the analysis of women’s issues, piloting and modelling activities addressing concerns such as violence against women, and networking among civil society organizations.

**CANADA FUND FOR LOCAL INITIATIVES (CFLI)**  
**RENEWED ANNUALLY**

The CFLI extends financing and technical assistance to nongovernmental organizations, people’s organizations and cooperatives for projects addressing local human security and social development issues. In focusing on the smaller local-level organizations of the urban and rural poor, and indigenous communities, CFLI complements CIDA’s other programs by adding flexibility and timeliness to the disposition of Official Development Assistance. CFLI’s overarching criterion in the approval of support for a certain proponent is compatibility with CIDA’s two broad goals of sustainable development and poverty reduction.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM (LGSP)
1999-2006
Now in its second phase, LGSP provides technical assistance to partner Local Government Units (LGUs) to enhance their capabilities in: (i) local government management, (ii) service delivery, (iii) resource generation and management, and (iv) participatory governance. A major thrust is support to an LGU’s formulation of local executive and legislative agenda that identifies an area’s priorities, unites the development thrusts and priorities of the local chief executive with those of the Sangguniang Bayan, and mobilizes the various stakeholders for a more participatory planning process. Building on the results of Phases I and II, CIDA supported the Local Governance Support Program in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (LGSPA) in 2005.

PEOPLE COLLABORATING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT (PCEEM)
1995-2005
The PCEEM seeks to promote a multi-stakeholder approach to watershed management in Metro Cebu and Metro Davao. In both areas, it has initiated the formation of a watershed management board whose members represent the different sectors with stakes in the rehabilitation and preservation of the Kotkot, Lusaran, Mananga and smaller watersheds in Metro Cebu, and the Talomo-Lipadas watershed in Metro Davao. PCEEM aims to encourage long-term, ecosystem-based planning and decision-making in watershed management, and the design and implementation of innovative projects and activities on issues addressing resource use, management and regeneration, biodiversity, water supply and waste management.

MINDANAO PROGRAM FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT (PROPEACE)
2001-2004
ProPeace was the follow-through of an earlier project called Program for Peace and Development in the SZOPAD Areas (PPDSA), which supported the community livelihood initiatives of Muslim rebel returnees. PPDSA was envisioned to contribute to the peace dividend and commenced a year after the signing of the final peace agreement between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front in 1997. In 2001, with the region reeling from the devastation of a total war declared the year before, PPDSA was expanded into ProPeace to include Christian and Lumad territories. Both ProPeace and PPDSA were implemented by the Philippine Development Assistance Program (PDAP), a consortium of Philippine and Canadian NGOs.
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