



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

Philippine indigenous peoples lead the way in an innovative partnership to strengthen their self-reliance and promote their heritage in a changing world

INDISCO Case Study No. 7

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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

***INTER-REGIONAL PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT SELF-RELIANCE OF
INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH COOPERATIVES AND
OTHER SELF-HELP ORGANIZATIONS (INDISCO)***

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Foreword & Acknowledgment

The ILO-INDISCO Programme was launched in the Philippines in 1994 in collaboration with the Philippine Government. It is a multi-bilateral technical cooperation undertaking aimed at strengthening the self-reliance of indigenous and tribal communities and testing innovative approaches to indigenous people's development.

In order to achieve its objectives, it has facilitated the operation of 12 pilot projects located in strategic areas of the country. These pilot projects involve indigenous communities in various stages of development and different levels of cultural integrity. They have already been in operation for an average of 3.5 years and regular INDISCO technical and financial support has been phased out from most of them.

As a strategy, INDISCO Philippines capitalized on the inherent sense of self-reliance and native technology of the partner communities. Community organizations, which are founded on existing indigenous institutions, were tapped to implement the project activities with facilitative technical and financial assistance from the INDISCO Programme. Through their own community organizations, the indigenous peoples were given the opportunity to plan, implement and monitor their community development activities.

For purposes of discovering in a systematic and objective manner the initial results of the programme, Ms Yasmin D. Arquiza, a fellow of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism and editorial director of *Bandillo ng Palawan*, recently documented the lessons learned and best practices generated from the pilot projects. ILO-INDISCO national coordinator Domingo I. Nayahangan edited the text prior to publication.

This book was written on the basis of information, ideas and opinions provided by the people who have been involved in the implementation of the ILO-INDISCO programme in the Philippines. Special thanks go to all of them, particularly the tribal leaders and project staff of the indigenous communities in the 12 pilot projects.

It is hoped that through this book, the above-mentioned lessons learned and best practices generated under the programme in terms of innovative approaches to indigenous peoples development could be disseminated and replicated.

Werner Konrad Blenk
Director, ILO Manila Office



CONTENTS

I. The Changing Scene 6

Centuries of colonization and waves of migration have radically altered the lives of indigenous people all over the Philippines. Missionaries have penetrated the most remote of forest abodes. Internal armed conflict has brought violence into otherwise peaceful villages. Ethnic unrest continues to rage in the countryside, causing uncertainty and economic hardship. Ill-planned development programs and assistance have failed to ease the poverty in many indigenous communities. In this context of rapid change, the INDISCO programme started introducing a new concept of community development partnership in 12 pilot project sites.

II. Changing Lives 16

Five years after the launching of the pilot projects, INDISCO has brought significant changes in the lives of indigenous peoples in most of the sites. Through its innovative approach that emphasized collective responsibility and discouraged the dole-out mentality, INDISCO managed to instill a sense of community ownership of the project. Many of the partner communities are well on their way towards sustained decent work, higher family income, increased sense of responsibility over the environment and natural resources within ancestral domains, and greater gender awareness. Most importantly, better appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems and practices has been fostered to ensure the cultural survival of tribal communities. The positive impact of the project shows the validity of the approach employed by the programme, where the partner communities are allowed to take greater control of the project and learn from their mistakes, and successful ventures as well.

Learning How To Fish	22
The Music of the Fish	33
Nature's Stewards	38
On Their Own	42
A World of Men and Women	48
Counting the Face of Rizal	52

III. Changing Communities 54

Among the partner communities, some have exhibited the most successful application of the project's strategies and components. These best practices are showcased in this section. Among the initiatives that are replicable in other communities are the gender awareness programs in Baguio City, the innovative use of the Revolving Loan Funds in Tawi-Tawi, management of ancestral domain in Bakun, the preservation of indigenous handicraft in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, and the literacy program in Bukidnon.

Ancestral Domain Management	57
Revolving Loan Fund	63
Traditional Handicraft	65
Gender Awareness	70
Functional Literacy	71

IV. Changing People 74

In every project, difficulties are encountered that lead to deep reflections and acceptance of lessons on the part of beneficiaries. In this section, partner communities candidly discussed some of their mistakes as well as their perceptions on what could be the weaknesses of the project. They also provided insights, analysis, and suggestions for addressing these concerns.

Marketing of Products	76
Promoting Indigenous Knowledge	78
Repayment of Loans	80
Project Management	82
Strengthening Local Organizations	84
Logistical Concerns	85
Tenurial Security	86
Peace & Order	87

V. Changing the World 88

What else can government, private organizations, and donor agencies do to help the indigenous peoples improve their lives? Tribal leaders share their ideas on policy recommendations that can go a long way in preserving and pursuing the initial gains of the INDISCO project.




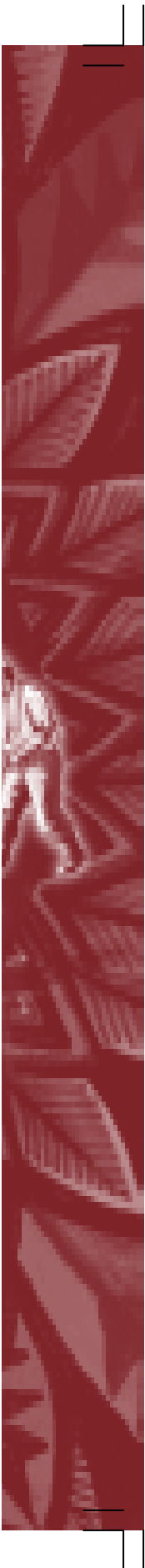


GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A D M P	Ancestral Domain Management Plan
A D S P P	Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development & Protection Plan
B I T O	Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization
C A D C	Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim
C A D T	Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title
C A L T	Certificate of Ancestral Land Title
D A	Department of Agriculture
D A R	Department of Agrarian Reform
D E C S	Department of Education, Culture, and Sports
D E N R	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
F E M M A T R I C S	Federation of Matigsalog-Manobo Tribal Councils
I K S P	Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices
I L O	International Labour Organization
I P R A	Indigenous Peoples Rights Act
M A L E I	Matigsalog Literacy Education Inc.
M A L T R I C O	Malungon Tribal Congress
N C I P	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
R L F	Revolving Loan Fund



I
The
Changing
Scene



A weaver begins her task by selecting the finest threads that will suit the design she has in mind. The choice of material is important, as it determines the quality of the finished product. Other elements such as dye and wax are also necessary to complete the process. In the past, many of these materials came from the rainforest that also provided the indigenous communities with food, shelter, and medicine. Outsiders have cut down vast tracts of forests however, causing shortages of material and endangering the survival of ancient weaving traditions.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

In his book *Wisdom from a Rainforest*, anthropologist Stuart Schlegel describes an idyllic community of indigenous Teduray in the Cotabato region during the 1960s. The tribal people in remote Figel village believe they were created by the Great Spirit to care for the forest, and that the forest was created to provide for their needs. They helped each other prepare swidden farms, and during harvest time, they shared the bounty from the land. Each one was a “specialist” in a particular skill such as hunting, healing, or mediating conflicts, and contributed this unique talent to the community. Yet, no one was above anybody else. All creatures, humans as well as wildlife, had equal value. Gender conflict was non-existent as men and women shared responsibility and various roles in many aspects of daily life. Children were accorded the same respect as adults, and there was no discrimination against gays. Their way of life had no room for competition, hierarchy, coercive force, and violence. Even in a game of kickball, there were no winners or losers because the objective was simply for everyone to make the ball stay in the air the longest. Harmony prevailed because they avoided inflicting physical or emotional pain on another person. When disputes arose, they relied on legal sages to settle the issue through an elaborate tribal justice system. Cooperation was the key to their survival.

It is unlikely that the Teduray in Figel had ever heard of socialism even though they practiced one of its core values: from each according to his or her abilities, and to each according to his or her needs. But then ideology and political power had no place in their way of life. Their egalitarian system was simply the essence of community.

Unfortunately, the Teduray people of Figel had no control over the world outside their peaceful village either. In the early 1970s, ethnic conflicts reached their forest abode and the community was dispersed, many of its members killed.

While it may be extreme, the fate of the forest Teduray in Cotabato reflects the negative outcome of a changing environment in the lives of Philippine indigenous cultural communities. This is the context that the managers of INDISCO have to face in the 12 pilot sites of the programme — a climate of uncertainty and unrest that has transformed once idyllic communities into conflict-ridden settlements.



THE CHANGING SCENE

To this day, conflict persists in certain parts of the Philippines, adversely affecting the economy and causing tension among indigenous peoples. The latest outbreak of fighting between rebels and government forces in central Mindanao in the early part of year 2000 has severely affected the handicraft production of INDISCO partner communities in the region. In the province of Lanao del Sur, a place well known for its colorful woven cloth and finely – crafted brassware, Bai Deron says she keeps her children’s clothes in suitcases — so they can evacuate easily if the need arises. Even though she wanted me to visit her women’s group in the village of Dayawan where their woven malong wraps are reputed to be among the best in Mindanao, she was hesitant. As she recalled telling the project manager, “How can I guarantee her safety if I cannot even guarantee my children’s safety?” Deron heads the Dayawan Women Loom Weavers Association, the organization of one of the partner communities located in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

In a neighboring village, Haji Mangacop Dipatuan, Chairman of the Tugaya Brassware Makers Multipurpose Cooperative, which is another partner community organization, was forced to stay home also because of the internal conflict. As a result, he was unable to join the interview in Iligan City. The two organizations had proposed Iligan City as the venue for the interview because it was considered relatively safe compared to other areas.

Cotabato City faces a similar image problem. The internal conflict had a telling effect on business in the city, which has failed to keep pace with the economic boom in the southern part of the resource-rich Cotabato region. Vehicles have to go through several checkpoints before entering urban areas. Members of the Sultan Kudarat Women Loom Weavers Association noted that the situation has scared off some customers. Their intricately woven malong and tubao with the distinctive Maguindanao designs are piling up in their display center as marketing activities outside the city were impaired.

Public infrastructure has also suffered from the conflict. The Teduray and Maguindanao residents of Upi belonging to the Kuminamar Multi-Purpose Cooperative know this only too well; they have to travel for one day just to reach the city. The road going to their town needed repair, and few boats ply the



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

dangerous waterways leading to their homes. Communication is spotty, with messages getting relayed to them usually through the local radio. As a result, the handicraft producers could not keep up with orders for their baskets and other native products made of a wild vine called nito. In recent years, the internal conflict has combined with logistical difficulties to make life very hard for the cooperative members who are all engaged in the handicraft business. Datu Lab Sinsuat, president of the cooperative, says that business used to be good but has slowed down since the conflict intensified.

The situation is the same in the southwestern part of Mindanao, which made headlines with several kidnapping incidents last year. Few outsiders dare to travel to this region where the province of Tawi-Tawi, homeland of the Sama people who are known as hard-working fishers, is found. The Municipality of Simunul in Tawi-Tawi is the site of the Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative, an organization composed of Sama people living in the barangays of Bakong and Panglima Mastul. The island is known as the cradle of Islam because it is the site of the first mosque erected in the Philippines by Arab missionary Sheik Karim Ul-Makdum in the early 14th century. Traces of the past live on in such things as the name of the oldest barangay, which is Tong Gusong, or First Sand.

Elsewhere in mainland Mindanao, one is constantly reminded of the high level of political awareness and the recent history of social unrest in the region. The indigenous B'laan and Tagakaolo communities in Malungon, Sarangani had a history of being at odds with one another due to various reasons. But even with that, they both had to contend with the rising number of Visayan migrants who found their way to their ancestral domains. Early attempts to unite the two tribal communities, through a series of organizations, did not succeed because both tribes could not find enough reason to get along with each other. But under the INDISCO programme, they were able to overcome their differences, and to work together through a single organization called the Malungon Tribal Congress or MALTRICO. This was an important development for the indigenous peoples in the area who felt they were getting overshadowed by the "lowlanders."

According to the Tagakaolo-B'laan ancestral domain baseline survey report, the two tribes are not traditionally nomadic; they establish affinity to their place.



THE CHANGING SCENE

But successive government decrees eroded their rights over the land they have possessed and occupied since time immemorial. Information about the 1902 Land Registration Act of the American colonizers for example, did not reach the hinterlands of Mindanao where many of the indigenous peoples lived. The 1905 Public Land Act gave the government sole control over all unregistered land and from 1913 to 1919, a series of government decrees lured migrants to the area, resulting in mixed settlements that abound in much of Mindanao today. In 1973, then President Ferdinand Marcos gave the Department of Natural Resources control over public lands.

Intense lobbying from indigenous people's rights advocates recently changed government policy on indigenous peoples. The most profound reforms occurred during the term of former President Fidel Ramos, when the government started recognizing the right of indigenous peoples to their ancestral territories. For the B'laan and Tagakaolo peoples of Malungon, such recognition came in the form of a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) awarded to each of the two tribes on May 30, 1997 covering a total of 81,628 hectares. About 14,000 Tagakaolos and nearly 15,000 B'laans benefited from the award, that gave them back some amount of control over the resources in their territory. Earlier, they had become concerned about rampant illegal logging in their forests and loss of biodiversity in the rolling farmland and rich waterways. Assistance from INDISCO helped them turn the tide against outsiders who were destroying their natural environment. It also helped them stem the rampant selling of land by some community members. The municipal government did not oppose the claim because officials knew the land is public domain.



Tagakaolo and B'laan indigenous leaders pledge to protect their tribal territory during the awarding of their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim or CADC in Malungon, Sarangani province, in 1997.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

In the years following the famous Edsa Revolution that took place in 1986, some provinces have managed to recover from conflicts that used to divide their communities. Among these is Bukidnon, where a community uprising in 1975 led by the respected Datu Lorenzo Gawilan, Sr. gave birth to the Federation of Matigsalog and Manobo Tribal Councils or FEMMATRICs. In the early years of Martial Law, the government had divided their ancestral domain into ranches and awarded these to influential businessmen from various origins. A quarrel between one of the ranchers and a tribesman triggered the uprising. Datu Gawilan then declared that he would surrender only if the ranches are dismantled. The government granted the demand and since then, Gawilan's group has lobbied vigorously for the return of the land to the tribes that had long nurtured it.

In 1995, Matigsalog-Manobo tribes achieved a major victory when the government granted a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim to them covering 77,134 hectares of land in 20 barangays. Most of the land is found in the mountainous town of Kitaotao in Bukidnon, but the certificate also covers three barangays each in the adjoining municipalities of Arakan in north Cotabato and Marilog in Davao City. Feeling happy that peace has returned to their fertile homeland, local farmers are now more preoccupied with pests that may attack their crops than working to avoid getting caught in the crossfire.

For the Mangyan people of Occidental Mindoro, reclaiming their ancestral domain has remained a dream. With opposition to their ancestral domain claims still evident, it may take some time before that dream becomes a reality.

In the mountain village of Balangabong in Occidental Mindoro, tribal leaders credited missionaries for bringing basic services such as clean water and health care to their remote community. One religious group for example, funded the construction of a spring water system. But the community also admitted that the influence of some religious groups had eroded their indigenous beliefs. For instance, the community no longer reveres the traditional god of the Tau Buid called Funbalogs. "*Nakapag-aral na kasi kami,*" (We are now educated) says a tribal officer. They were told accepting the Christian concept of God means they should no longer make offerings to animist gods.





Indigenous houses made of native materials can still be found in the Cordillera Mountains, home of several tribes that have maintained aspects of their traditional culture.

The influence of outsiders is not much of a problem for the Kankanaey people in the municipality of Bakun in the Cordillera Mountains. Even though many have converted to Western religions, Christian rites are usually mixed with indigenous rituals such as the lawit or requiem mass for the dead. It has probably helped that the community is fairly homogenous, with only a few lowlanders married to local women comprising a minimal ethnic mix. Cave burials are still practiced by some clans for deserving members, depending on their status, especially for the kadangyan or rich people. These days however, the more prevalent custom is to bury the dead in one's backyard.

Nestled between forested slopes in the misty mountains, the town of Bakun is home to Mount Kabunian, which is considered a holy site. In the local language, Bakun means dipper, which describes the bowl-shaped valley and the handle-like river that runs through it. The town proper was relocated to the more accessible

Some villages have retained the practice of cave burials for certain members, whose bodies are placed in native coffins.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

barangay of Ampusungan, where the office of the Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization (BITO) is located. Although it's only eighty kilometers from Baguio City, it takes three hours to reach the area along the rough and slippery Halsema Road. Tidy rows of vegetables such as cabbage, carrots, lettuce, and cucumber grace the terraced plots as far as the eye can see. BITO chairman Tirso Bayawa, who is also the vice mayor of Bakun, says the Chinese introduced vegetable farming in the area in the 1950s. When the Chinese left because they did not have enough land, the indigenous people took over and the vegetable farms have thrived since then.

In 1996, village leaders authorized the mayor to apply for a certificate of ancestral domain claim for Bakun. The DENR later recognized 29,346 hectares of ancestral domain covering almost the entire municipality of Bakun, with the exception of the Ambuklao watershed, to the 13,000 Bago and Kankanaey people. The claim includes 400 private titles estimated to cover 200 hectares. The certificate was awarded on March 13, 1998, just as the INDISCO programme implementation was about to start.

Often, the public perception of indigenous peoples is confined to images of forest dwellers in G-string or checkered wrap skirts with native baskets on their heads. But there are also tribal people who have either voluntarily left or were forcibly displaced from their homeland. They are now seeking a new life in urban areas, struggling to survive in an unfamiliar world.

Among them are the weavers and ambulant vendors who are members of the Baguio City Indigenous Women's Council. They belong to the Kankanaey, Ifugao, and Kalinga tribes in the Cordillera region but for a variety of reasons, they have settled in the poorer sections of the bustling resort city of Baguio. From time to time, they still return to their "ili" or native communities in the rural hinterlands but for the most part, their indigenous heritage has been sidetracked by daily concerns to make a living. Project manager Geraldine Cacho says many of the women have become "very individualistic and have no concern for others" much unlike the strong sense of community in their hometowns. Many of the children who were born and raised in the city are unaware of their ethnic heritage, even teasing other tribal children in school about their indigenous roots until their mothers chide them, "*Igorot ka met,*" (But you are also an Igorot) adds Cacho.





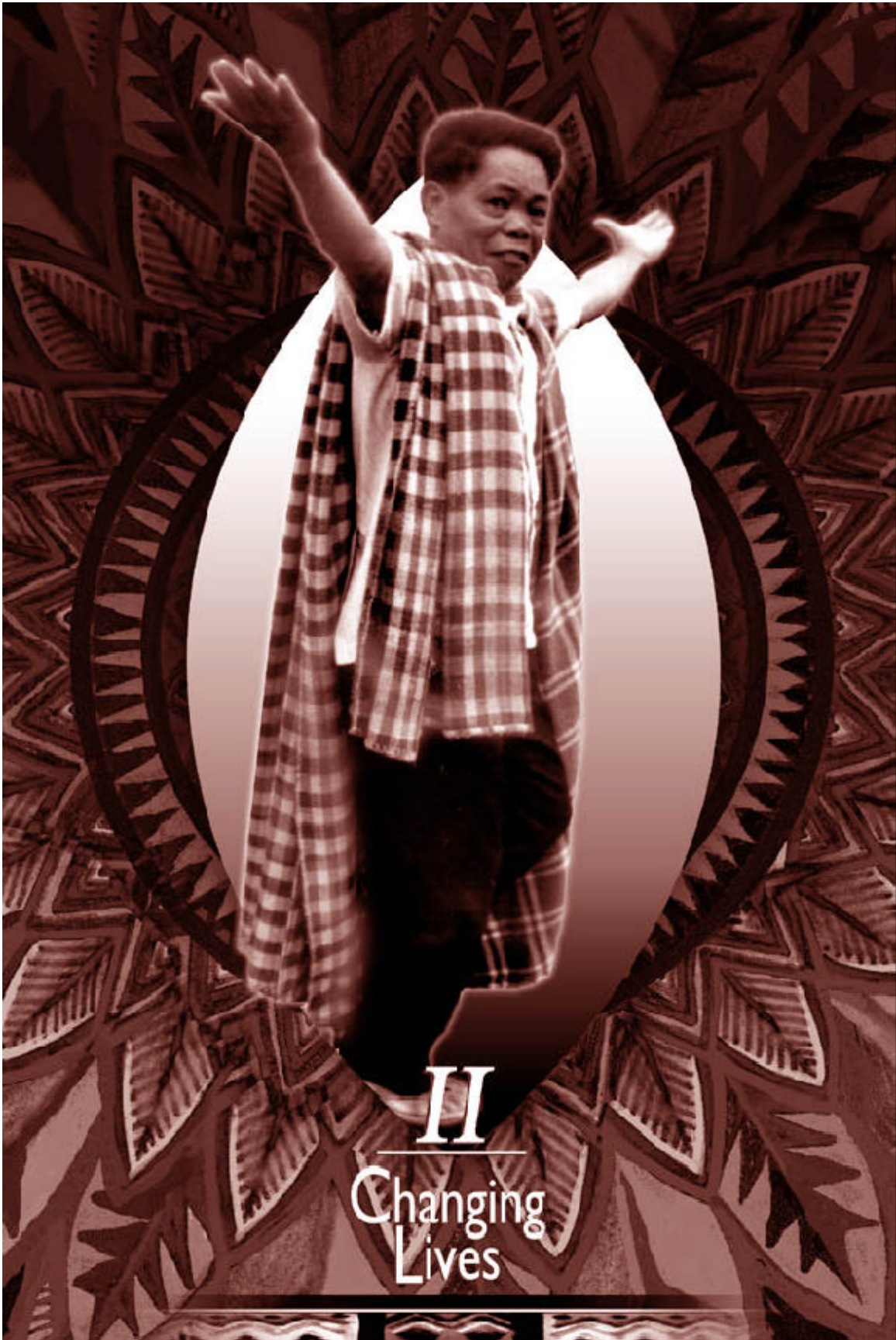
THE CHANGING SCENE

In a resettlement area in Botolan, Zambales, Aeta families who belong to the Samahang Katutubo ng Masikap don't have much of a problem remembering their background. Yolanda Abrigo, president of the association, recalls with pride that visitors from the former naval base in Subic Bay used to drop by whenever they wanted to see authentic Aeta performances. Although they have had to adapt to their new lowland environment from the mountains that they used to inhabit, the small Aeta community of 76 families has not forgotten its indigenous practices. Their main concern is their tenure over the land, where they were resettled by the former governor due to violent incidents in the mountains of Zambales nearly 30 years ago. Until now, none of the families has a title and there are threats to evict them.


The pilot project sites have yet to achieve the level of development enjoyed by mainstream society. Faced with a multitude of modern-day concerns, they strive to maintain aspects of their culture. Life is a never-ending struggle to balance their need to keep up with the pace in mixed communities, and the effort to preserve the heritage that gives them a unique identity in post-colonial times.

Reverting to the ideal lifestyle and community that was enjoyed by the forest Teduray of Figel is a remote possibility in this day and age, but with the infusion of new ideas and a better appreciation for their heritage, some indigenous communities have found it easier to cope with their ever-changing environment, as we will see in the next section.





II
Changing
Lives



Before she goes to the loom, a weaver has to sort the threads and decide which colors are needed to create a certain design. She untangles the thread, counts out rows, and arranges them in a pattern on the loom. Then she sits for long hours, sliding the spool to and fro, tugging the thread tight so the fabric will not unravel easily. Sometimes she weaves with a partner, two pairs of arms and legs working in harmony with the loom. The quality of the finished product is a result of the combination of thread, loom, and the human hands that shaped the fabric into its final form.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

In the dusty village of Sinuda in Bukidnon, tribal leader Paquito Uban recounts the failure of a high-profile government program back in the '70s that was supposed to improve the lives of indigenous communities. A dozen carabaos were donated to the Matigsalog and Manobo communities, but the animals had too many owners so these were overworked. He points to a row of stunted mahogany trees on the roadside, and says those were planted 25 years ago from seedlings distributed by the same program. Across the field, he gestures toward an empty building, one of the “white elephants” that the government program had constructed during the Martial Law years, when infrastructure projects mushroomed across the country.

Project manager Cosme Lambayon of FEMMATRICS agrees with Uban’s observation. In the past, other agencies had given them various forms of material assistance, but the efforts failed due to lack of training. Seeds or fertilizer for instance, were distributed to farmers but they were not taught how to use these inputs properly so their harvest remained dismal. The federation lagged behind other groups especially in local governance, farming of high-value crops, and other skills.

The same ill-planned approach was applied in the Mangyan village of Balangabong in Occidental Mindoro. Social workers taught the tribal community to make commercialized hammocks so they could augment their income, but the products sold very cheaply and were labor-intensive as well, earning them only P150 for three days’ work. In the process, the business venture also destroyed their traditional craft of making hammocks called arure or salafudan. Often, they had little choice in responding to the government programs. The activities were dictated to the community and if they did not like the project, it was withdrawn. On the other hand, some non-government organizations in the area simply gave dole-outs to the tribal community, says project manager Noli Hablo.

When INDISCO introduced its community-driven and participatory approach to the federation in Bukidnon, Manobo tribal leader Bai Laura Balucan says there were a lot of complaints at first. The area had received various forms of assistance in the past, and the tribal people had become used to outsiders making the decisions for them. With INDISCO, the funds would be entrusted to the community organization, and they would have to implement their own projects. Local communities would participate in making plans and activities on how to improve the quality of their



CHANGING LIVES

lives. If they made mistakes, they would have no one to blame but themselves. While INDISCO would provide the means for the federation to attain its goals, the members would have to learn to take responsibility for charting their own development.

Baluca patiently explained the beauty of the process to villagers in East Dolorong, where she heads the tribal council. “Once they understood it, they agreed with the approach,” she says in Cebuano. “Even I don’t want to be given something without having to use my brains. The project has encouraged people to work,” she adds.

Uban agrees: “With the ILO-INDISCO programme, we have learned to earn a living. We were taught how to fish and we were no longer just given fish.”

Among other things, federation members have learned a lot from the various kinds of training conducted. Under the INDISCO program, members undergo appropriate training first before an activity is implemented. For instance, those who want to start a buy-and-sell business are trained on bookkeeping while farmers who want to plant high-value crops are trained on land preparation and proper techniques to get a good harvest. Datu Jacinto Lantong, a member of the FEMMATRICs Board of Trustees, says one reason the organization did not collapse despite the damage to crops from El Niño and waves of pestilence is the knowledge they gained from the training on environmental awareness.

Lambayon says INDISCO’s requirement for the group to make policies on the use of donated equipment before purchasing them helped make villagers more responsible in taking care of the facilities. Beyond the material benefits however, he says federation members have realized that the project’s success can also be measured in their collective and personal growth, which are not readily seen. There is a change in attitude from the tendency to live beyond their means, to proper budgeting and planning.

Slowly, tribal officials also began to see the meaning of individual and collective self-reliance as envisioned in the program. This became particularly evident early this year, when INDISCO regular financial assistance was phased out. Unlike other projects that simply stop operations when the allocated donor assistance has been exhausted, extension worker Virgie Enangkil notes that the federation managed to continue implementing its activities because of their effective training in project



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

management and administration. Although the pay was lower and the staff had to provide volunteer services sometimes, she says they looked at the long-term development of the community and not merely their personal gain from the project.

Similar observations were made in other pilot sites. The tribal chairman of the Tau Buid community in Occidental Mindoro says he appreciates the freedom given to the tribe in choosing and planning its own activities, with their project manager simply there to guide them and provide advice whenever necessary. Maranao tribal leader Bai Deron of the Dayawan Women Loom Weavers Association in Lanao del Sur was also grateful for the support she received — from the extension worker who responds to the group’s problems to the village animators who assist her in making reports.

In the island of Simunul in Tawi-Tawi, Chairman Amilhussin Abduraup says the grassroots approach has greatly strengthened the capability of the Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative. After the INDISCO project support was phased out, the group remained very active with the support of the local government. In fact, Abduraup sits in both the municipal and provincial development councils.

In a tiny Aeta village in Botolan, Zambales, community leader Yolly Abrigo of the Samahang Katutubo ng Masikap remembers the time when outsiders looked down on them. Villagers who worked as hired laborers in neighboring farms often got and spent their pay in advance. People then called Masikap village “pahimala” or a place that is just waiting for miracles to happen and blessings to rain down on them. Barely a year after the INDISCO project started however, village life has improved considerably. Residents say their houses no longer look like pigpens and families are not too deeply in debt anymore. “We now pay cash on delivery,” a local joke goes. They have learned to budget their money wisely and save for unexpected expenses like hospitalization.

“ILO-INDISCO’s method is good because it provides direct facilitative assistance. We are the ones who think, plan, and implement the project,” says Abrigo. The alternative approach has changed the attitude of members, who no longer just think of themselves but the welfare of the entire village as well. They have also begun to think of the future of their children, whom they want to raise as socially responsible citizens. At the same time, the Aeta villagers are conscious that the INDISCO project will not last forever and they have to learn to stand on their own to ensure continuing economic development for the community.



CHANGING LIVES

An INDISCO staff says the concept presents a better approach compared to other projects for indigenous communities that can sometimes be manipulative. “If people can manage their own project, that’s the best way to sustain it,” he says. The program did not just leave material equipment and funds for loans, but also a lot of skills training for personal and collective growth so that communities can be given a chance to try and chart their own development.

The pilot projects under the INDISCO programme have been funded by a group of donors including the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Netherlands Government, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), the Rabobank Foundation, the United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV) and the Philippine Association International (API).

Twelve communities with a combined population of more or less 90,000 people, about half of them women, have benefited directly or indirectly from these projects. An estimated 2,500 jobs in agriculture, traditional handicraft, fishery, weaving, and community services were initially created. As a result of the new revenue-generating activities, the income levels of partner communities have increased by an average of 44%. Literacy rate has also risen by 50% due to intensive functional literacy training in local languages. More importantly, these communities were able to strengthen their indigenous institutions and reinforce the foundations of their individual and collective self-reliance.

Ever sensitive to the indigenous peoples’ distinct cultural values and general preferences, the INDISCO programme has followed an integrated approach focused on six major areas: institution building, capability building, preservation and promotion of indigenous culture, income and employment generation, natural resources conservation and environmental protection, and gender awareness.

Each of the six components will be discussed at length in this section, which explores the impact of the project on partner communities.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

LEARNING HOW TO FISH

For most, if not all, of the partner community members, earning a living through employment and income generation activities supported by the INDISCO program was a paramount concern. Poverty is a major problem in their towns and villages, so it is understandable that the livelihood aspect of the programme was a welcome development for them. Statistics compiled by the national INDISCO coordinating team show that as of December, 2000 after an average three-and-a-half (3.5) years of implementation, the partner communities were able to achieve a modest increase in income among direct beneficiaries and create a number of job opportunities with the help of the programme.

PARTNER COMMUNITY	LOCATION	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION	% INCREASE IN INCOME OF BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES CREATED
Indigenous women migrants	San Carlos Heights & Quirino Hill, Baguio City	Baguio City Indigenous Women's Council	70%	250
Tau-Buid Community	Balani, Sablayan, Occ. Mindoro	Balani Multi-Purpose Cooperative	50%	235
Tau-Buid Community	Balangabong, Calintaan, Occ. Mindoro	Samahang Tau-Buid sa Balangabong Multi-Purpose Cooperative	75%	264
Aeta Community	Masikap Village, Botolan, Zambales	Samahang Katutubong Masikap	35%	57
Sama (Muslim) Community	Bakong & Panglima Mastul Simunul, Tawi-Tawii	Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative	75%	1,230
Maranao, Maguindanao % Teduray Communities	Tugaya & Dayawan, Lanao del Sur; Sultan Kudarat & Upi, Maguindanao	TBMPC; DWLWA; SKWLWA and KMPC	45%	465
Tagakaolo-B'laan Communities	Malungon, Sarangani	Malungon Tribal Congress	55%	620
Matigsalog-Manobo Communities	Kitaotao, Bukidnon	Federation of Matigsalog-Manobo Tribal Councils	60%	675
Kankanaey-Bago Communities	Bakun, Benguet	Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization	65%	742

REFERENCE: A Summary Profile of INDISCO Pilot Projects in the Philippines (As of Dec. 2000)

CHANGING LIVES

The main window of opportunity for income and employment generation opened to community members was the Revolving Loan Fund. This is the central mechanism for providing assistance to groups and individuals for their livelihood activities. Each partner community was responsible for localizing the application of its own RLF, which is why the success rate of the fund varies widely. Together with skills training on a particular trade the tribal groups wanted to pursue, plus appropriate equipment bought from project funds, members who availed of the loans and used the money wisely managed to improve their economic status.

Examples of achievements in the 12 pilot sites follow:

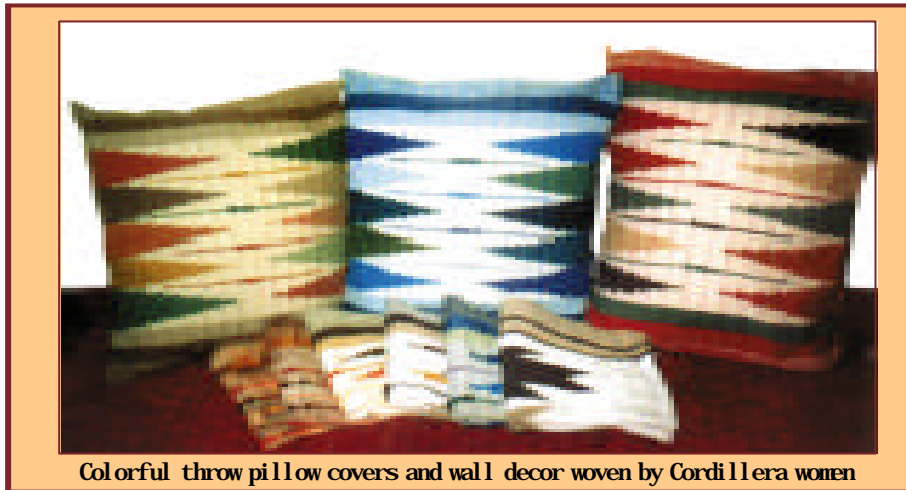
BAGUIO CITY - Before the INDISCO project was introduced, there was only one organization of weavers whose members were mostly the laborers of those who owned a loom and had money to buy thread. Their main community is located in Quirino Hill, a muddy settlement in the less affluent section of this popular resort city. Now there are five of these organizations.

The partner community organization of INDISCO is the Baguio City Indigenous Women's Council. It is presently composed of five organizations of weavers who make blankets, wall decor, and kit bags as well as two associations of ambulant vendors who sell fruits, vegetables and rice. During the peak season, a pair of weavers can produce 16 double blankets in one day, with each one earning an average of P560 for 12 hours' work. During the lean season however, each weaver can only get P80 or below per day, unless there are big orders or if there's a trade fair. To augment their income, both weavers and vendors help plant vegetables in the numerous farms along Halsema Road from June to September, when there are few tourists.

With funds from the programme, weavers bought looms and sewing machines for the common use of members. They conducted skills exchange between communities on sewing, knitting, and making designs. Project manager Geraldine Cacho says the group has attained the socio-economic target of the project, considering the visible improvement in the lives of its members. Agnes Damaso, chairwoman of the San Carlos Heights women weavers' association, has built a roomy two-storey house and set up a sari-sari store during the three-year project. A former contract worker in Singapore, Damaso audits and manages the livelihood project for her association and also hires weavers from the community.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE



In Quirino Hill, where some members of the partner community live, the sewing machine and zigzag machine were placed in the more accessible house of chairwoman Cristy Guineden's mother, who has spruced up the place and bought home appliances with earnings from the project. The local association hired two workers to sew the school uniforms of elementary students in the barangay. Cacho says many women in Quirino Hill have reaped benefits from weaving as a result of the INDISCO programme, with their houses now all in concrete. In Guineden's house, members can use three single looms for making wall decor and rugs in an outdoor shed. Dyed fiber is used for a type of weaving called ikat to show the beauty of the design, which is outlined on a sheet of plastic. Their selling price for a large wall hanging measuring 48 inches is P450, but when it reaches the public market, the price jumps to P1000. Although the women still weave traditional designs, there is increasing pressure to put commercial touches such as the name of the city to add value to the product.

BAKUN, BENGUET - Vegetable farmers belonging to the Kankanaey and Bago peoples in Bakun, the local partner community, gained the most from the livelihood component of the project. Members used their loans from the RLF to pay for additional labor and buy farm inputs like fertilizer and seeds for leafy vegetables. Among their cash crops are string beans, cucumber, and a variety of legumes. They also plant upland rice, lima beans, and ginger for home consumption.



CHANGING LIVES

Post-harvest facilities and equipment bought from project funds such as the rice mill in Kayapa village, thresher in the poblacion, and hand tractor in barangay Bago have inspired more farmers to go into rice and coffee production which has a higher value. The equipment is entrusted to local associations, which charge a certain amount from villagers for their use. The association remits the funds used to buy the equipment to the overall community organization called the Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization (BITO); excess funds go to the local village association for expenses such as wages of the machine operator. BITO also has a jeepney for hire that is described as a “four-wheel drive to any point of Bakun.” The old logging road serves as the main artery for the municipality. The jeep that is used for hauling vegetables also generates a considerable amount of income for BITO that will help make it self-reliant.

Two years into the INDISCO programme, the BITO has identified a series of training needs as suggested by the community members such as salabat making in areas with plenty of ginger; sewing in villages where there are no tailors; and tilapia and carp fingerling production in backyard ponds, with assistance from the Benguet State University, to supply the iodine and protein needs of inland communities in and around Bakun.

The community, through the BITO, has also put up a coffee nursery to supply seedlings for clan-owned tree farms. Coffee can be inter-cropped with a fast-growing

In the village of Dalipey, BITO built a trail line used to transport vegetables up the road and fertilizer down to the farm. The 1-kilometer monorail can carry 200 kilos on a 40-kilo “bucket” which is actually a rectangular metal case. A motorized pulley using cable and nylon gets the load up and down, an innovation relying on local technology. Located at the back of an abandoned health center, the main part of the contraption consists of a motor and a “driver’s seat,” much like a vehicle minus the body and the wheels, that runs the pulley. It has resulted in savings of 60% in labor costs and cut by 70% the time spent in hauling. Before, it used to take 15 people to carry a day’s load for 12 hours up or down the two ridges. With the trail line, it only takes three hours and farmers pay a minimal amount for every kilo carried in the sack.



A CABLE CAR FOR VEGETABLES

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

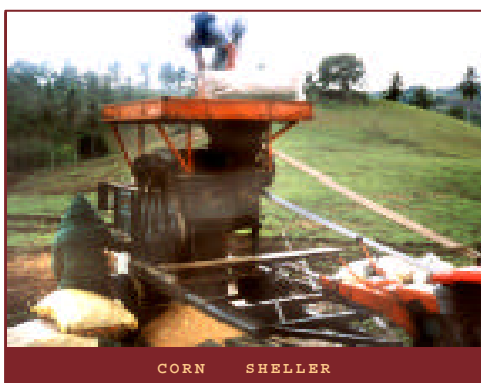
and nitrogen-fixing tree called *alnos*, which has sucker roots and leaves that are good for mulch when they fall. There are also plans to go into coffee processing as production of the crop increases.

It is difficult to quantify increase in income as farmers fear they might be called boastful so they simply say, “*tama lang*” or just-enough, says project manager Amos Beta-a. There were noticeably many new vehicles among vegetable farmers though. Laborers are hired from as far as Region 1 and paid P100 a day plus food and lodging

The community recently put up a new cooperative which, Beta-a says, would serve as the business arm of BITO. Each activity has a savings account so all expenses and earnings are recorded, although financial management is centralized.

KITAOTAO, BUKIDNON - In barangay East Dalurong, 160 Matigsalog-Manobo families welcomed the arrival of a new corn sheller in 1999. Each farmer pays a rent of P2 per can of milled corn. Project manager Cosme Lambayon says the site was chosen because of its high volume of corn production. The corn is sold at the Pontian market in nearby Quezon town. So far, the council has netted P5, 000 from the corn sheller. Half of the revenues go to the local council, a quarter to the federation, and the rest is spent for fuel and maintenance of the facility. The local council believes it can maintain the corn sheller by itself once INDISCO project support is phased out because it has prepared adequately for that eventuality. Lambayon adds that the community organization, the Federation of Matigsalog-Manobo Tribal Councils (FEMMATRICs), is ready to assist the local council if there is a major problem with the machinery.

The corn sheller has resulted in huge savings for local farmers, who can harvest their main crop two to three times a year. They no longer have to haul unhusked corn to Pontian, which costs about P20 for three sacks. Since the project is still new, they have no estimates on increased income yet. The corn sheller can be pulled by carabao to



CHANGING LIVES

other areas. It can remove the kernels from the husk at a rate of 100 sacks per hour. The tribal council has a first come, first serve policy and no special treatment is given to any group of farmers. The sheller covers about 8,000 hectares of land in two barangays planted with corn. Other plants in the area are mongo, beans, and leafy vegetables.

Another project is a fishpond in barangay Sinuda stocked with tilapia and carp. It consists of two adjoining fishponds in a swampy area at the foot of a hill. Water flows freely from a creek upstream into the dammed pond and out to a canal. Ducks in the pond eat the snails. The owner is a member of the community organization who paid for all the costs, including the P4,000 needed to carve the pond. The fish are fed various grains; one sack of 50 kilos that costs P150 is enough for a week. Caretaker Edward Carmen has planted a nice garden with colorful flowers and small pine trees in front of the house. His daily routine is feeding the fish twice a day and tending the corn farm in front. The pond requires very low maintenance, except when he has to raise the fence during heavy rains to keep the fish from jumping out. The community organization provided 1,000 fingerlings for the pond that was set up in December 1999. They expect to start harvesting an estimated 150 kilos of tilapia, which costs about P45 per kilo, in October 2000. The community organization will soon get fingerlings from the pond for distribution to other areas. So far, four ponds have been established. Lambayon says the pond is the result of an information drive for the livelihood component of the project.

CALINTAAN/SABLAYAN, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO -The Tau Buid community of Mangyans in Balangabong village joined training activities on duck raising and tilapia culture; handicraft making (nito plates, bamboo hats and bags) with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority; sloping agricultural land technology and production of bananas, rice, corn, and ginger with the Department of Agriculture; cooperative operations for new members; small engine repair and maintenance; and RLF management, among others. Project manager Noli Hablo said the women specifically appreciated the training on dressmaking as trainer Milagros Montoya used the Tau Buid language so she was easily understood.

The community organization, the Samahang Tau-Buid Sa Balangabong Multi-Purpose Cooperative, based in sitio Balangabong has presently 67 families as members. Their main livelihood is planting rice in swidden farms, ube, kamote,



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE



An agricultural extension worker explains swidden farming techniques in Balani, Occidental Mindoro

banana for food and for sale, mungo beans, and corn. They said the project has helped them tremendously with their livelihood. Their level of knowledge on agricultural tech-

nology has increased, along with their banana production. They have more plants now as a result of the skills training activities, according to members.

In Balani, the community members, through the Balani Multi-Purpose Cooperative, used project funds for planting more bananas and putting up small community irrigation systems for rice fields. They also make baskets from rattan, which they sell within the community for P50, although rattan is getting scarcer now. With loans, they have planted 400 banana trees and had some training on improved rice production with the Department of Agriculture (DA) which enabled them to increase rice production by 1/3 from pre-project status. Many have prepared their own paddies. To complement the assistance provided by the INDISCO programme, they have also received assistance from concerned government agencies, such as the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) which provided P200,000 worth of equipment, including carabao and plow, to other community members who did not yet receive direct assistance under the INDISCO programme. The Mangyan Tribal Church Association also gave a water system to the barangay in addition to one that was provided by the former Office for Southern Cultural Communities (now NCIP).

SIMUNUL, TAWI-TAWI - Whenever they need money for livelihood projects, the people of barangay Bakong in Simunul jokingly refer to the Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative as the Land Bank, where the group deposits its funds. The two local



CHANGING LIVES

users, who charge exorbitant interest rates, are named after the two other banks operating in the province.

Seaweed farming is a major industry in Simunul, covering 339 hectares of shallow foreshore areas on the islands' fringes and producing 100 tons per hectare in 1998. Cassava covered 200 hectares while vegetables were planted to eight hectares. Although seaweed farming was introduced in the 1970s, the industry suffered a slump due to prices that went as low as 20 cents per kilo of dried seaweed. The islanders shifted to catching of sharks and flying fish, which is abundant from October to January. The industry was revived in 1997 when two barangays in the island, Bakong and Panglima Mastul, received funding from the INDISCO programme.

Amilhussin Abduraup, president of the Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative, said the project was meant mainly for fishers who lived a hand-to-mouth existence and had no money for health and education. The cooperative, with an initial membership of 60, was formed by the partner community in 1996 with facilitative assistance from INDISCO, initially extended through the Magbassa Kita Foundation.

Among the individual livelihood projects assisted by INDISCO was the seaweed farm of Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator Abdulmuffi Madlias. He used his P5,000 initial loan to buy seedlings and nylon. Instead of paying laborers, they arranged to share in the harvest. After nine months, their harvest was worth P10,000 and he managed to pay the loan in one year. The borrowers also include a vegetable vendor in a Bongao market and the owner of a small sari-sari store in

VILLAGE LIGHTS

Together with another resident, Panglima Mastul barangay chairman Ismael Abdulhanid got a P10,000 loan from the INDISCO project to buy a 45 HP generator for the barangay two years ago. The barangay has 150 houses with about two to three families each. They pay a flat rate of P35 for 10 watts and P50 for 20 watts every month, compared to P50 and P70 in other places where generators are privately-owned. Electricity is turned on four to five hours a night, extending to 12 hours upon the request of some individuals. The revenue is enough to pay for the loan and the operations of the generator, including the fees for an operator. Abdulhanid, who is also treasurer of KLMPK, says it has stimulated economic activities in the village. Even those who have private generators sometimes connect to the community generator because the equipment is repaired at once if it breaks down. Barangay officials say the generator has improved the grades of pupils since they can now study in their lessons better. They also claim tongue-in-cheek, that the availability of electricity in the evening has also lowered the population growth.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

Bakong that has since been expanded. Barangay chairman Amilbick Mohammad Sha of Mongkai, who built a fishpen for abalone, was the first one to pay his loan of P110,000 to the Land Bank when the cooperative got a bigger amount after full repayment of the RLF.

SULTAN KUDARAT, MAGUINDANAO - Before the INDISCO programme, Hajji Siitie Sanggacala says there was limited production of native *malong* (wrap) and *tubao* (scarf) in her village, with about 20 old women still weaving the colorful cloth. She heads the Women Loom Weavers Association in the municipality, which had 72 members in seven barangays during Phase 1 of the programme. The number increased to 150 weavers in 17 barangays under Phase 2. Girls as young as 12 years old, once they can reach the loom, help in the weaving process. A weaver can finish up to 12 pieces of tubao in one day and a malong in three days.

The weavers estimate that their income doubled since the INDISCO programme came in. With new equipment such as sewing machines and looms, they were able to diversify their product line to include bags and slippers that are sold in nearby towns and cities. They also created new designs, such as one called Mutya ng Cotabato because it was used by the winner of a local beauty contest.

Although they have been weaving for a long time, it is the first time for the women to receive assistance and become formally organized. The project also helped give livelihood to jobless ones and residents have become more industrious because they know that they can earn a lot from this kind of work.

UPI, MAGUINDANAO - The Teduray who are members of the Kuminamar Multi-Purpose Cooperative make woven products out of nito, a wild vine that grows abundantly near trees or grasslands. It is combined with a kind of bamboo called nanap to make products like the *tampipi* (traveling basket), picnic basket, *bilao* (winnowing tray), clutch bags, food cover, hat, and plant containers.

The tribe still uses traditional designs such as the familiar diamond shape. A nito flower basket sold at P35 in the village can fetch P70 in the market. A large clothes basket costs P300. They have no estimate of earnings yet, but cooperative chairman Datu Lab Sinsuat says the group cannot keep up with the orders due to security and logistical problems in the Cotabato area and surrounding communities.

Before the INDISCO programme was introduced, basket weaving had become



CHANGING LIVES



a dying industry in the village. The Teduray tended their farms during the day and made nito baskets only in the evening. With the project, they began producing in large volumes if there's an order. Among the

equipment they received from INDISCO were a generator, sprayer for varnish, machetes, and knives. Sinsuat says the project had a positive impact in terms of encouraging the tribe to make traditional crafts again.

TUGAYA/MARANTAO, LANA DEL SUR - The Tugaya Brassware Makers Multi-Purpose Cooperative and the Dayawan Women Loom Weavers Association share a display center in Marawi City, near their villages. Both groups say there is a big difference in their life with the INDISCO programme. Before, their production was slow and they lacked capital. Now, they have additional income, new property, and youth involvement in the handicraft industry.

In Tugaya, all the products are sold to the cooperative and members get a percentage out of every product they make. Some members have been able to build concrete houses because of their higher income. Dayawan has been known for excellent weaving since the time of the Spanish colonizers, but it is only now that the income of the women has improved a lot. Their operations are sustained and both men and women derive an income from the activity. Some have built their own homes already, unlike before when five families would share one house.

MALUNGON, SARANGANI - The Tagakaolo and B'laan communities in Malungon used to look at grants as dole-out so the money easily ran out and they became lazy, local leaders say. With the help of the INDISCO programme, extended through the community organization known as the Malungon Tribal Congress (MALTRICO), the community members became more responsible and have learned to look at the long-term and sustainable impact of livelihood activities.



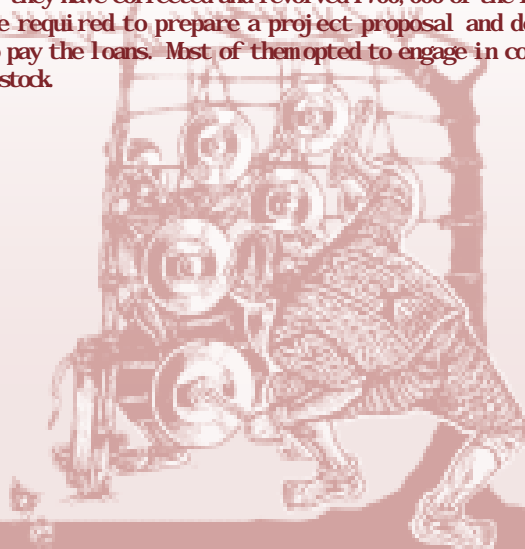
WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

Members applied the skills they received in training on goat and swine raising, poultry, corn production, basketry, tribal dressmaking, handicraft, setting up fruit tree nurseries, and family-based tree planting. Farm inputs, tools, and equipment that include three portable corn shellers, two water pumps, two solar dryers, and a delivery truck have provided benefits to local farmers.

The community members, through their organization, decided to utilize some of the proceeds from the revolving loan fund to buy a Tamaraw FX vehicle for passenger use. Income from the operation of the vehicles was used to purchase a lot worth P64,000 where a MALTRICO building worth P350,000 was built last year.

GONGS FOR LOANS: HOW THE FARMERS OF MALUNGON BORROW MONEY

In the hilly town of Malungon, a borrower does not need a piece of land to avail of loans from Maltrico. When the organization decided to release its P1.8 million Revolving Loan Fund to members, the word of honor of the tribal chief was enough collateral for those who did not own any property. "That's one of the ways in which we are promoting indigenous practices," project manager Arman Guile says. Gongs that are used in tribal rituals could also be used, adding a distinctly indigenous application to their implementation of the project. Of course, some of the 320 borrowers also presented their tax declarations, horses and carabaos as collateral. The borrowers were divided into 44 selda with seven to 25 people each. Selda leaders were placed in charge of collecting payments for the loans ranging from P25,000 to P50,000 per cell. The group charges 2% interest per month. So far, they have collected and revolved P700,000 of the loans, Guile says. Borrowers are required to prepare a project proposal and demonstrate their capability to pay the loans. Most of them opted to engage in corn production and raising of livestock.

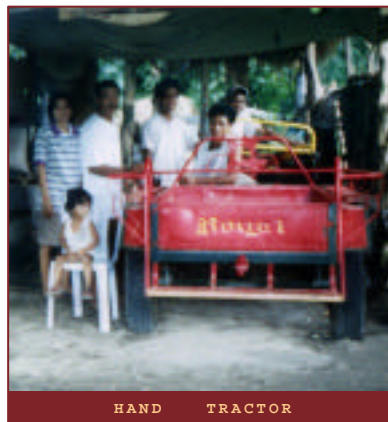


CHANGING LIVES

The building is now used as an office and storage facility for the produce of community members.

BOTOLAN, ZAMBALES - Most of the Aeta community members living in Masikap Village, in the municipality of Botolan, work as hired laborers for farms owned by settlers whom they call “unat” (having straight hair) in contrast to their own signature curly hair. They get P60 a day plus food to plow the field and harvest the crops. They also gather cogon and bamboo to sell as housing materials. When the rainy season arrives, many are out of work, which is why many kids cannot finish school. To augment their income, they maintain swidden farms in the uplands.

When the INDISCO programme was implemented, community members were able to initiate their own livelihood activities, including the buying and selling of consumer goods, palay trading, and farming. Through their community organization, called the Samahang Katutubo Ng Masikap, they recently rented a farmland for communal rice cultivation. Women made use of five sewing machines bought under



the project to make blouses, shorts, and pants that they sell in the neighborhood. Members give a certain percentage to the community organization, which has earned P10,000 so far from the equipment. The income is reported in the monthly meetings. The organization also bought supplies and equipment, and provided electricity for their tiny office. They likewise acquired two *carabaos* (water buffalo) and a *kuliglig* (hand tractor) which is rented out at P60 for every 100 square meters of land cultivated.

In the near future, the community members hope to generate funds for the purchase of a rice thresher, and land for rice and vegetable production.

THE MUSIC OF THE FISH

In the island of Simunul, the Sama fishers still go shark fishing with a hook and line, using pandan leaf or wood fashioned to resemble fish as their only bait. They



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

also have a unique way of calling the creatures of the sea, a practice they call “music of the fish” which may include slapping the surface of the water with one’s hands to the use of contraptions that can mimic ocean tunes. Such traditions have survived the passing of time, and Kasi-Lasa project manager Ismael Asakil has documented them. Through the INDISCO programme, he says members have renewed their appreciation for indigenous traditions. Since many of the officers are college-educated however, they are increasingly on the lookout for rational explanations and trying to reconcile traditional practices with scientifically proven techniques.

Indeed, even as much of the urban areas are steeped in the age of MTV and the Internet, many indigenous peoples remain untouched by modernity. But in places where the influence of Western countries has steadily crept its way toward the larger society, pockets of tribal communities are doing what they can to make their indigenous culture survive, not just as museum pieces but as living and continuing traditions in their villages. Many of the pilot sites for the INDISCO programme have done just that, through the component on the promotion of indigenous knowledge, systems and practices.

Modest gains have been made in this respect. In many communities, the project has resulted in renewed pride and identification with their ethnic roots, and in stimulating local interest to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems and practices in the community development process.

In Baguio City, where many Igorot children have a vague understanding of their roots, the Indigenous Women’s Council held a training for the youth on traditional songs and dances. They consider the Basic Cordillera Arts workshop a major breakthrough in giving the younger members of their communities a better appreciation of the mountain tribes’ colorful culture. In recent years, they have also been performing the traditional *saliddumay* during assemblies, ensuring that the ritual will not be forgotten.

For the Aetas in Botolan, living in the mixed settlement of Masikap Village for 30 years has definitely posed dangers to the erosion of their indigenous culture. The village is a 10-minute tricycle ride from the bustling town center of Botolan. There are several kinds of Aeta in the community: the *abelen* or fair-skinned ones,



CHANGING LIVES

lunay or those with straight hair, and the more well-known *kulot* or kinky-haired people. Despite the influx of Christian missionaries to their town, the community has managed to retain many of its tribal ways. Tribal chieftain Basilio Juliano still knows the songs and dances of the Aeta and performs them for visitors. These performances are also done for occasions like birthdays or graduation. When somebody is sick, a healer called *mangananito* dances around a chicken and tries to hit it with a spear. If the dancer misses, the patient will die. They make offerings such as chicken, pig, wine, cigarettes, water and rice to the spirits for a good harvest. In the mountains, those who practice swidden farming perform a ritual called *gahak*. Residents still speak the indigenous language called *sambali*.

In the municipality of Bakun, the council of elders has revived its tribal justice system called *tong-tong*. Seven cases have been solved since the practice was re-instituted in 1998, when the tribe was awarded its ancestral domain claim. Disputes are usually decided within half a day, with each side allowed to talk freely until an issue is resolved. After the session, the defendant is obliged to feed the entire village where the case is heard.

One of the cases resolved was an illegal fishing case involving the use of sodium cyanide by employees of a local mining firm. Obsessed with a get-rich-quick mentality, the outsiders wanted to get a bountiful catch of eel and shellfish in the Bakun river in the shortest time possible. The offenders paid the cost of two carabaos that died from the poisoning incident.

The latest application of tribal justice occurred in barangay Gambang, where one mining company wanted to start a gold mine and hired influential leaders as supervisors. Villagers were concerned about the lack of information on the proposed mining project, so the BITO called all parties to a hearing. The negotiations took one year until 1998, with local farmers saying “we also have gold — green gold” referring to their vegetable farms. In the end, the community rejected the project because they will lose their water source if gold mining is done in the lower part of the village. They refused to barter water with gold.

In the island of Occidental Mindoro, there are seven Mangyan tribes, one of them the Tau Buid (literally People of the Forest) which has two villages that are partners in the INDISCO programme. One of its oldest residents, Fermin Estilloso,



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

and other senior members of the community gave a lecture on land tenure, society, economy and politics of the tribe.

They have continued making traditional designs such as *bilao* made from bamboo and the *buyog*, a basket receptacle for banana and rice made of rattan with tree bark for handles. Some elders can still hum the traditional lullaby. But in the village of Balani, many changes have happened to their culture due to the influence of missionaries. For instance, they no longer slaughter a pig to cure the sick, although they still use herbal medicine. Swidden farming has been modified in places where irrigation was introduced.

In the municipality of Kitaotao in Bukidnon, the tribal leaders of FEMMATRICS are actively engaged in the preservation of their culture. There are 300 recognized Bai and Datu, female and male tribal chieftains, who are anointed by the communities where they belong. Many of them still wear traditional clothes, with red a dominant color, and bead necklaces. Local farmers still practice rituals such as the *panubad*, *sungod te kamanga*, *lagti*, *samit*, and *panalabogta* with their children. Parents are passing on their knowledge of these rituals to their children. Anthropologists in provincial and Manila-based universities have documented various aspects of their culture, which are taught to the youth in both formal and informal settings. Project manager Cosme Lambayon was happy to report that a Matigsalog couple even went to Australia and Sweden to perform Matigsalog-Manobo songs and dances. On the last week of November 2000, a children's indigenous art festival was held in Sinuda, homebase of the organization.

In the southern province of Sarangani, the Malungon Tribal Congress is looking at ways to integrate new technology with their indigenous knowledge. They are evaluating what practices to retain and what to throw out. Among the practices that they think should be minimized is swidden farming, not because their method is destructive but due to the increase in population and shrinking portion of land that they can use, as they cannot have fallow periods anymore. They also think the practice allowing men to have more than one wife should no longer be encouraged. The practices they want to retain are pride in their identity as an indigenous people, respect for ancestors, teaching local language to their children, intercropping in the farms as opposed to monocropping that was introduced to the area, protection of



MANOBO SONGS AND DANCES

While lunch was being prepared, four Manobo ladies performed native songs and dances for the visitors to the village of East Dalurong. A woman played the *saluray*, a bamboo string instrument, while others took turns at a percussion-like instrument made of two sticks tapped on a bamboo cylinder. They sang an old song about not wanting to go back to the difficulties of the past, and the pain of thinking the world will end and they are still poor. In the *pukyutan* dance, they pretended to get honey from an imaginary beehive and shared it among themselves. In the *pig-agawan* dance, a group of women flirted and vied for the attention of one man. The *babagsil* dance mimics the motions of a bird hopping in the river, with the women swaying their hips vigorously. In the *kalaw* dance, the performers imitate a hornbill feeding worms to her young chick, represented by a dancer holding a musical instrument.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

sacred areas by traditional tribal chieftains, and wearing of tribal attire during special occasions. The Tagakaolo and B'laan communities are striving to achieve food security through the promotion of their indigenous knowledge. They also want to continue making ethnic handicraft such as wooden utility vessels, embroidery, and beadwork. But the entry of plastic household items has affected their production.

NATURE'S STEWARDS

There is a belief among the Kankanaey in Bakun that wherever one of its native sons or daughters may go, they all return to the place where their umbilical cord is buried. In other towns in the Cordillera, young people who leave for the big city abandon their inherited land, but they often come back when they grow old.

With the INDISCO programme, which stresses protection of the environment and conservation of natural resources as one of its concerns, partner communities have been able to reaffirm their deep attachment to the land and the natural environment. Analysing their particular conditions and traditions, they have planned and implemented various activities that are appropriate to their locality.

In Bakun, each clan owns a forest or tree farm called *muyong*. Aside from trees, a *muyong* may be planted to a variety of plants and crops. In certain areas, goats and cows serve as “volunteer workers” that help trim the grass and weeds in the tree farm. Crisscrossing furrows on the mountainside indicate that it's a grazing area for cows or goats. Each animal has a territory and they never mix. Owners practice controlled burning with fire breaks when clearing their *muyong*, which has an average size of five hectares. Clan members get equal share from the proceeds of the *muyong*, such as sales from pine timber harvested in the farm. Timber harvest is usually sold to residents in the ancestral domain for the construction of houses and public buildings. With the granting of the CADC, *muyong* owners no longer have to go to the DENR to get a permit for cutting trees in the exercise of their traditional use rights. They only get a barangay permit and coordinate with the local police, for a fee of P30, to cut a tree. The maximum timber harvest allowed in one year is 2,400 board feet.

One of their projects, which has environmental significance, is a seed potato storage building intended to preserve genetic strains. Cuttings from first to third



CHANGING LIVES

In Bakun, each clan owns a tree farm or forest called *muyong*. It is planted to a variety of crops, aside from trees. Clan members get equal share from the sales of products, such as pine timber, harvested in the tree farm



generation are planted in the same area to maintain quality. They say it's better if seeds from higher elevations are planted in lower slopes.

Before, only the forest guards of logging concessionaires protected the area. Local villagers used to say it's the responsibility of the government to guard the forest. Therefore, they often found it difficult to cooperate specially when they are displeased with the DENR. There were even times when they deliberately started forest fires when they got angry at the DENR, or to get mushrooms when it rains. With the INDISCO programme, the community became conscious once again of their stewardship role especially in protecting the *muyong* and the rivers. In their vegetable farms, they are seeking ways to lessen the use of pesticides with more environment-friendly strategies, such as controlling pesky leaf miners with greased cloth.

Among the strategies in their environment program are reforestation, tree nurseries, delineation of *muyong*, replanting of the forests within the ancestral domain, *Bantay Saguday* (protect your birthright), and erosion control. Recently, the management of forestlands within the ancestral domain previously covered by Timber License Agreement No. 143 of the Benguet Mining Company was restored by the DENR to the Kankanaey-Bago community in Bakun, through its community organization.

In Baguio City, the women vendors' association adopted the Buyog watershed adjacent to Quirino Hill and promised to protect it on the condition that they will not be driven away. They had suffered 21 demolitions before and wanted to secure



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

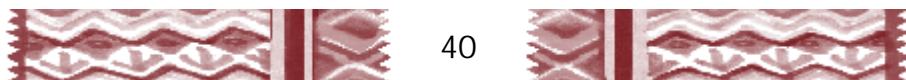
their tenure on their homelots, and protect the source of their water at the same time. The women are also encouraging the community to limit the use of rocks found in the area only for shoring up their homes on the hillsides. Women leaders remind their members that the mountain gods will be displeased if the indigenous people sell the rocks for profit.

For the Tagakaolo and B'laan people in Malungon, fishing in the rivers used to be important for home consumption. But irrigation use, siltation, and pollution have lessened the abundance of fish. Hunting with bow and arrow or spear was also widely practiced in the past, with 12 most sought after species listed in their ancestral domain plan. But deforestation and depletion of biodiversity in the forest has reduced their catch. Women used to gather root crops, edible ferns, and mushrooms to supplement diet. When rice is scarce, they gather a toxic yam from a wild vine called "bay" (it is fed to a cat first to test its safety) and use it as a substitute. Again, the use of pesticides has affected this food source. In the '80s, illegal logging was a serious problem, with huge trucks hauling out timber from the forest. The practice stopped in the '90s when the trees were gone.

When their CADC was granted, the tribal communities realized that they had a deeper responsibility for protecting their homeland. Community leaders now serving under the MALTRICO say the environmental awareness and nursery management training have helped to increase awareness among members about what they can do to rehabilitate their damaged ecosystems. Barangays are required to set up nurseries for forest trees and plant bamboo along the river banks. The group is also reforesting the area, with an initial target of 30 hectares.

In Mindoro, the Tau Buid have prepared seedlings of endemic trees such as malugay, narra, and guiyo to replace those cut by illegal loggers. Their lives are very much intertwined with their surroundings; for instance, the name of Balangabong village comes from a broad-leafed tree called Bongabong, which grows abundantly near springs and creeks. The chairman says they used to think the forest was inexhaustible but when people with chainsaws came, they realized that their livelihood, especially their swidden farms, was at risk.

The community in Balani village say carabao logging persists in the area. Members of the organization who consider themselves "civilized" complain that they have protected their part of the forest, but adjacent communities who live in higher sections of the mountain often fail to protect theirs against illegal loggers.



THE CHANGING LIVES

In the ancestral domain of the Matigsalog and Manobo people in Bukidnon, the community has formed forest protection teams who act on reports of illegal logging. One of their problems is that illegal loggers are bringing chainsaws and cutting trees in Buda, one of the barangays covered by the CADC. The council of elders has made policies for the protection of caves, waterfalls, and rivers. Project manager Cosme Lambayon says all the headwaters of major rivers are in Bukidnon so it is, in effect, the watershed of Mindanao. Nurseries are encouraged for the reforestation of denuded areas and the bayanihan system is practiced in planting trees. Five trees are planted for every tree felled.

In the municipality of Sultan Kudarat, environmental awareness is still at an initial stage. Many of the members live in low-lying areas near the river, so they are very much vulnerable to floods. They said the display center, where we held our interview, was waist-deep in floods during a recent heavy downpour. The weavers only realized lately that the floods they are experiencing were caused by deforestation of their watershed.

In the island of Simunul, two members of the community cooperative used to practice dynamite fishing with materials from Malaysia. But the chairman says the cooperative campaigned and went to the houses of illegal fishers until the practice was eradicated. Officers convinced the fishers to plant seaweed instead. The cooperative also coordinated with the municipal government for the planting of fruit trees in the farms of members.



Seaweed farmers in Simunul island in Tawi-Tawi have discovered an environment-friendly alternative to destructive practices such as dynamite fishing that used to be rampant in the area.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

In the Aeta community in Masikap, Botolan, members are becoming conscious about the need for better sanitation, especially toilets, to prevent diseases such as malaria and diarrhea.

ON THEIR OWN

The stories about failed projects in tribal areas are like familiar refrains from old songs. Government officials appoint tribal leaders who are not recognized by the local communities. Private organizations send “educated” project implementers who exploit tribal communities. Community organizers group together the “target beneficiaries” and organize them into short-lived associations.

A critical phase in the implementation of the INDISCO programme is the identification of culturally recognized indigenous tribal leaders and institutions. It is through them that the partner communities are able to implement specific projects. This phase was successfully accomplished by the community members themselves with facilitative and technical support from the INDISCO staff.*

Although some experiences were shaky at the start, the INDISCO programme has gradually transformed most of its partner communities into fairly strong organizations that have been able to continue the project after the financial assistance was phased-out. The tribal communities have reasserted their traditional leadership structures. Their testimonies bear witness to a process that allowed indigenous communities to become confident in their own abilities, build a sense of self-esteem, and enabled them to walk the development path on their own.

* It is interesting to note that INDISCO Philippines has a tiny programme coordination office and facilitation of project activities at ground level came mostly from a lean team of project managers and extension workers who are themselves members of the partner communities. Training and guidance for the project managers and extension workers came from a national coordinator. The arrangement is a far cry from many foreign-assisted projects where much of the funds are wasted on huge overhead costs and lavish purchase of office equipment.



CHANGING LIVES

There are now 12 established indigenous community organizations that correspond to the 12 pilot project sites, as follows:

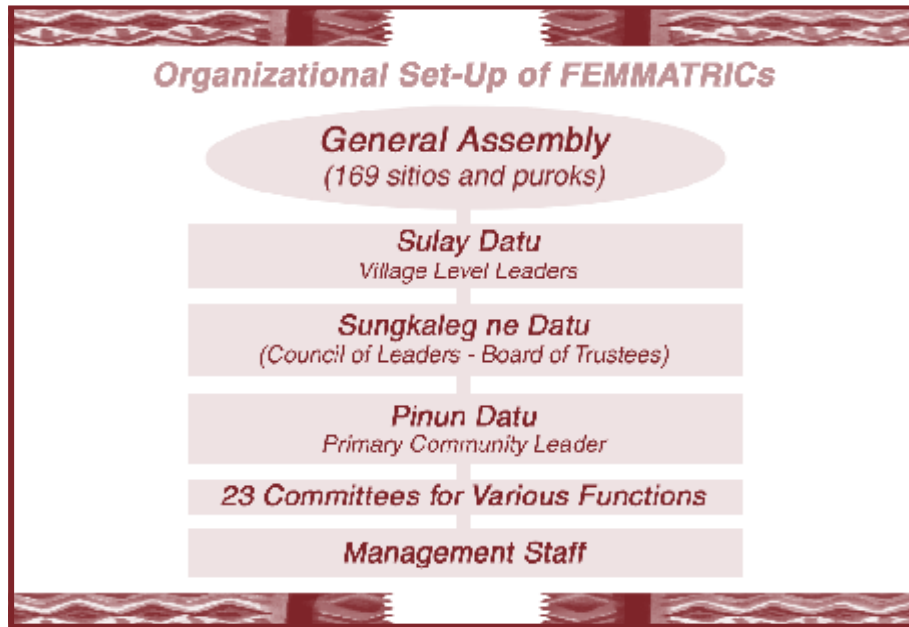
1. Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization (BITO) in Bakun, Benguet
2. Baguio City Indigenous Women's Council (BCIWC) in Baguio City
3. Samahang Katutubo ng Masikap (SKM) in Botolan, Zambales
4. Balani Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BMPC) in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro
5. Samahang Tau-Buid sa Balangabong Multi-Purpose Cooperative (STBMPC) in Calintaan, Occidental Mindoro
6. Sultan Kudarat Women Loom Weavers Association (SKWLWA) in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao
7. Kominamar Multi-Purpose Cooperative (KMPC) in Upi, Maguindanao
8. Dayawan Women Loom Weavers Association (DWLWA) in Marantao, Lanao del Sur
9. Tugaya Brassware Multi-Purpose Cooperative (TBMC) in Tugaya, Lanao del Sur
10. Federation of Manobo-Matigsalog Tribal Councils (FEMMATRICS) in Kitaotao, Bukidnon
11. Malungon Tribal Congress (MALTRICO) in Malungon, Sarangani
12. Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative (KLMPC) in Simunul, Tawi-Tawi

Each of these indigenous organizations has so far developed a reasonable level of capacity to facilitate community development activities and form meaningful partnership with concerned government agencies, non-government organizations, and the private sector.

Among the Matigsalog and Manobo in Kitaotao, Bukidnon, the consensus of people in a village determines whoever gets the esteemed rank of Bai or Datu, who are anointed as such because of leadership qualities. During my visit, I met Bai Laura Baluca who heads the tribal council in east Dalurong and Datu Marcelino Gumanon who provides the same function in west Dalurong. There is no conflict between regular barangay officials and the tribal chieftain in the community as many of the leaders belong to local government units as well. West Dalurong barangay chairman Fidel Saliño, for example, is also the treasurer of FEMMATRICS.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE



The community organization's president, Datu Lorenzo Gawilan, Jr. is the vice mayor of Kitaotao while project manager Cosme Lambayon is known as "first kagawad" for having garnered the most number of votes among municipal councilors during the last elections. Baluca says she prevents power struggles and works for better organizational development by having committees who are assigned various duties in the community. There is a strong sense of responsibility in fulfilling assignments and tasks within the organization, she adds.

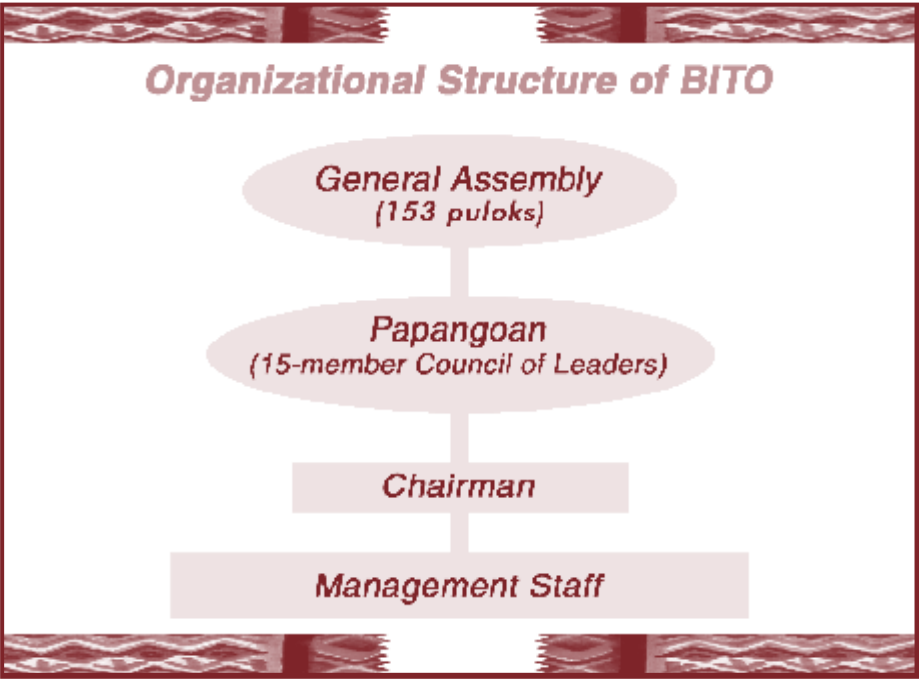
The Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) donated a former high school building to the federation in 1994, when it was formally organized. The office and training center have been here every since, in a hectare of land in the middle of a ricefield. It is located beside the former highway that was turned into an airstrip by the Marcos government after Datu Gawilan asked for the transfer of the road.

In the municipality of Bakun, there used to be a Kankanaey-Bago Association that was rather informal and was not recognized by the municipal government. With the INDISCO programme, members of both tribes formally organized the Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization. The programme's leadership and organizational

CHANGING LIVES

management training have strengthened BITO, which now has a defined set of officers and is recognized by the local government.

BITO chairman Tirso Bayawa, who is also the vice mayor of Bakun, says the council of elders does have debates about issues and problems. But he says, “we do not count that as a weakness but as a strength. With the exchange of ideas, a better idea may come out.” The community organization is half-way through its agreement with INDISCO for facilitative financial and technical support. Looking at the long-term future of the group, Bayawa says, “I am sure BITO will survive and continue to be strong but we might have to trim down the project staff without funding from outside.”



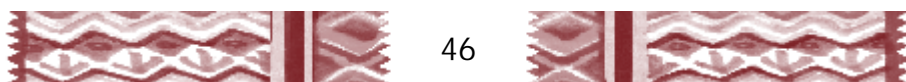
In the Malungon Tribal Congress, the group has divided its tasks among the Tagakaolo and the B’laan members of the community. MALTRICO chairman Datu Ramon Catala, project manager Datu Arman Guile and the three board members interviewed are Tagakaolo. Their treasurer Amelia Lasib and three women staff are B’laan.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

Before the project, most residents led a hand-to-mouth existence and did not want to get involved in community activities, Guile says. Government officials often have a low regard for the indigenous culture. They appointed tribal leaders who were not recognized by the local communities. (The Tagakaolo leader is called *Makabatog* or wiseman.) With the leadership training from INDISCO, traditional tribal leaders became aware of their rights and began to assert themselves. “They cannot underestimate us anymore,” Catala says, using the Cebuano language that is prevalent in the area.

The MALTRICO has an organizational structure similar to that of its counterpart in Bukidnon. It had 10 project staff at the start of the project (which is supposed to be seven but the staff agreed to contribute part of their salaries to accommodate three more). Now that regular financial assistance has ceased, the number was reduced to five, all serving as basically volunteers. They are given some allowances only when funds are available. “This project (management of the ancestral domain) is for us so we continue to be involved. That’s the beauty of having community members as staff. We don’t leave, whether we have salaries or not,” says one volunteer. They have been able to sustain the project using income generated from their equipment. The organization earns an average of P3,000 a month, which is used for meetings and other expenses. Guile still provides supervision but the council of leaders decides on its own and is not dependent on him, which he considers his biggest achievement. Communication among officers and members is smooth. There is a designated officer of the day who settles problems among members and attends to visitors. The staff says they have a higher self-esteem and have gained confidence in themselves.

Among the Tau Buid in Balangabong, Occ. Mindoro, members have learned to work together as a result of the training and the project has helped strengthen their community cooperative. “*Ang dating tulong ay nagising,*” (Those who used to be apathetic have become more aware), says the chairman. They believe they can sustain the project with the funds that they have, through the help of their staff. The group had a budget for two extension workers but since there was only one community member qualified, the 10-member board decided that part of the allocation be given as allowance to community leaders who do extension work and are responsible for a certain number of community members. The extension worker does the bookkeeping.



CHANGING LIVES

In the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the four organizations believe that the activities under Phase 2 will help them sustain the project after INDISCO financial assistance ceases. Among other things, they say the leadership factor and the collective sense of responsibility that members have will see them through. In the Kuminamar cooperative in Upi, most of the officers are elders and women who are respected in the community. Among the women loom weavers in Sultan Kudarat, project manager Reyzaldy Tan credits village animator Sainab Idtim for her vital assistance in facilitating discussions when problems arise. The women weavers are also quite vigilant and the officers do not dominate the group.

The community leaders in Tugaya and Dayawan in Lanao del Sur are also good in organizational management and they inspire everybody to participate, Tan says. There is less competition among the Tugaya brassware makers and they have developed good working relations, helping each other in making large products. The training on cooperative management made them aware of their duties and responsibilities as members. In Dayawan, there is less rivalry and better community relations among the weavers. Many have small display centers. They don't snub each other or "hide" their clients anymore, says Bai Deron. There is more pooling of resources and information. Among individuals, the women of Dayawan are not as egoistic as before and they respect the decisions of their officers, adds Deron. She says members are aware that INDISCO assistance will not be there forever. With the knowledge and equipment that they have, she believes they have strengthened their self-reliance and the projects will not collapse after INDISCO financial and technical support is phased out.

The Aeta community in Masikap village, Botolan, Zambales used to receive assistance from the Sta. Monica Foundation that had a child sponsorship program for the tribes with Japanese support. Looking back on those years, the community said they felt unhappy with the way they were treated by project officers who were high school graduates coming from outside. Villagers' lives did not improve, and only certain leaders benefited from the project. It has since ended, and community members learning from that experience became very careful in selecting the officers for the new community organization, Samahang Katutubo ng Masikap, organized under the INDISCO programme.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

Out of the 76 families in Masikap Village, 27 families are active in the organization. The others wanted to observe the organization first (the result of negative experiences in relation to community in the past), which just turned a year old in July 2000. There's a waiting list of members now. The organization has 14 officers including a 5-member council of leaders headed by energetic President Yolanda Abrigo. Their tribal chieftain, Basilio Juliano, is vice president. They used to have a Datu, Emilio Cabalig, but he withdrew to the foot of a mountain when he was defeated in a government-sponsored election for tribal leaders several years ago. The office of the association is in a refurbished day-care center, where they also do some sewing.

The training activities helped them assert themselves and become more mature in their outlook, Abrigo says. It helped that trainers spoke Sambali and Tagalog, not English. Members don't insist when they are wrong, and they are no longer shy about speaking out. "We discovered that we also had talents that we can share, says Abrigo. Most members only had elementary education, and their secretary is one of the few villagers who has taken a vocational course. Their lone staff is a student who resides in the village. Their lack of education was not a hindrance to their training and understanding of the Revolving Loan Fund though, since they themselves were asked to make their own regulations. They are starting to organize the out-of-school youth. Members are united and the officers don't plan anything without everyone's approval. They hold monthly meetings where decisions are discussed.

A WORLD OF MEN AND WOMEN

In a community where all traditional leaders are male, it helps that the tribal chairman keeps an open mind on the concept of gender awareness. This is one factor that made it easier for the Malungon Tribal Congress to recognize and respect the roles of men and women despite their male-dominated society. MALTRICO chairman Datu Catala says he doesn't think gender awareness contradicts their culture, citing the TV ad that says "*Kung kaya ni mister, kaya ni misis.*" (If the husband can do it, the wife can do it, too.) He says it's better for men and women to help each other. The staff says members are given a choice on maintaining traditional roles or changing them so that both sexes could share responsibilities in the household and the larger community. Gender awareness trainer Melanie Remulta also says their emphasis on gender awareness and development is partnership, meaning both



CHANGING LIVES

sexes have equal rights and choices. “If a woman wants to plow the field, why not? If a man wants to wash the dishes, why not? It doesn’t mean that women compete with men,” she says.

Of course, in terms of power relationships, it will still depend on their status in the community. For the Tagakaolo, decisions are usually made by men as the head of the family. Women’s subservience is attributed to mutual respect and caring, according to the baseline survey of the community. Although their society has evolved and male members of the council of leaders say they do not mind having a woman in the council, there are still no women tribal chieftains in accordance to indigenous tradition.

The group recognizes that they cannot change their culture but the concept of gender awareness is accepted. Before, women did not even talk during meetings and the system was not friendly to them, but they now participate in decision-making. When Chairman Catala joked that if women don’t do any good, they will go back to the old system, Remulta retorted that they will form their own organization.

Treasurer Amelia Lasib, whose husband volunteers as the project vehicle driver sometimes, says it was difficult for the men at first to accept that their wives would work outside as they were regarded mainly as housekeepers. Her husband says it took quite some period for adjustment especially now that the men are discouraged from having more than one wife. But he agreed that there is a need for women to get involved in politics, earn income, and be represented in all activities that affect their development.

In households where there are multiple wives, the adjustment is more complicated. Usually, it’s either the first wife or the latest wife who has the highest rank and is obliged to take care of the others if the husband dies. First wives cannot accept the notion of equal stature and rights with the other wives. Multiple wives were common up to the ‘70s but the practice has declined since then. Some migrants have exploited the practice with sham marriages through a tribal chieftain.

The Malungon Tribal Congress has combined gender awareness with livelihood projects for women such as backyard gardening, food processing, raising free-range chickens, setting up fishponds for tilapia, and getting access to potable water. Before, all the staff and board members were men. Now, they have one woman member of the council of leaders and a balanced number of men and women in the staff (three each). There are also plans to organize a Tribal Women’s Federation, says Remulta.



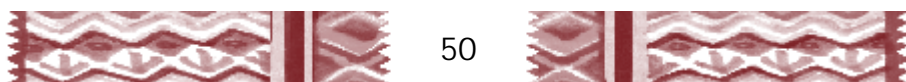
WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

In the municipality of Bakun, there was resistance to gender training at first due to their previous experience with another group that was feminist in orientation, the staff recalled. With INDISCO, the focus was on family relationships and gender roles i.e. it's not only men who decide in the house but also women. Although some changes have taken place i.e. two of the members of the Papangoan (council of elders) are women, the trainer says tribal rituals are sacred and there is no attempt to interfere with gender roles there. For example, women are not allowed in the traditional gathering place of Cordillera elders called *dap-ay*.

Among the changes that the group has observed in the community is the increasing load for males in domestic affairs. People are also beginning to realize such things as unequal pay for equal work e.g. P50 for women and P100 for men who tend vegetable farms. They are also aware that domestic abuse of women is happening, as reflected in police records, but this is not discussed openly among residents yet. One interesting data collected is that only 27% of the tax declarations are in the name of women while 62% are with men, possibly due to local practices involving inheritance i.e. eldest sons usually get most of the property.

For the FEMMATRICs in Bukidnon, the gender component does not conflict with the Matigsalog and Manobo cultures, and trainers have not received complaints from men. Some of the changes they have seen are men sharing in household duties like laundry and babysitting. With the previous Women in Development project however, there were lots of reactions because it simply focused on the upliftment of women. The INDISCO programme stressed that it is better if decisions are made both by men and women. Some resistance came from people like older tribal leaders who justified the practice of having doway (two wives), saying they need more help in entertaining visitors. Trainers put the pros and cons of the practice on the blackboard. For some tribal people, this is the only time that they realize such negative effects as having too many children who are not fed well and are unable to go to school. Some women also said it's painful for them to be just one of multiple partners. This happens only among elders in their 50s or 60s, with some of them having six wives at the most.

Since July 1999, ten women associations have been organized within the ancestral domain. One of their goals is to be represented in the board, which has only one





GENDER PROJECT IN BUKIDNON

The Tawas Gender Association, which has an initial 26 members, set up an agriculture supply store as its livelihood project. Tawas is a major trading center near Sinuda as it is the confluence of several villages. The store was set up last May through a loan of P50,000 (separate from RLF) with a 20% interest. It is payable with a monthly post-dated check covering the P4,166 principal plus 1.6% interest which diminishes in amount. The store serves Sinuda, Tawas, Buda and other surrounding barangays that are planted to corn, rice, and vegetables. It has eased the burden of farmers who used to go to Calinan in Davao City, more than an hour away, to buy fertilizer and other inputs. Members have a share capital from P100 to P5,000 and profit will be shared depending on their capital. Priority was given to those who attended the training. They will receive dividends one year after the loan is repaid, after which the proceeds will be used for other gender projects.

female member so far. Women have an equal say in making decisions during the general assembly though. The gender trainer also teaches high school students who enjoy the lessons.

In Mindoro, the Tau Buid women in Balangabong felt that they had no right to lead or make decisions before the INDISCO programme. Now, they can reprimand the men, avail of loans, help decide on community matters, and there's even one female sitio councilor.

In Simunul, two-thirds of the members now are women and they are given a role in decision-making, unlike before, project manager Ismael Asakil says. They



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

voice out opinions in monthly meetings, and two board members elected in '96 and '97 were women.

COUNTING THE FACE OF RIZAL

Life in the hinterlands has deprived many indigenous peoples, especially the older ones, of the opportunity to get a formal education. It certainly is no easy matter to walk for hours just to go to school. There's also the more pressing need to tend to the fields, resulting in elderly tribal people who can only identify money through the face of national hero Jose Rizal who is on the P1 coin. This is what happened in Bakun, where some vegetable farmers used to dislike trips to the market because they could not count well.

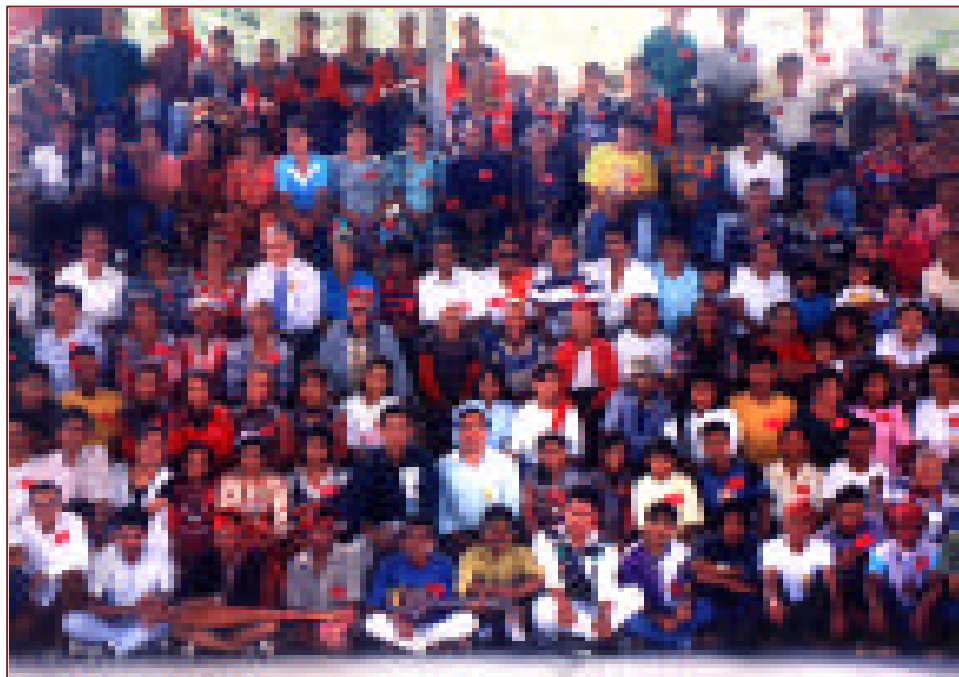
With the literacy program under INDISCO, the farmers are not just selling their produce with confidence, knowing that they can count the amounts correctly. Mothers have started sending letters to their children in school as well, according to the project staff. As of June 2000, 255 have completed the functional literacy classes in Bakun. Village animators teamed up with the Summer Institute of Linguistics in teaching local residents. There is a lot of demand for the classes, so it might not be long before BITO reaches its target of 500 graduates.

Learning how to read, write, and count has meant different things to different tribal communities. In the village of Balani in Occ. Mindoro where most of the Tau Buid Mangyan are Protestant, the literacy training helped them to read the Bible for their daily devotional services. In the villages of Dayawan and Tugaya in Lanao del Sur, the elderly Maguindanao learned to read, count, and sign their names in "English style" aside from the traditional Arabic script that they normally use. In the island of Simunul, older Sama people overcame their fear of "becoming Westernized if they were literate" after they learned to read and write under the INDISCO programme through the Magbassa Kita Foundation, according to Kasi-Lasa leaders.



CHANGING LIVES

Other groups have been able to obtain additional funding for their literacy programs. In the municipality of Malungon, where 514 graduated in the first six months of the program, MALTRICO received support from Fulford Foundation based in the Netherlands. The literacy project resumed in September 2000 and will last for another year. In the municipality of Kitaotao where project manager Cosme Lambayon has long been involved in literacy programs, more than 3,000 have completed their literacy classes over the last five years.



The entire community shows up for the closing exercises of a literacy class for Manobo and Tagakaolo indigenous people in Malungon town, Sarangani.







A n array of woven fabrics is always a joy to behold. T here is a multitude of colors and designs to choose from, each one a unique creation of the individual weaver. N o two products are alike. Some fabrics stand out for the intricacy of their design, the excellent handiwork of the weaver, and the pleasing combination of colors. T he best ones, made from the finest materials and crafted by the most skillful weavers, command the highest price.



TRADITIONAL	INNOVATIVE
NGO/GA-Driven	Community-Driven
Dole-outs	Counterparting
Technology-Driven	IKSP-Driven
Funding given through NGOs and Government Agencies	Funding Given Through Community Organizations
Project Activities are Determined and Implemented by NGOs and GAs	Project Activities are Identified and Implemented by Communities
Projects are Fund-Driven	Communities Sustain the Project

It may be worthwhile to note some major differences between traditional methods of project implementation and the alternative approach employed by INDISCO, as shown in this table.

The immediate contrast seen is that while the traditional method emphasizes the lead role of government agencies and non-government organizations with the target communities as mere beneficiaries, INDISCO makes the partner communities take the lead with the GA and NGOs serving as facilitators.

The traditional method also considers the project as a dole-out, while INDISCO urges the partner communities to consider the project as a seed capital which should be used to generate more development activities. Thus, the partner communities are urged to give their share to the project at least in the form of community leaders, project offices and contributions in kind.

Another important difference is that INDISCO encourages partners to draw ideas from their indigenous knowledge systems and practices in implementing project activities, against the traditional insistence on the use of modern technology.

Usually, project funds are coursed through non-government organizations or government agencies who implement the project. INDISCO gives its trust to the partner communities, allowing them to implement the project and manage the funds through their own organizations, with only facilitative technical assistance from the INDISCO staff.

Often, donors or assisting agencies consider it their responsibility to determine the project activities, including training for the target communities. But with INDISCO, the partner communities are given the opportunity and responsibility to identify the project activities based on their needs. They also coordinate, through their own organizations, the implementation of these activities.

Lastly, most projects only last as long as there are funds. Experience with INDISCO pilot projects, from which regular financial assistance was phased out, has shown that the partner communities were able to devise ways to sustain project activities long after funding has ceased. Their methods include the tapping of volunteer services and the use of existing resources to generate funds for operational expenses.

THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES

In the 12 pilot sites where the INDISCO programme was implemented, a number of partner communities have achieved high levels of accomplishments in several areas. The combination of competent and well-meaning project staff and dedicated community leaders spelled the difference in the attainment of modest successes by these communities. Their “best practices” may be replicated in other areas across the Philippines with similar conditions and characteristics.

ANCESTRAL DOMAIN MANAGEMENT

There are three sites where the INDISCO programme contributed to the success of indigenous peoples’ organizations in implementing their respective ancestral domain management plan. Their CADCs cover entire municipalities, comprising some of the biggest areas granted to indigenous communities. Regular INDISCO assistance has been phased out in two areas — Kitaotao in Bukidnon and Malungon in Sarangani. The programme is ongoing in the municipality of Bakun in Benguet province. It is worthy to note that members showed a high level of morale in all three partner communities. Their leaders agree that the INDISCO programme has immensely changed the attitude of tribal people for the better, ensuring the long-term sustainability of their efforts. Among the activities they managed to implement with INDISCO assistance are community-driven baseline surveys, crafting of community policies concerning the ancestral domain, organizational development, protection of natural resources, and revitalizing indigenous practices in sustainable resource management.

BAKUN - The municipality covers seven barangays: Kayapa, Bagu, Sinacbat, Poblacion, Dalipey, Gambang, and Ampusongan where the town proper is located. Two indigenous communities, the Kankanaey and Bago peoples, comprise about 98 percent of the population. They are all considered members of the Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization or BITO.

There are 148 puloks or villages whose leaders represent the people in BITO. A council of elders called *papangoan* is chosen from men and women whose leadership and wisdom are recognized by all. The *Papangoan* consists of two representatives from each of the seven barangays, with Kayapa getting three representatives. Both tribes do not have a concept of a single leader such as a *datu*, and all decisions are made collectively.





Environment Sec. Victor Ramos awards the certificate of ancestral domain claim to leaders of the Kankanaey-Bago community of Bakun, Benguet.

The road to getting a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim for BITO was not an easy one. BITO chairman Tirso Bayawa recalls that village leaders had conceptualized the organization as early as 1996 but it was not formalized due to lack of a CADC. Bakun residents had to fight the re-entry of a logging company, which had proposed an Industrial Forest Management Agreement in the area. They wrote former DENR Sec. Victor Ramos, who decided to uphold the CADC application.

Fortunately, the local government fully supported the ancestral domain claim from the start. On June 14, 1999, the municipal government of Bakun adopted the community ancestral domain management plan (ADMP) as part of the Municipal Development Plan. Former Bakun Mayor Tico Dalmones, who died in a car accident in May 2000, gave the foreword for the plan: “The residents today face the challenge of actually managing this domain. With this plan and with BITO in the center, it is expected that dependence of the two communities on the government will be lessened towards stronger self-reliance.”

BITO’s mission is spelled out as follows: promote the well-being of the ancestral domain residents through the sustainable development of the natural resources; appropriate utilization of lands, minerals and water; social equity and efficiency in resource use; and effective protection of the environment and conservation of the biodiversity.

Among the management policies of BITO are the primacy of community decisions, and recognition of indigenous socio-political units within the domain as well as their corresponding roles in the sustainable management and protection of the natural resources.



THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Under the ADMP, sale or transfer of land to non-members of the two indigenous communities is null and void. Land sold before the plan was enacted may be redeemed by the Kankanaey and Bago people after giving due compensation to outside owners. In the near future, project manager Amos Beta-a says BITO hopes to have the community CADC converted into a community Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) as mandated by the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 and to help each family obtain individual Certificates of Ancestral Land Title (CALT). Upon conversion of their CADC to CADT, they will correspondingly convert their ADMP into an Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSPP) pursuant to the current implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the IPRA.

The baseline survey for Bakun is impressive. It includes the kinds of mammals, trees, birds and a long list of medicinal plants (together with their uses and preparations) found within the domain. BITO staff researched the scientific names of the various plants and animals in one of the Benguet universities. The various cultural practices in the municipality are also listed in the baseline data.

The staff gets guidance from the papangoan whose officers meet once a month. There is a general assembly of community members every October. BITO chairman Tirso Bayawa says they have no problem managing the organization because it is the custom of the Kankanaey and Bago to support someone who is assigned a task. Instead of putting obstacles, they guide one another.

They are guided by the following cultural values: *Kababain* which denotes a sense of shame if one dishonors the family and does not respect elders; *Taan* which is respect or trust, and *Inayan* which refers to spirituality, or the fear that something bad will happen to a person who does something bad. Bayawa says these values are still very strong in the interior villages, but not as much in villages located near the road which are culturally weakened by external influences.

KITAOTAO - The late tribal chieftain, Datu Lorenzo Gawilan, Sr., organized the Federation of Matigsalog-Manobo Tribal Councils or FEMMATRICs shortly after leading the 1975 uprising that ended the domination of ranchers in the hilly area. Leaders of the Federation say former President Marcos promised to release 77,000 hectares of land to both tribes but only 766 hectares were actually endorsed to Malacañang for release by government officials.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

In 1994, the Federation applied for a CADC, in behalf of the community, when its officers found out that no one had a land title in the area. The Federation was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission in October 1994. The following year, the Matigsalug-Manobo CADC was awarded and the community's partnership with the ILO-INDISCO programme also started. Recently, the Federation requested the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples for the conversion of their CADC to CADT and the issuance of Certificates of Ancestral Land Title (CALT) to individual families. To facilitate the latter, the Federation, through the community council of leaders (Board of Trustees) plans to make guidelines for the delineation of ancestral lands held by individual families.

The Federation is based in the village of Sinuda, home village of the Gawilan family. When the elder Gawilan passed away, one of his sons was chosen to lead the community. The Federation's policy is to uphold traditional methods of succession which is primarily by anointment and not by election, thereby strengthening the role of indigenous tribal leaders. The community covers 169 villages. Tribal councils within the ancestral domain's 20 barangays nominate one representative to the board of trustees of the federation. The 23-member board is chosen by consensus. A management staff and several committees created for various functions help implement the group's activities. All council leaders attend the regular meeting every second Saturday of the month. A general assembly of community members with all tribal councils, numbering in the thousands, is held every January 15.

Farming is the main livelihood of the people, with half the population still practicing traditional ways although they are slowly evolving to semi-modern agriculture using fertilizers and other inputs. Major crops include rice, corn, legumes, vegetables, various types of root crops, and a wide variety of fruits.

One of the barangays covered by the ancestral domain is barangay East Dalurong in Kitaotao. About 60% of the barangay population are Pulangi Manobos while the rest are Visayan settlers. Many of the Visayan families arrived in 1977 to occupy parts of the land. At first, project manager Cosme Lambayon says the migrants balked at the proclamation of the area as an ancestral domain. But as time passed, they softened their stand for the greater good of the village, tribal chieftain Bai Laura Baluca says. Land ownership in Dalurong are family claims handed down from generation to generation. So far, there are no conflicts or problems with land boundaries between the Manobos and the Visayans, who also benefit from the organization's projects.



THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES



Matigsalog and Manobo indigenous communities in ethnic wear make their way to the village of Sinuda for their annual general assembly.

The ancestral domain management policies of the Federation include the preservation of 14 sacred sites, seven ancient burial grounds and traditional landmarks, sustainable management of the natural resources and conservation of the biodiversity, ban on slash-and-burn farming in forested areas, establishment of family tree farms, and promotion of eco-tourism. Non-traditional resource extraction, especially harvesting of trees and mining, requires among others a written consent from the community through the Federation. When ancestral land titles become available, these will not be transferable except by hereditary succession to ensure the security of tenure of the family. If the clan or family violates the policy on transfer of ownership or fails to make the land productive, the Federation may recommend the cancellation of its ancestral land title. The rights of migrant settlers who already have community-recognized farm and home lots are respected but they are not allowed to expand their landholdings without the written consent of the Federation. No sale of land is allowed to investors, who need to obtain the community's free and prior informed consent before putting up a project in the area.

MALUNGON - The Tagakaolo and B'laan communities in Malungon, Sarangani occupy adjacent ancestral domains covered by separate CADCs. Among the Tagakaolos, land "ownership" is acquired mainly through traditional occupancy rights. Later however, some of the people started accepting government-sponsored stewardship agreements. Ten out of the 13 barangays consisting the ancestral domains have a tribal council. The ancestral domain covers an area of 37,751 hectares



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

from flat land to mountainous slopes. The area has sparse forests, large tracts of open grassland, minimal irrigated areas, and vast fields of corn and sugarcane. Dipterocarp species such as lauan, bagtikan, malapanan, and amugis dominate the forests. Corn is a major crop. Horses are vital to their lives and treated like part of the family; they are both means of transportation and also transmission of messages. More horses means greater stature for the family.

The B'laans have an ancestral domain with an area of 48,497 hectares covering 12 barangays. Large



Newly-harvested corn field in Malungon

portions are open grassland and most areas below 30% slope are planted solely to corn.

Since the issuance of the CADCs, local government officials have recognized the

tribal justice system of the Tagakaolo and B'laan peoples. The provincial government ordered barangays to provide a *kasfala* (tribal justice) hall where there are indigenous communities. All government projects also go through MALTRICO; for example, when a barangay donated land to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) for a school, it was approved only after MALTRICO passed a resolution allowing it. MALTRICO is presently going through negotiations with one company seeking to enter into a joint venture with the Tagakaolo-B'laan community for the setting-up and operation of a Palm Oil project within the ancestral domain.

Ancestral land claims among the Tagakaolo and B'laan communities are usually by clan, with indigenous peoples generally respecting each other's boundaries. Most land conflicts are between tribal people and migrants who "bought" land on onerous barter arrangements or managed to get a tribesman's thumbmark on paper.

According to their combined ancestral domain management plan crafted with the facilitative technical assistance of the Sarangani Environmentalists Movement, the community members envision permanent land tenure in the not so distant



THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES

future. Among their strategies for ensuring a sustainable management of their domain are massive tree planting, total ban on slash and burn farming in forested areas to preserve the biodiversity and the sources of their herbal medicine, promotion of organic farming and sloping agriculture, development of cultural eco-tourism, and discouragement of early marriages to control population growth. MALTRICO has already started working for the conversion of the Tagakaolo and B'laan CADCs into CADTs.

Community leaders working for MALTRICO have made educational field visits to Lake Sebu in South Cotabato, and made a proposal to develop eco-tourism based on natural attractions such as Sabayan Falls, with the municipal government.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND

In the language of the Sama people in the Tawi-Tawi archipelago, *kasi* means kindness (or taking pity) while *lasa* means love. This is the origin of the name of the Kasi-Lasa Multipurpose Cooperative. Taken together, the two words literally mean love one another and also connotes sincerity, according to its officers.

From a group with 73 members belonging to two barangays just three years ago, Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative has expanded into a 500-member association in 15 barangays in the entire municipality of Simunul. Project manager Ismael Asakil says the cooperative has achieved 100% repayment of the original Revolving Loan Fund from the INDISCO programme. The association has managed to leverage the payments to get bigger loans from the Land Bank of the Philippines. Asakil told the members that it's time for them to disprove the perception of the bank that people from Simunul don't pay their loans. He often makes the rounds of borrowers to remind them of their obligations. Earlier, they had an experience where people thought the loans were dole-outs and did not pay back.

In June 1999, the cooperative received a P1million loan from the Land Bank, payable in one year. The money was divided among several barangays through the cooperative, with the entire council of leaders and project staff held accountable and their Tax Declarations used as collateral for the loan. In just six months, the cooperative managed to pay the loan in full.

In January 2000, the Land Bank again released P5 million to the cooperative, payable in 12 months. As of July, Kasi-Lasa had paid back half of the loan. Asakil



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

COMMUNITY CREDIT IN BAKUN



Aware of the need to ensure repayment of loans under the community credit facility, the Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization came up with a strict set of policies for implementing the Revolving Loan Fund in the ancestral domain. Borrowers are divided into two types: the *lagding* or individuals and *alluyon* for groups such as cooperatives. Individuals may borrow a minimum of P5,000 and a maximum of P25,000 while accredited groups can take out loans of up to P150,000. The loans are payable in one year, and borrowers may choose monthly or quarterly payments. There is a 23% interest charged annually but another 4% of this amount is deposited in the name of the borrower as his or her saving and contribution to the capital build-up. Delayed payments get an additional 2% penalty charge. Applicants are required to submit several documents and prove that they are eligible for the loans. An RLF committee evaluates the proposals, which require a 2/3 vote of approval. The collateral is usually the land tax declaration of borrowers. Types of projects eligible for loans are crop production, livestock raising, fish culture, handicraft, purchase of farm tools, and trading, among others. So far, the people of Bakun have managed a consistent 98% collection rate.

continues to serve as project manager in a voluntary capacity; he is also ex-officio member of the 5-person board of directors. They have two bookkeepers, one from Bakong and the other from Panglima Mastul for purposes of check and balance.

“Our major strength is the trust given to us by the bank,” says Asakil. He also cites the high literacy rate of the municipality (87.5% which is the highest in Tawi-Tawi) as a major factor in achieving success. Simunul has four high schools and several elementary schools, and has the most number of civil servants among the municipalities in the province, especially in the thickly-populated Manuk Mangkaw island.

THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES

To ensure prompt payment of loans, the cooperative has devised a unique system that takes advantage of the large number of salaried professionals in the municipality. The loans are coursed through guarantors who are usually relatives of the borrowers. No collateral is required, as the payment for the loans are automatically deducted from the salaries of the guarantors every month. The borrowers pay their guarantors every harvest.

The community practices the principles of equity and equality in distributing benefits. The local government has given them space in the new municipal hall where members can get updates on the activities of the cooperative. Most of the loans are for fisheries projects.

PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFT

With INDISCO assistance, indigenous craftspeople have obtained new equipment and participated in training that is helping them become more efficient in making their products. They are also learning new marketing skills and a diverse range of products that could help them adapt to the changing needs of a more sophisticated and wider clientele than they had in the past. More importantly, they are now able to promote their culturally-inspired handicrafts effectively.

Project manager Reyzaldy Tan notes that there is a strong sense of cultural preservation among the four communities comprising the pilot sites in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. For one thing, many families in these villages have been engaged in the handicraft industry for generations, so it is mainly a matter of continuing the tradition.

In Tugaya, where the manufacture of brass handicraft revolve around family enterprises, the cooperative was already in place even before the INDISCO programme so it is relatively well-off compared to the other sites. They were given additional equipment and training on quality control because their brassware is not as good as products from India, for example, which is what they want to replicate.

Tugaya got the most benefits from the Revolving Loan Fund because members were able to successfully use the money for improving their products, says extension worker Abdullah Dipatuan. The entire barangay is involved in melting brass. It takes 12 hours to bake a load of items in a wood-fired kiln. Fuel consists of saplings



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

LIVING TRADITIONS:



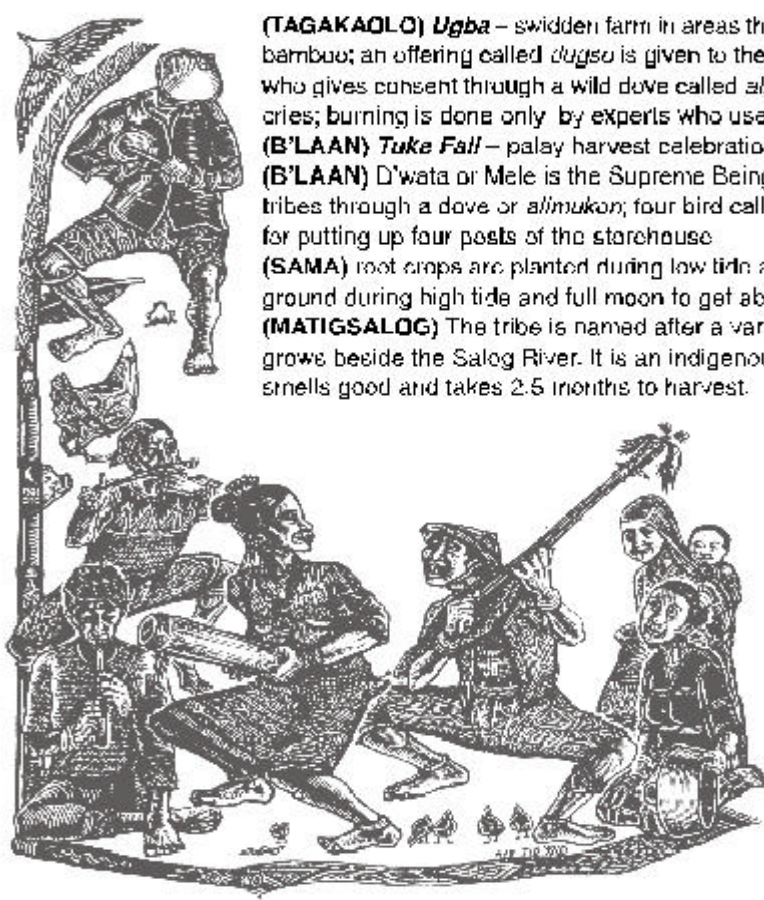
JUSTICE SYSTEM

(KANKANAHEY) *TangTang*
dialog to resolve disputes with guilty party paying proper penalty or fine

(TAGAKAOLO) *Kasfala*
system for resolving conflicts that usually requires peace offering

(MATIGSALOG)
Gantangan owsy palavian
indigenous justice system

FARMING



(TAGAKAOLO) *Ugba* – swidden farm in areas thick with bagacay bamboo; an offering called *ugsa* is given to the god Tyumanen, who gives consent through a wild dove called *alimukon* with four cries; burning is done only by experts who use firebreaks

(B'LAAN) *Tuka Fall* – palay harvest celebration

(B'LAAN) D'wata or Mele is the Supreme Being who speaks to tribes through a dove or *alimukon*; four bird calls is a good sign for putting up four posts of the storehouse

(SAMA) root crops are planted during low tide and crops above ground during high tide and full moon to get abundant yield

(MATIGSALOG) The tribe is named after a variety of rice that grows beside the Salog River. It is an indigenous variety that smells good and takes 2.5 months to harvest.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM IN PRACTICE

ENVIRONMENT

(KANKANAHEY) *Kingking* - a bird whose presence near a river indicates that the water is safe to drink

(B'LAAN AND TAGAKAULO) - their Supreme Being is called Mele who speaks through the *alimukan* or dove; when the forest is gone, the bird will also leave and their link with Mele is lost



HEALING

(MALUNGON) medicinal plants are used to treat scorpion and snake bites, stomach upset, allergies, and respiratory ailments

(KITAOTAO) *panubad* - healing ritual that accounts for 9.9% of preventive remedies



COMMUNITY / SOCIAL STRUCTURES

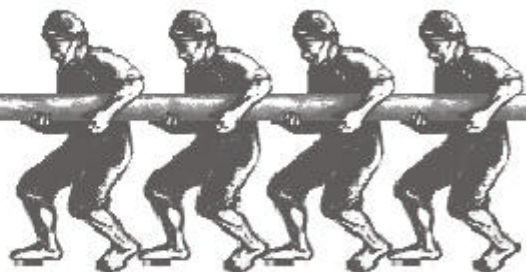
(CORDILLERA) *Innabuyog* - Kalinga word that refers to women in a community pooling labor

(CORDILLERA) *Uraga* - system of pooling funds to purchase an item e.g. rice, milk, cooking oil, etc needed by the community without profit; sharing tasks like fixing canals during rainy season

(TAGAKAULO) *Balaw*;
(B'LAAN) *Saelang* - system of bartering goods and possessions

(B'LAAN) *Sahul* - bayanihan system

(MATIGSALOG) *Pangakat* - pooling community services in times of need to attain self-reliance



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

collected from the forest. Brass comes from scrap metal sold by scavengers. The wax that is used for molding brass comes from the sap of a tree found deep in the forest, which is one of their concerns as the source is getting farther and the material is getting scarce. Their brassware includes decorative cannons, betel nut case, a large jar called *gador* often used as a vessel for plants, wall decor in the form of plates or trays, the traditional sword called *kris*, musical instruments such as gongs and *kulintang*, beds, and an expensive office decor called *kabo* which can cost up to P80,000. The Tugaya handicraft makers are also well-known for their intricately designed furniture e.g. *baor* (wooden box) and coffee table inlaid with capiz shells.

In the neighboring village of Dayawan, the Maranaw women are passing on their centuries-old traditional designs to younger weavers. Even men in the village are engaged in weaving; the budget officer of Marawi City, who is male, is said to have earned his accounting degree through income from the craft. Dayawan has more than 50 weaving designs. Dipatuan says the women can add but not alter original designs like the *okir*, even though they are accepting made-to-order designs and attending training on modern design. Among their product lines are *mamandiang* or decorations for buildings, different kinds of *malong* wrap, *langkit* or accents for clothing, *tubao* or scarf that are different from the ones made in Cotabato, and vests. The *landap* malong is multi-colored and costs P1,500. Only experts can

weave an embroidered *rawatan* malong that takes one month to make and costs P5,000.

Tugaya and Dayawan credit the INDISCO programme for helping put their products on the national and international map. Among their clients are former president Fidel Ramos who ordered 800 pieces of vests for giveaways, and former Tourism Sec. Gemma Cruz-Araneta.

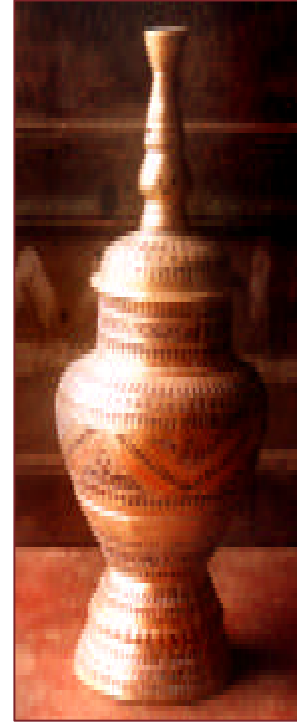
They also feel they have become “hi-tech” because of the equipment they obtained from



Culturally-inspired wall decor woven by Cordillera women



THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES



Maranao craftsmen are well-known for their intricately designed furniture such as the *baor* (top), brassware (right), and coffee tables inlaid with capiz shells (left).

INDISCO. Among the equipment that Dayawan got were sewing machines, looms, stove and large pans for dyeing thread, and office equipment that were installed in the president's house for safekeeping while the training center is under construction. Members can use the equipment for free while non-members pay rental fees.

In the training center in Tugaya, members pay a fee to use a wide array of equipment and tools, plus a spacesuit-like clothing and shoes for protection. The revenues are kept in a separate account together with the service fees from the loans, and are used for repair and maintenance of the equipment.

In Sultan Kudarat, the Maguindanao women weavers still maintain traditional designs like *ampik* and *binalodan-lipon* and the same system of weaving. They have adapted to the times though, with additional material for bags and other saleable items.

In Upi, community leader Datu Lab Sinsuat ensures quality control and promotion



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

of the Teduray's nito craft outside the town. He has a wide network and checks on product designs that are saleable.

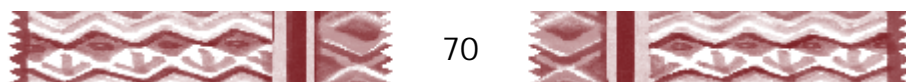
GENDER AWARENESS

“Economic power begets political power” is a lesson the indigenous women of Baguio City learned when they began earning a substantial income from their INDISCO-supported livelihood activities, says project manager Geraldine Cacho. Women have found a new voice as a result of their economic power. Husbands no longer complain that their wives are too busy because of the considerable revenues derived from weaving, sewing, and vending goods. The husbands are also included in the gender awareness training of the Baguio City Indigenous Women’s Council so the results are generally positive.

Cacho says the education and training component of the project contributed a great deal to building the capability of the women in asserting their rights. Indigenous women leaders have learned to dialog with the city mayor and negotiate with the Department of Social Welfare and Development about the management of other projects. They are more assertive both in the community and at home. In some communities, the local women’s associations are so strong that barangay officials and other organizations like the Parents-Teachers Association look up to them when important decisions are needed. Politicians have also begun “courting” women leaders, who have become influential in getting votes.

In the community of San Carlos, women have greater decision-making powers due to their year-round work, as compared to their husbands who are usually seasonal laborers. Both parents share domestic duties; it is no longer rare to see husbands taking care of the children. In some cases, husbands even help in weaving, especially when there are orders to be met.

As a whole, there is a greater sense of responsibility and involvement in the areas where the women’s associations are active, says Cacho. They make collective decisions when there are squabbles and help out when somebody is sick or dies. After years of alienation brought about by urban living, indigenous women have discovered a renewed sense of community. “*Magkapitbahay pala tayo ... dalawa pala ang anak mo,*” (So we are neighbors ... and you have two children) are only some of the comments women leaders have heard from people in the community



THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES

who have just recently discovered the people in their neighborhood. With higher income and greater decision-making abilities as a result of INDISCO facilitative support, the women leaders are making good use of their influence to encourage more community involvement for the benefit of all their members.

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

The Matigsalog Literacy Education, Inc. or MALEI was established in the village of Sinuda in 1995, just before the INDISCO programme was introduced in the community. Cosme Lambayon is the founding chairman of the SEC-registered group. Its present coordinator is Datu Ponciano Buntag, a Subanen. During our visit, there were six ongoing literacy classes in San Fernando (outside the ancestral domain) and eight in Kitaotao.

Literacy class participants are usually aged 15 years *“kutob sa makakita pa”* (up to any age as long as they can still see) who live far from the school. They



Graduates of the first literacy class supported by INDISCO in Bukidnon pose for posterity with officers of the program

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

decide on the class hours, usually three half-days in a week, so they can balance their school lessons with their work schedule. One area consists of six villages, whose residents support the school. The program is implemented in the Davao, Bukidnon, and Cotabato side of the Matigsalog-Manobo ancestral domain. Everything is free for the participants, including an initial supply of pencil and paper.

The module consists of three levels with 70 lessons each, for a total of 210 hours. Level 1 is conducted in Matigsalog and Cebuano and teaches reading, writing, and basic mathematics including telling time and reading weighing scales. Level 2



consists of advanced lessons from the first module, the history of the tribe, and health especially sanitation and preventive medicine. Level 3 is conducted in Tagalog and English, and includes higher math. The classes are effective because teachers use the native language, says Lambayon.

Teachers are usually high school graduates trained by MALEI, while other para-teachers are graduates of the literacy classes. A supervisor checks on the classes every third week of the month. MALEI issues two kinds of



certificates: attendance for those who do not pass the levels and achievement for participants with passing grades. Their experience is that more students get certificates of attendance rather

In the mountain village of Bakun in Benguet, members of the Kankanaey and Bago tribes celebrate the arrival of visitors and the graduation of the latest batch of literacy class students.

THE CHANGING COMMUNITIES

than achievement due to frequent absences since they still have to work.

DECS has encouraged graduates of the literacy classes to take the PEPT so they can enter regular schools. Some of the trained teachers are already accredited by DECS, which has also given P140,000 worth of assistance. This is for 10 slots that go to teachers' honoraria (P2,000 per level), supplies, allowances and other expenses.

MALEI's organizational structure includes the village education committee composed of the sitio leaders, students, women, and the tribal council in the area where the classes are held. So far, the group has less than 100 registered members who pay a one-time fee of P20. Members can avail of livelihood programs in the long term, with Lambayon replicating the RLF method from the INDISCO programme using savings from the grants.

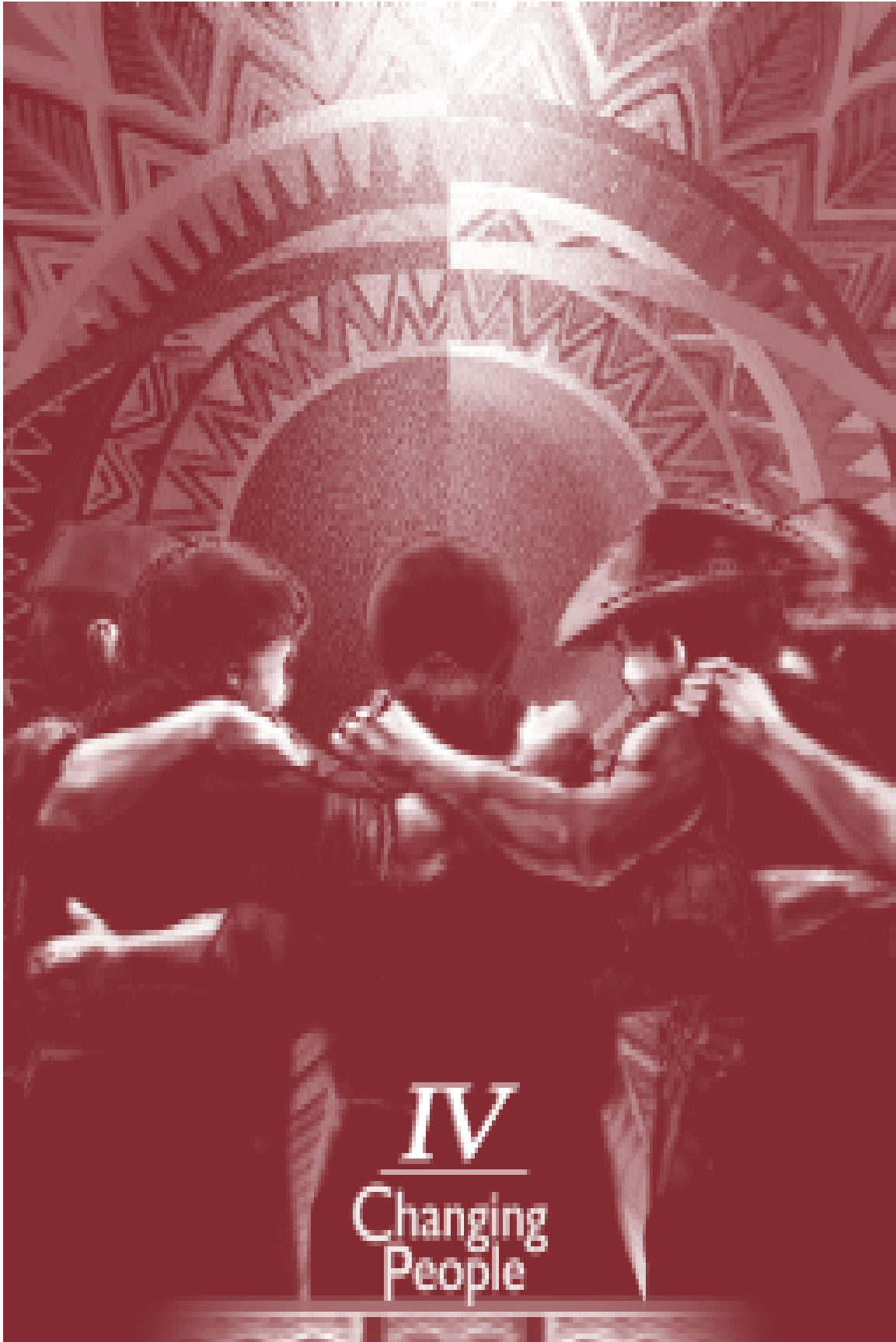
FEMMATRICS and MALEI signed an agreement for the latter to implement the literacy program within the CADC area. Funding from the INDISCO programme covered 20 barangays, and there are efforts to link up with funding institutions for additional support. The other sponsors of the program include the New Zealand embassy, DECS, and the provincial government. Church groups such as the Baptists, the Evangelical church, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics that provides reading materials, also assist the program.

Lambayon says their problems are minimal. Some para-teachers drop out after several weeks due to lack of commitment and low pay. It is the responsibility of the village committee to select the right person who is willing to make the necessary sacrifices for the project. MALEI has had an 80% success rate in training teachers.



To encourage more members of the tribe to pursue a career in education, FEMMATRICS has sponsored the tuition fees of indigenous students. There are five in college at the Central Mindanao University, 89 high school students who get P230 each per year, and 200 elementary students with P150 each per year. The scholarships are given to deserving students with good grades who are willing to go to school but cannot afford the cost. MALEI has been nominated for outstanding literacy program by DECS for Region 10.

In the province of Sarangani, the Tagakaolo and B'laan community belonging to the Malungon Tribal Congress initiated and sustained its own literacy program with INDISCO support. MALTRICO sustained the program by getting into partnership with government and non-government organizations, notably the Municipal Government of Malungon and the Fulford Foundation based in the Netherlands.





IV
Changing
People



When all the products are laid out for display, the weaver checks her work for flaws and the little details she may have overlooked. There may be a loose section here, a portion that may unravel there, or extra pieces of thread that her scissors may have missed. It is not easy to achieve perfection in a task as complicated as weaving, but it is up to the weaver to identify the imperfections and try not to repeat her mistakes.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

Like in any other endeavor of its kind, the implementation of the INDISCO programme had its low points, and the partner communities willingly admit their shortcomings. It is interesting to note what some partner community members perceived to be the downside of the programme. There are also factors beyond the programme's control that undermined some of the gains its partners may have achieved, particularly in the area of livelihood generation.

Whatever the problem, project managers point out that the mistakes were committed by individuals and not the community organizations themselves. Partner communities that started later also learned from the mistakes of those who joined the program at an earlier stage.

The following is a summary of the difficulties encountered by the partner communities. Some of their efforts to solve their problems are found at the end of each section.

MARKETING OF PRODUCTS

Whatever their product, many of the project partners had a common problem: there is still a need for them to improve their network and develop the competitive edge necessary to maintain a regular market.

In Baguio City, the women weavers fear that the entry of cheaper and better quality Lotus blankets from Taiwan may soon wipe out their traditional weaving industry. The imported blankets sell for P100 and are much finer than the sometimes coarsely woven local blankets that sell for P120 to P130 each. In addition, overseas Filipino workers are bringing in second-hand comforters and knitwear that pose further competition to their already dampened market. The problem is that their clientele is limited to the Cordillera region and neighboring provinces where the weather is cool enough for thick blankets. They also join trade fairs and get orders from non-government organizations, but this is only occasional so it is not a very reliable market. They admit that their handlooms at home are not very efficient compared to the mass production of blankets in factories abroad. Since many of the women do not want to stock their products, there are times when they slash their prices drastically even though this means lower revenues. They also barter unsold items for rice and vegetables in places where there is no blanket weaving industry.



CHANGING PEOPLE



Mangyan men and women learn how to make hats in Mindoro, but marketing of their products is a major problem

The women weavers of Sultan Kudarat face the same problem. There is a glut of woven products in their display center coming from those who took out loans and encountered difficulties repaying them in cash. Rather than having nothing in return from the loans, the organization is sometimes forced to accept products of equivalent value as an alternative. Project manager Reyzaldy Tan says the market in Cotabato is saturated with tubao and malong so the women weavers either have to improve the product or diversify. The group has tapped exporters and joined trade fairs, but there are too many similar products and theirs are sometimes more expensive than others. The services of a marketing consultant hired during the first phase of the programme proved insufficient in relation to the problem.

In Bakun, the community also identified some problems in marketing their vegetables. Their abundant production can lead to depressed prices in their main outlet which is Baguio City. If the price of cabbage is just P5 per kilo for example, they would rather let it rot in the mountains as the transportation to the city would be higher than their income.

Successful agricultural techniques also had a negative effect in Mindoro. The Tau Buid of Balangabong say the training has helped them increase their production



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

of bananas, but the problem is, they are now encountering difficulties in marketing the growing volume of the fruit. Big sizes are sold at P40 to P50 per 100 pieces while smaller ones go for P25 to P30. The market in barangay Calintaan, the nearest outlet, cannot absorb their produce so the Tau Buid sometimes go door-to-door during the dry season to sell their bananas. They also have no market for ginger which is getting abundant. Additional market outlets need to be discovered.

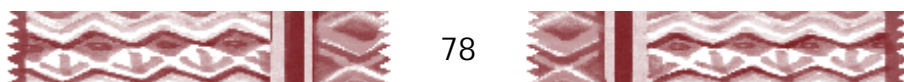
To ease their difficulties, some partner communities are looking at other livelihood opportunities. The women of Baguio City are exploring the possibility of weaving thinner bedsheets and have begun sewing school uniforms in June. Their counterpart in Sultan Kudarat have improved their product display center and asked the project staff to help them develop a marketing operations manual. In the village of Dayawan in Lanao del Norte, the Maranao weavers are helping to prepare a product catalog that they can show to prospective buyers.

An INDISCO staff has suggested that the indigenous communities tap more specialty outlets in addition to the common market and trade fairs which are limited. It is also difficult for small villages to meet the demands of exporters who require large volumes of products a month. Instead of competing with factory-made products, the partner communities plan to focus on good quality, unique designs, and traditional stories related to their handicraft that would add value to indigenous products.

PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

In the cities, it is easy to understand why it is difficult to revive indigenous systems and practices. The proliferation of religious groups, the popularity of Western music, and a school system in which “pagan ways” are discouraged are some of the factors that the women of Baguio City mentioned to explain this problem. They also resent the exploitation of traditional rituals for tourism such as the performance of the harvest dance in festivals such as the *Panagbenga* (Kankanaey word for blooming of sunflowers) even though there’s no such harvest in Baguio City since it’s not an agricultural area.

But in the rural hinterlands, the loss of indigenous ways is worrisome. In the highlands of Mindoro for example, the openness of the Mangyan communities to new ideas has made them vulnerable to the influence of outsiders. Many members



CHANGING PEOPLE

of the two partner communities describe themselves as “educated” and distinguish themselves from tribal groups who live higher up in the mountains, whom they call “mailap” or reclusive. Only old men still use G-strings, which are made of cheesecloth instead of the traditional tree bark. Myths are no longer passed on. The elderly chairman of the Balani cooperative, who was wearing a T-shirt and a G-string, says he cannot remember some of their indigenous stories anymore. A young Tau Buid para-teacher says he cannot recall tribal stories that were told to him so he does not tell tribal stories to children either. While community members, with help of the INDISCO programme, are exerting some effort to revive the indigenous practices that are getting lost, the process however could be slow.

For the weavers of Sultan Kudarat, it is not modernization or outside influences that hampers their craft but lack of material for their woven products. The Maguindanao women said they could not do the antique designs anymore due to lack of “sutra” thread which is silky and as thin as a spider’s web. It went out of stock since the Chinese trader who used to sell it in the city passed away. The most commonly used thread at present is rayon, so their designs are limited. Now they are trying to produce new designs with the available materials.

Among the Maranaos in Dayawan, their problem is more of a generational one. They are concerned about the skills that may be lost to the group when their three expert weavers, who are now in their ‘70s and the only ones who make balud designs, are gone.

To ensure the preservation of indigenous knowledge, Bai Deron of Dayawan is planning more training that will utilize the expertise of their three elderly weavers whom she says are still quite sharp despite their advanced age. This is necessary so that the experts can pass on their skills to younger weavers.

INDISCO staff are aware that indigenous practices can sometimes pose a barrier to effective project implementation. A member of the staff recounted how he had to be very careful not to say or do anything that could be perceived as culturally offensive to the tribe and how he had to learn how to speak in metaphors or parables, which is a practice in the community, in order to bring his message across. To illustrate the problem of greed or corruption for example, he told a story about a monkey who dipped his fingers into a jar and could not get it out because he got too many candies. He says facilitators need to be creative in explaining concepts



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

through stories that are easily understood by indigenous people, who have a tradition of storytelling that can be promoted.

REPAYMENT OF LOANS

For most partner communities, one of the major problems was the slow repayment of loans under the Revolving Loan Fund.

In Baguio City, the leader of the women's association in Quirino Hill complained that collecting payments from delinquent members was taking up most of her time. A few borrowers migrated to other places, while some of those who remained paid their loans in small amounts. The problem has caused division in communities like San Carlos Heights, where a councilor wanted to create a parallel women's association. Fortunately, the weavers averted the politician's plan.

In agricultural areas, natural disasters and the risks inherent in the industry have affected the ability of farmers to pay their loans. In Bakun, some borrowers cannot keep up with their payments if the prices of vegetables are low. In Kitaotao, many of the farmers have not paid their loans fully because their crops were destroyed by the long drought (El Niño) and later by army worms, rats, and locusts following difficulties caused by El Niño. In Balangabong, Occidental Mindoro, the farmers were also adversely affected by El Niño which moreover caused some forest fires. The prolonged dry spell also brought anguish to the farmers in Malungon, who suffered from rat and locust infestation as well.

For some partner communities, weak leadership affected the operations of the Fund. In one community for example, loan collection was seriously affected when certain officers of the cooperative mismanaged the operations, including the records. Community members say some borrowers have given P10 to P20 a week towards the payment of loans, but they cannot say where the money is being kept. The community has since elected a new set of officers who have now been working for some time trying to repair the damage inflicted on the cooperative.

In the village of Dayawan in Lanao del Sur, the women weavers have elected three sets of officers since 1995. According to some officers of the community organization, changes in the leadership had to be made mainly because the members showed dissatisfaction with the way the RLF was being managed. Although some



CHANGING PEOPLE

are paying little by little, in cash and in kind, others want the officers to pay up first. Out of 83 members, only 68 have availed of loans so far.

In Sultan Kudarat, officers of the association said they are having problems in loan collection largely because of the effect of events beyond their control such as the floods and the fighting between government forces and the rebels which forced many members to flee their homes. Due to the collection problems, the officers were forced to tolerate payments in kind. Slow sales, however prevented the products from being speedily transformed into cash, thus the funds could not be revolved satisfactorily. Under the arrangement, earnings from the products paid for the loans would go back to the RLF. The association is doing better with the loans under the current phase of the project (Phase 2). The payments have been revolved to give a chance to new borrowers and bookkeeping is now stricter.

Peace and order problems have also affected the members of the Kuminamar Multi-Purpose Cooperative. Datu Lab Sinsuat says some members were unable to pay their loans due to ethnic conflicts.

To instill a sense of accountability among members who retained the dole-out mentality fostered by government loans in the past, the Kasi-Lasa Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Simunul, Tawi-Tawi had to remind them of their Islamic values. According to their religious beliefs, a person who has a debt will not have a good afterlife when he or she dies.

Other groups resort to social pressure to encourage members to pay up. In Masikap village, Zambales, where some borrowers choose to pay only when they have extra money, there is an agreement that all initial borrowers should pay by April, 2001 so that the association can give loans to the second batch. They are made to understand that other members of the association will not be able to get a loan if they don't pay theirs. This is the same mindset that the staff and officers of the Malungon Tribal Congress trying to impress on delinquent borrowers — to give others a chance to avail of the loans. Besides, the Fund belongs to the community so everyone must benefit in the long run. In the town of Kitaotato, bookkeeper Virgie Enangkil diligently follows up every borrower's commitment during the last week of each month. "*Bisag gamay basta may bayad,*" (It doesn't matter if they pay little by little, as long as they pay up) she says.

In the community of Quirino Hill in Baguio City, where the RLF was considered



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

a big learning experience, the women leaders have instituted a new policy. If the applicants only want money from the group, it is better for them not to become members at all.

In some cases, conflicts arise between cultural practices and the technical requirements of the project. For example, it is a tradition in certain communities that the tribal leaders act as guarantors for the loans of their constituents. But this does not always work because some tribal leaders are themselves experiencing financial difficulties.

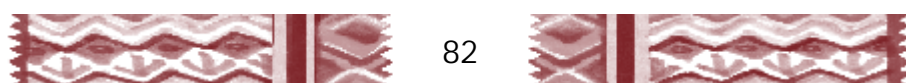
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

As conceptualized, the INDISCO approach which focuses on the provision of facilitative technical and financial support services and giving the partner communities the opportunity to plan and implement their development activities, and handle project funds in the process, is basically sound and innovative, says one INDISCO staff. But the partner communities had to go through a lengthy training process in order to learn and benefit from it, the staff added.

One of the difficulties encountered was that, at the start of the programme, only a few partner communities had members with the minimum technical skills needed to effectively help facilitate project activities and handle project funds. This has initially led to some misunderstanding among the community leaders and a few instances of abuse by certain individuals. There were also cases of dishonesty, favoritism, incompetence, misplaced priorities and inability or refusal to understand and implement the concept of the programme.

But the situation improved very much during the later stages when the partner community organizations and project staff began to apply the lessons they have learned from the training activities and from their initial experiences. The partner community leaders and project staff realized that for the INDISCO approach to be effective, it must be properly understood and applied with commitment, sincerity and honesty. Proper guidance must also be given at all times. Otherwise, as some project staff observed, the approach could become “too empowering, too democratic or even too participatory” and may lead to abuse.

As the INDISCO staff discovered, one of the cultural factors which had to be considered was that some tribal leaders take it for granted that community members



CHANGING PEOPLE



Vegetable farms line the slopes of remote mountain villages in the Cordillera, where it is often difficult to gather people for meetings.

will not question their decisions due to the hierarchical social structure in their community, where residents often look up to the leaders to solve their problems. Instead of living up to the expectation of the community members, they sometimes use their position to advance their selfish interest.

Many community members say that even though the process was good, the leadership of the community organization was sometimes the problem. A lot of misunderstanding happened where there was lack of proper consultation with the members. In a few cases, the partner communities' experiences from past projects with other agencies and institutions gave rise to the "dole-out" mentality or the tendency to mismanage project activities and resources. The INDISCO staff had to exert extra effort to generate attitudinal changes and reverse the situation.

Through self-evaluation, the partner communities have slowly discovered their strengths and accepted their shortcomings. Project management problems are getting resolved through indigenous community processes, training and experience. In Bukidnon, Project manager Cosme Lambayon believes that in the long run, the recognition and acceptance of past mistakes can only lead to greater unity for the community.

Due to their previous negative experiences, the partner communities in the ARMM for instance warmed up to the second phase of the project. The project partners also changed their perspective when adjustments in project implementation were made.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

In Botolan, community organization president Yolanda Abrigo says the community members have understood the importance of having someone who has a stake in the success of the project to serve in the project staff. The officers also realized the importance of good management skills and long-term perspective in making the project successful. This is the same mindset that the new Board of Directors of the Balani Multi-Purpose Cooperative hopes to promote among its members.

In the context of the new approach to indigenous people's development that INDISCO introduced among its partners, the problems that were encountered appear minimal. As one INDISCO staff says, "Sometimes, you have to allow them to make mistakes as long as they don't put the project in jeopardy."

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

During the selection process for partner communities, INDISCO looked at areas where there are existing traditional institutions that could be strengthened through the programme. Still, some local project staff encountered difficulties in the institution building process due to a variety of factors.

A common observation among partner communities is that their members have become so used to doleouts that they still prefer instant material remedies even if these are only palliative. Many of them found it difficult to appreciate the need for long-term human development that will help them improve the quality of their lives in the long term. Programme facilitators had to be creative in mobilizing people to participate actively in the endeavor. In remote villages in Bakun for example, the staff at first had a hard time gathering people for meetings, unless they show that they had something to offer.

Indigenous cultural traditions also need to be considered. In the town of Upi, there is a strong tradition of respect for the Datu, project staff say. The political and leadership structure is such that officers of the organization can only make decisions regarding matters of common interest with the participation of the Datu. The staff in Bakun also observed that villagers generally tend to defer to elders, thus the relative youthfulness of the extension workers sometimes worked to their disadvantage.



CHANGING PEOPLE

In the Malungon Tribal Congress, the officers learned to make decisions in keeping with the times, and to solve their problems in a harmonious manner. The former chairman of the community organization, for example, had to resign when he ran for a seat in the municipal council. The group came up with the policy not to allow officers to run for public office because they are afraid the organization and its funds might be used for political motives. There were also times when the council of leaders made decisions that they found difficult to implement, such as the release of loans covering the entire amount of the available RLF in the same year. They did not anticipate the drought and the pestilence, or consider that agriculture is a very risky business. But instead of blaming anyone or ignoring the problem, they faced it squarely by dividing the responsibility of collecting the payments among the board members per district. When INDISCO funding ceased, MALTRICO sustained the project and maintained organizational unity through a strong spirit of volunteerism. Members of the Council of Leaders agreed to take turns helping in the project office. When there are available funds from the project for transportation, they pay their own fare or even ride their horse to the office if necessary. "That's how self-reliant we are," says project manager Arman Guile.

LOGISTICAL CONCERNS

With most of the partner communities living in remote areas, it was inevitable for the project staff to encounter a number of logistical difficulties in facilitating the implementation of project activities.

Among the extension workers in Bakun, where they have to hike up to 13 hours just to reach one of the mountain villages, the joke is that they will have to request for a chopper soon in order to be able to reach some specific project sites. Communication is also a major problem, with the solar-powered Public Calling Office in the town proper and two-way radio systems in the barangays transmitting messages only when it is not foggy or rainy which is quite seldom.

In the far-flung town of Upi, Datu Lab Sinsuat of the Kuminamar Cooperative has cited the need for a motorboat to facilitate transport of products. In the entire ARMM area, monitoring by the project manager is ideally done once a month for each project site but due to distances involved and security concerns, field visits had to be minimized and instead mobile phones had to be relied on to get updates and deliver messages.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

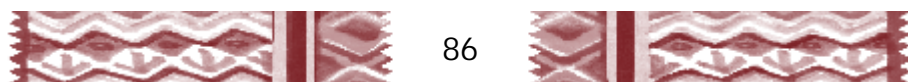
Handicraft makers in Lanao del Sur have a different problem in terms of raw materials needed for their products. In Tugaya, brassware makers are worried about the shortage in the supply of an organic wax called tigus, which comes from the sap of a certain tree that used to grow in nearby forests. Since the trees were depleted, they have been buying from far-off sources in Davao and Cotabato. In Dayawan, the weavers have a problem looking for taro or beeswax which is used to dye and strengthen the fabric. This material is getting scarce and expensive, and they have to order from faraway places like Davao.

ANCESTRAL DOMAIN AND TENURIAL SECURITY

All three partner communities that are implementing their respective ancestral domain management plan have made great strides under the INDISCO programme, but they believe that the sustainability of their effort would be greatly enhanced if the government would issue their respective Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) as stipulated in the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997. Another long-term activity which the BITO, FEMMATRICs, and MALTRICO are preparing to undertake is to help families or clans secure individual Certificates of Ancestral Land Titles (CALT) to strengthen their security of tenure. However, they can only do this if they already have their community CADT. With the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) still experiencing organizational and operational difficulties, it is unclear when the partner communities will obtain their titles.

BITO project manager Amos Beta-a said the community has submitted to the concerned agencies all the requirements for having their CADC converted into a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title. They are hoping that the title would be granted very soon.

For the FEMMATRICs, project manager Cosme Lambayon says that at first there was lack of support from surrounding barangays and local government units for the management of the ancestral domain by the communities themselves, but in time, they learned to accept it after they understood the concept. A member of the FEMMATRICs Board of Trustees, Datu Paquito Uban, said the local governments were concerned that their control over territories would be diminished, but the community organization made the officials understand that it is simply protecting the rights of the Matigsalug-Manobo community. Lambayon says they had to



CHANGING PEOPLE

emphasize that in pushing for their ancestral domain claim, they are not concerned with extending political boundaries but the eradication of destructive utilization of natural resources. The Federation coordinates with the DENR on applications for permit or license to use natural resource within the ancestral domain and has rejected one mining project so far. Land use permits require approval from the Federation, such as the renewal of special permits for the operation of resorts located within the ancestral domain.

The Aeta community in Botolan, Zambales has a different concern. They are not going after their ancestral homeland in the mountains, but they do want to get permanent tenure in the village where they were resettled by the government three decades ago. Although the family that supposedly owns the land is not forcing them out aggressively, residents have put the procurement of individual titles on top of their list of priorities. They want to get rid of the insecurity of their current existence at the soonest possible time.

PEACE AND ORDER PROBLEMS



Ethnic and political conflicts have existed in the ARMM for a long time, so it is no longer surprising that peace and order concerns are high on the list of difficulties facing the partner communities in the area.

Among the weavers in Sultan Kudarat, transport of products is a major problem. Aside from pitched battles between rebels and soldiers, traders also fear highway robbery. *“Naistambay ang produkto dahil sa giyera,”* (Our products are stockpiled here because of the war) one member says. Datu Lab Sinsuat of Kuminamar considers security concerns their biggest problem in Upi, since the weavers often have to hide for fear of armed vigilante squads that roam the place. In Dayawan, Bai Deron says people are scared to work sometimes because firefights might suddenly erupt and they would get caught in the crossfire. They have seven teams that work in sheds, with seven to 10 members each. Their problem is two-fold: the insurgency and warring clans. In Tugaya, the organization put all the equipment in the training center which the rebels have not raided because they respect the community members. Bai Deron recalled that foreigners used to visit Dayawan to buy malong, accents, and vests because they are known for the best quality of craftsmanship. Since the fighting broke out this year, sales are down.





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the World



When she sees the flaws, no matter how imperceptible, a good weaver will not make any excuses for it. Instead, she thinks of how she can improve the woven product. Did she buy the right thread? Did she choose the proper colors? What went wrong in the execution of the design? She goes back to the beginning of the process, and resolves to do it better the next time around.

WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

When all is said and done, partner communities can only learn from their experiences, strive to avoid mistakes and do better as they continue to plan and implement their community development activities. Sometimes, there are circumstances beyond their control that need to be solved in the larger sphere outside their communities.

As the partner communities showed, indigenous peoples often understand and identify most with the kind of development that is built within the framework of their own culture. One indicator is the incorporation of their indigenous knowledge systems and practices into the development process. Activities in the pilot sites also proved to be most effective when existing indigenous institutions performed a lead role in the process.

Weakened by a history of outside intervention that sought to assimilate indigenous communities into mainstream culture and society, individual and collective self-reliance among the partner communities were strengthened in a sustainable manner through facilitative support from the INDISCO programme. In most of the project sites, better results were derived when partner agencies served only as facilitators of community processes – supporting people’s initiatives to develop their individual and collective capacities and solve their own development problems.

LEARNING FROM THE PROCESS

- Development assistance is meaningful only if it is enabling – something given to the intended beneficiaries to use as a seed capital or tool for generating sustainable results
- A community-driven participatory approach to project implementation is a powerful means for strengthening individual and collective self-reliance
- It is more beneficial for assisting agencies and organizations to simply serve as facilitators rather than main actors in the project implementation process
- Indigenous people’s development could be more sustainable if it is anchored in their own culture
- Community organizations founded on existing indigenous institutions are the best channels of development assistance to indigenous peoples
- Community ownership of development projects, as reflected in their own integrated ancestral domain development and protection plans or community development plans, is crucial for purposes of ensuring project sustainability

CHANGING THE WORLD

Indications of sustainability in some pilot sites is attributed to the fact that partner communities see the project as theirs, and the INDISCO programme as well as concerned government agencies and non-government organizations as facilitators. Indeed, community ownership of development projects is critical for ensuring project sustainability.

The following policy recommendations were generated from discussions with the project partners about their problems and prevailing conditions:

1. Institutionalization of a community-driven participatory approach to indigenous peoples development.

In all the pilot project sites, the partner communities have expressed satisfaction and preference for the community-driven participatory approach in pushing for their development. They have recommended, along with other advocates, that it should now be made a matter of policy that the indigenous peoples be allowed to take the lead in planning and pursuing their own development activities within the framework of their indigenous culture. This would help neutralize the dole-out approach to development assistance and encourage facilitative interventions.

2. Integration of subjects on IKSP into the formal educational system

The BITO in Bakun, Benguet has proposed the incorporation of songs, dances, and indigenous art in the elementary and high school curricula. They also want to include the teaching of values inspired by the indigenous culture (see *Chapter 3*) in the schools. In Bukidnon, the FEMMATRICs is advocating also the teaching of indigenous rituals and performances in schools. They have sponsored several Matigsalog and Manobo children to get an education degree so they can teach indigenous ways to students. The Malungon Tribal Congress is lobbying with DECS to incorporate the IKSP of the Tagakaolo and B'laan tribes in the elementary and high school curricula in Malungon and Sarangani.

Indeed, partner communities are one in saying that the incorporation of lessons on indigenous knowledge systems and practices into the educational system is a potent mechanism for the preservation and promotion of indigenous culture. In this way, the common perception that indigenous practices belong to backward societies may be discarded.



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

3. Provision of safety nets for indigenous peoples adversely affected by import liberalization

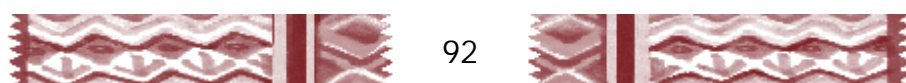
As a result of globalization, there is an influx of mass-produced and cheaper blankets in the Baguio City market, affecting indigenous women weavers. Project manager Geraldine Cacho says their weaving industry might die if nothing is done about the problem. This problem may also spread to other indigenous communities especially in Mindanao, which is now flooded with affordable ethnic products from Indonesia and Thailand. They are now praying that existing policies be specifically adjusted to make responsive support services and safety nets accessible to them.

4. Protection of the traditional fishing grounds of indigenous peoples

In the province of Tawi-Tawi, project manager Mike Asakil notes that local fishers are losing out to commercial fishing outfits, including those coming from foreign countries. Concerned government agencies are not enforcing the laws that protect ancestral fishing grounds and the country's exclusive economic zone adequately. This problem has made a tremendous negative impact on the Sama people, whose livelihood has always depended on the sea.

5. Continuing support for the promotion of indigenous arts and crafts

To gain a competitive marketing edge, it is necessary for indigenous handicraft makers to be provide continuing support for them to create new culturally-inspired products that will cater to the demands of an increasingly selective clientele. This is clearly indicated in the pilot sites where such support is being provided but on a limited scale. Further studies are needed to generate information that may guide indigenous communities to adapt to the changing times. On the other hand, communities such as Dayawan that are known for excellent traditional designs may choose to specialize in the craft and concentrate on a more vigorous promotion of their work. The global trend points to creative marketing techniques as the key to better sales, so the tribal communities may be assisted in this area. Catalog preparation, in the case of Dayawan, is a step in the right direction. It needs to be augmented with imaginative descriptions of their handicraft to capture the interest of buyers.



CHANGING THE WORLD

6. Institutionalization of support mechanisms for the transfer of IKSP to the young

As pointed out by the women weavers of Dayawan, their elderly experts need to pass on their skills to younger weavers. Assistance to indigenous women weavers in this regard can be pursued through a system of mentoring that will ensure thorough training on the part of indigenous youth, who have to be selected on the basis of their positive attitude and strong sense of responsibility to the community. Aside from craft-oriented villages, the method may also be extended to other indigenous communities that still have a tradition of storytelling, arts and culture, agricultural practices, and other aspects of indigenous life.

7. Development of an indigenous people's cooperative system anchored on the indigenous culture

From their experience in facilitating project activities, INDISCO staff believe that policy adjustments should be made to pave the way for the emergence of an indigenous people's cooperative system. Such a system would take into account the unique cultural practices of indigenous communities. This is a creative step which could contribute significantly to the process of strengthening the indigenous peoples' individual and collective self-reliance.

In a national workshop held under the INDISCO programme in November 2000, where the results of this documentation were presented, participants gave additional suggestions on how to promote and reinforce the positive results of the programme in the Philippines. Among these are:

- The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples should take steps to replicate the community-driven participatory approach to indigenous peoples development which was shown to be effective among the partner communities in the INDISCO pilot project sites.
- Facilitative support services to indigenous people should always have a para-legal component.
- Indigenous people's rights to their intellectual properties need to be protected.
- Customary laws must be shielded from manipulative treatment. Indigenous peoples should document and update their customary laws (e.g. guide book,



WEAVING A NEW WEB OF LIFE

institutionalized sharing of experiences and best practices) under the principle of self-determination and get this information into the consciousness of the mainstream population.

- ❑ There should be an inventory of existing laws and policies that have an impact on indigenous people's rights and development.
- ❑ In relation to national policy on indigenous peoples, the gap between law and practice should be bridged through education and training.
- ❑ A Philippine indigenous peoples website should be established where important subjects, such as the IPRA, self-delineation of ancestral domains, community mapping, formulation of ancestral domain development and protection plans by indigenous communities, and the like could be tackled.
- ❑ An active lobby for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 should be launched.

Joey Austria of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) ancestral domains management program said the experiences in the 12 pilot project sites under the INDISCO programme showed that the paradigms of non-government organizations and government agencies must shift from being implementers to being facilitators of indigenous peoples development, if they are to remain relevant.


Atty. David Dao-as, chairman of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, requested participants to continue supporting the implementation of the Indigenous People's Rights Act. He reported that the NCIP has identified 181 ancestral domain claims so far, covering an estimated 2.5 million hectares out of the Philippines' 30 million-hectare land area. Dao-as stressed that any initiative to provide support services for indigenous people's development must first tackle the issue of land tenure security before anything else.

NCIP Commissioner Datu Migketay Victorino Saway pointed out that the particular needs and conditions of indigenous communities have to be considered at all times. These include their system of leadership, health practices, defense and security mechanisms, preservation of their territorial and cultural integrity, and other factors that define their nationhood.

At the same time, Saway stressed the need for harmony between indigenous and western-style cultures. "We are not isolated from other parts of the world," he said. "We need to trade. Thus, we need to interface ... we need development which does not marginalize but empowers us and promotes our cultural identity."







For centuries, indigenous peoples all over the world have been known for the intricate fabric, baskets, and mats that they weave from materials found in their natural environment. But few of us realize that it is an arduous task. A weaver of clothing selects fibers and thread, untangles them, and arranges the material painstakingly to create a coherent pattern.

In this documentary, indigenous communities in the Philippines have shared their thoughts to weave a colorful tale of trials and triumph in their quest for a better future. From the northern highlands of Luzon to the southern islands of Tawi-Tawi, they pursue a common dream: to regain their self-esteem and culture of self-reliance that were lost when colonization and migration swept through their villages.

Through an innovative programme of the International Labour Organization called INDISCO, these communities are getting closer to their dream. The acronym stands for Inter-Regional Programme to Support Self-Reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Communities through Co-operatives and Self-Help Organizations. Project implementation began in 12 pilot sites at various periods since 1994. Unlike previous assistance to indigenous communities, the INDISCO Programme which is being pursued in partnership with the Philippine Government, gives its partners the freedom to chart their own development and manage their activities. Indigenous peoples make most of the major decisions and handle the project funds and other resources themselves, with only facilitative guidance and assistance from the programme.

The result is a tapestry of hope woven by indigenous peoples from various ethnic traditions. They combine ancient wisdom with new tools to re-discover and renew their linkages with their heritage, even as society evolves at dizzying speed around them.

This is the story of their initial journey.