

Kêtiindêg

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IPDEV
Empowering Indigenous
Peoples in the Autonomous
Region in Muslim Mindanao

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Kêtindêg, in Teduray roughly means standing up for something, making one be seen and be felt among the many. The word is not far from the Cebuano, Tagalog or Maguindanao variations of *tindog*, *tindig* and *tindeg* respectively. It is a fitting title for a regular publication that attempts to capture the experiences gathered in this journey of recognizing the rights of the Lumads in the ARMM

Fiyo teresang!

Tracing trails, staking signs:

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

“...one team had to walk for seven hours and about three hours horse ride in order to reach a target barangay.”



ADVOCACY work for Indigenous Peoples in the ARMM has been ongoing since February 2012.

The main work constitutes the profiling of IPs, delineation of their ancestral domains and programs of empowerment where IPs can fully participate in existing government mechanisms as envisioned by both the Local Government Code (LGC) or RA 7160 of 1991 and the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) or RA 8371 of 1997.

Fr Eliseo "Jun" Mercado, OMI, Executive Director of IAG, said in the project launching in May 2012 that the IPs have a long way to go when it comes to their full participation and expression of their self-determination within their ancestral domain since the application of IPRA is not immediately applicable to the ARMM owing to its 'autonomy' under the Organic Act or RA 9054.

"For this reason," he said, "the sole instrument at hand is the LGC and the 1987 Constitution that recognizes the rights of the IPs".

He said part of the advocacy envisioned in the ARMM is for the local legislature or the Regional Assembly to enact its own IPRA and establish a sort of Regional Commission for the Indigenous Peoples (RCIP) enjoying the same powers and privileges as the NCIP in the national level.

But the crux of the work is to make the IP leaders fully participate in all local councils in their communities. It is not simply to have the IP voice

heard, but to make them truly stakeholders both in local governance as well as in the development of their communities.

In this new venture, IAG has partnered with Development Consultants (DEVCON), particularly in the IP communities where it has extensive contacts. On the national and international level, IAG's new venture is made possible through the funding coming from Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the European Union.

The project did not come out of the blue. After the passing of the IPRA in 1997, nearly half a million IPs comprising 20 per cent of the ARMM constituency remains at a disadvantage before the law.

The project document states that "...the problem stems from the absence of an enabling law that is supposed to be enacted by the Regional Legislative Assembly in the ARMM."

It is hoped that with empirical data produced by IPDEV, legislators and planners will come up with research-based decisions and give their constituents due recognition and protection, putting them at par with the rest of the IPs in the country.

Consultations will continue and





utmost care is undertaken to ensure the acceptance and outcomes of the project in the targeted barangays in the ARMM.

Community acceptance

At the barangay level, courtesy visits were made to the barangay captains, who usually join the orientation and participated in the selection of community volunteers. The community volunteers (CVs) are then trained in various activities like conducting a demographic survey, self-delineation and land mapping, etc.

Coordination meetings were conducted between DEVCON and the Project Management Office (PMO) to constantly clarify operational concerns after the Inception Workshop.

Twelve Development Facilitators (DFs) were grouped into teams; and team leaders were designated based on field experience. Clustering was finalized with the regional tribal



groups and the Office of Southern Cultural Communities or OSCC.

Presence of IPs in Wao were ascertained not only consist of Higaonon, but also Tiguhanon, Matigsalog, Manobo, Pulangion, Umayamnon, B'laan, Bagobo who were mostly migrant workers

from the neighboring province of Bukidnon.

Test activities were done in the remotest villages of Wao, Lanao del Sur. Evaluation ctivities were undertaken before proceeding with the Maguindanao barangays.

It is worth to note that the fare of

MILESTONES & EVENTS



April 2012

Courtesy Visits to ARMM Regional Governor /
Deputy Governor for IPs / 6th Infantry Division
/ Office of Southern Cultural Communities



April 15, 2012

Signing of MOU between ARMM
and Institute for Autonomy and
Governance (IAG)

‘habal-habal’ motorcycles which can carry up to 5-6 passengers, horses and pump boats immediately increase once the operators know that the passengers are non-residents of the area. Field staff sought the help of barangay officials in regulating the fare; they in turn recommended particular modes of transportation in succeeding trips to the area.

Bad weather and road conditions also contributed to the delay of some activities. For instance, one team had to spend three hours for a ride on horseback in order to reach a particular barangay. Sometimes, it would take them nine hours to reach another barangay on foot.

IPDEV



RLA: A Call for Sobriety & Appropriate Action



*A privilege speech delivered by
Assemblyman Deonato Mokuduf,
Representative for IPs
Regional Legislative Assembly on
9 August 2012*

LET me greet you all my esteemed colleagues in this august body a significant World Indigenous Peoples Day!

The recent harassments done by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters on the Armed Forces of the Philippines as we all know has done undescrivable harm not only untothemselves but most especially to the peace loving peoples of Mindanao.

I need not describe to you how we are suffering again from this blow on the hopes of many to attain peace in our land, not to mention the total disregard for all the effort each of us has contributed to the attainment of this peace.

I wish to bring to refresh your memories on how we have also seen the conventional response to situations like this. I say conventional because the expected results did not happen, even if the same approach

was applied to recurring problem of harassments.

Indeed, we are grateful for the immediate response of government and kindhearted sectors to provide humanitarian relief to displaced individuals. But the situation is more complex than being addressed in a temporary manner like providing food, medicines and shelter.

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples like the Tedurays, Lambangian, and Dulangan Manobo have lived in the mountains of the Daguma Range where Mt Firis is located.

Mt Firis is sacred ground for the IPs, -- it is where we exercise our spirituality as a people. Taking away your places of worship is also taking away our identity.

For the IPs, land is life. We cannot be separated from the land because it is what gives us life and identity. To forcibly remove us from our land to

be put in evacuation centers would be a blatant violation to our rights.

The IPs, epitomized by the displaced residents on Hill 224, have signified that they will stay where they are than be housed in evacuation centers. They have adapted coping mechanisms to hold their ground while waiting for assistance to where they are. We appeal to those concerned to listen to our plea. Experience has already taught them that once they leave their land, they cannot return because somebody else is occupying it. All of us would not want that to happen again.

We earnestly call on the government to exercise its democratic mandate to protect its people.

Tedurays, Lambangians and Dulangan Manobos are a peaceful people. Nobody wants them pushed to the wall just to assert their rights and identity.

Please declare Mt Firis as a Peace Zone. **IPDEV**



July 4, 2012

Privilege Speech of Assemblyman
Mokudef requesting for legislative
inquiry on Hill 224 situation

July 4, 2012

Creation of Technical Working Group to review
amendments to RA 9054 and Implementing Rules and
Regulations (IRR) of Tribal Peoples' Rights Act or Muslim
Mindanao Autonomy Act 241

A UNIFIED DECLARATION: MT. FIRIS IS A SACRED GROUND

WE, the Indigenous Peoples of the ARMM, particularly the Téduray, Lambangian and Dulangan Manobo, who are directly affected by the recurring cycles of violence in the Mt Firis Complex call upon one and all to hear our plea;

That the recent armed conflict between the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and the Armed Forces of the Philippines as we all know has done indescribable harm not only upon each other but most especially to the peace-loving non-Islamized Indigenous Peoples of the Mt Firis Complex;

- That this is not the only violent incident in recent history that has marred the land of our ancestors;
- That the suffering brought about by displacements is another blow to the efforts of many people including the government to attain peace, genuine reform and development;
- That we are grateful for the government and other kindhearted sectors that have provided relief assistance to displaced persons;

*“...a revered history
that has been handed
down the generations
through oral tradition.”*

- But the situation is more complex than just being addressed in a temporary manner like the provision of food, medicines and shelter.

In the face of all this, let it also be known to one and all that since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples like the Tédurays, Lambangian, and Dulangan Manobo have lived peacefully in the mountains of the Daguma Range where Mt Firis is located. Mt Firis holds among these peoples a revered history that has been handed down the generations through oral tradition;

- That this is where Lagey Firis practiced his tribal spiritual leadership;
- That Lagey Firis ascended onto heaven without dying (demniyat) from an exact spot known as Batew;
- That Gogon Ignacio was the last Chieftain at Batew afoot Mt Firis, the sacred ground of the Teduray and Lambangian;
- That since then, we, the non-Islamized Indigenous Peoples regularly visited the place for pilgrimage and spiritual nourishment.

July 25, 2012
Courtesy visit and presentation to
National Commission on Indigenous
Peoples En Banc

July 26, 2012
Courtesy visit and presentation to Office
of the Presidential Assistant on the Peace
Process

Learning conflict resolution from other IPs

SIX representatives of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) from different countries shared their experiences on how they are helping restore justice and build peace in their respective communities.

Speakers include Randal Ross of the Aborigines of Australia, Seng Zin of the Kachin Tribe in Burma, Hein Karlos Mano of Papua (Indonesia), Matt Le Blanc of First Nation Peoples in Canada, Francis Semoso of

Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, Bo-I Era C. Espana of the Monuvu Tribe of Mindanao, Philippines.

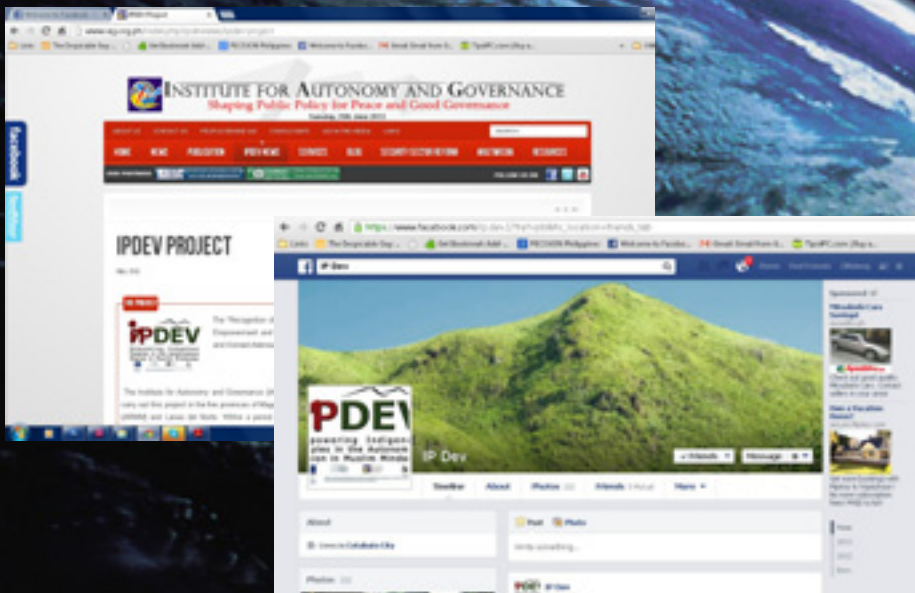
Cultural presentations were performed by Mindanao Peaceweavers Cultural Group.

The Public Forum on “Restoring Justice, Building Peace” is part of the MPI Annual Peacebuilding Program, providing opportunities for mutual learning and celebration of Indigenous Practices and how they face pressing global issues.

IPDEV had the privilege of joining the forum and learn from the practices of other cultures through the invitation of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI), Kinaiyahan Foundation and Mindanao Peaceweavers in May of 2012. **IPDEV**



GLOBAL PRESENCE: IPDEV on the Net



ONLINE presence is global presence
24 hours a day, seven days a week.

By going online, we hope to achieve
our goals in this rapidly changing
digital environment.

It is in keeping with our desire
to link partners, stakeholders and
communities. So far, IPDEV has more
than 900 direct friends and even
more indirect contacts in its social
networking site.

Being online gives access to
information where you may find
what you need to know about other
organisations, funding, development
programs, laws and much more.

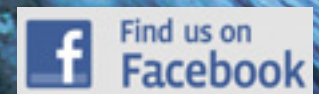
Given the geographical terrain in
the ARMM, being online may just
provide a fast, cost effective way
of exchanging ideas or relaying
messages.

This will also give opportunity
to a large number of people to
collaborate and discuss shared
interests across provinces, regions
and even countries.

And yes, the world wide web
gives chance to even the smallest
organization to present its
achievements - and its needs - to the
world. As said, organizations that
put up a site will achieve even more
visibility for their own effort.

Add us on facebook and follow our
work:

www.facebook.com/ip.dev.1



<http://www.iag.org.ph/index.php/ipdevnews/ipdev-project>

Feedback: Key to Proper Engagement

"We were always asked. But we do not know what they did with our answers. Hope this time they will tell us."

-- Community Stakeholder

ABOUT 50 persons representing various stakeholders in the ARMM met on May 8, 2012, at the IAG Conference Hall and discussed the direction of the IPDEV Project, or 'Recognition of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao for their Empowerment and Sustainable Development'.

Such activity is part of the constant efforts to put the IP agenda into mainstream governance, pointed out Aveen Acuña-Gulo, co-project manager of the newest endeavor for Indigenous Peoples funded by the European Union.



PROJECT SOUNDING BOARD MEMBERS			
PERMANENT	SECTORAL	IPs ORGANIZATIONS	IP POLITICAL STRUCTURES
ARMM Regional Governor – Gov Mujiv Hataman/ CabSec. Khal Mambuay Campong ARMM Deputy Governor for IPs – Mr Larry Tanzo OSCC – Director Fatima Kankan RLA Representative for IPs – Hon. Deonato Mokudef Teduray – Timuay Jovito Martin Lambangian – Timuay Ernelio Mann Dulangan Manobo – Sultan Nestor Bualao Higaonon – Mr Rodolfo Linsagan	Civil Society Org. – Sr Susan Bolanio, OND; Archie Buaya, MinHRAC Religious – Bishop Danilo Bustamante, Episcopal Church Academe – Prof. Sheila Algabre, NDU Media – John Unson, NUJP Business – Pete Marquez, PCCI AFP – Col Modesto Asto/ – Capt Aurora Rabang PNP – P/Supt Oscar Nantes	Organization of Teduray Lambangian Conference – Timuay Melanio Ulama Mamalu Tribal Organization – Timuay Antonio Juan Teduray Lambangian Women’s Organization – Florencia Badisto, Chair Ancestral Domain Claimants – Timuay Alim Bandara, Chair, TLADMADC	Timuay Justice and Governance – Timuay Labi Sannie Bello Sultanate of Maguindanao – Datu Guiambangan Asim Kewit Kitab (Dulangan) – Mario Kadingilan

In that stakeholders meeting were key decision makers who expressed so much willingness in being involved in realizing the project.

The three-year project hopes to gather cultural information and baseline data to facilitate the formulation of the Ancestral Domain Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP); Capacitate and equip IPs in the ARMM with knowledge and skills that will increase their active participation in local governance; Facilitate the inclusion of the ADSDPP into LGU planning instruments and community development plans; and institute strategic advocacy campaigns that strengthen IP ability to exercise their collective rights.

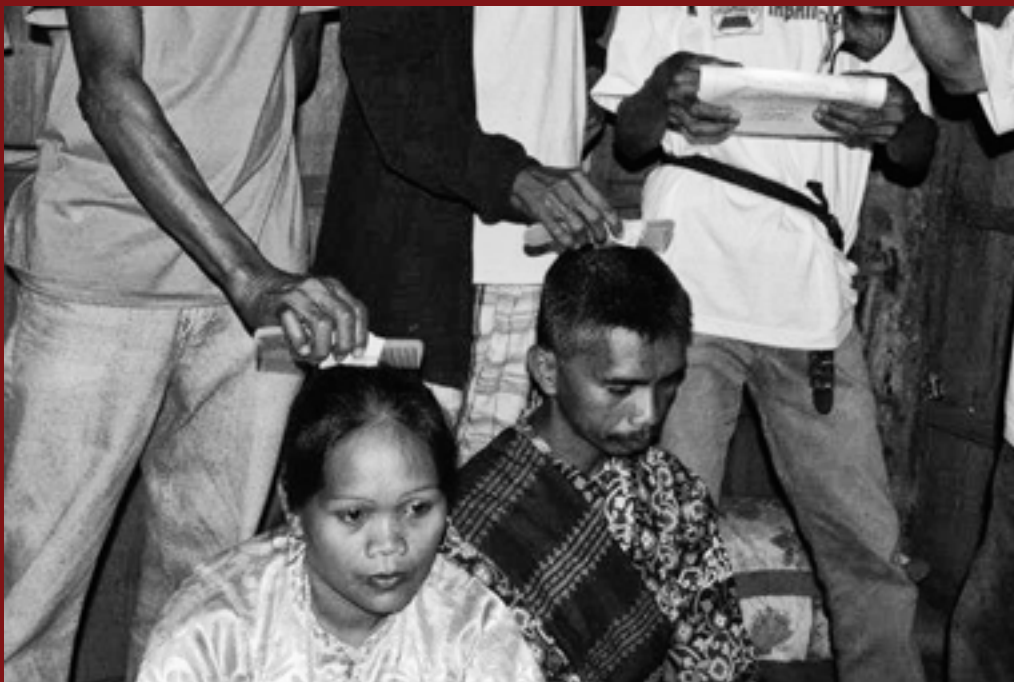
The stakeholders shared and discussed existing initiatives and complemented inter-organizational efforts to address IP issues.

A Project Sounding Board (PSB) was formed from among the participants. The 15-20-person board serves as a feedback mechanism and provide directions on project implementation. It will meet on a quarterly basis until month 30 of the project.



Teduray Wedding in Frames





A PHOTO STORY

IN traditional courtship and marriage among the Teduray, it is the parents that decide and gets obeyed.

It is natural among Tedurays that the boy's mother will look for his partner in life or what they call, kenogon. Interestingly, the maternal grandparents also help in looking for the wife-to-be for their grandson, even calling on relatives to help find a fitting wife.

After carefully checking on the background of a girl, the family of the boy will then send a family member acting as emissary to meet and discuss with the girl's family about their intentions and then formally offers the tising, a contract for marriage.

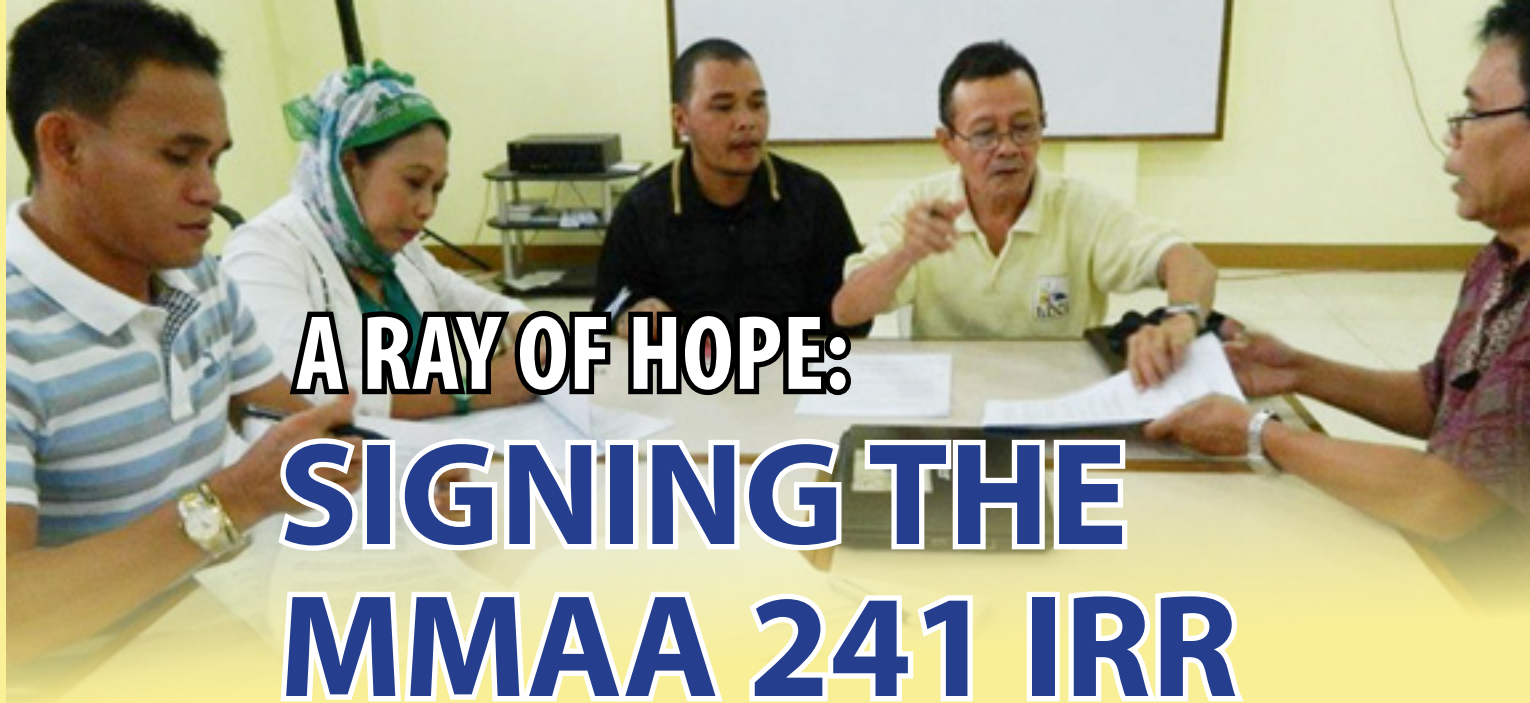
If the girl's parents accepts the tising, they will then send their own representative with the bantangan over to the family of the boy.

There the emissary will talk about the offer of the boy's family and then state the amount of flasa for the marriage to take place. **IPDEV**





“... we reiterate the affirmation of our territorial rights based on traditional territorial agreements forged by our ancestors through sacred peace pacts known as “pakang”, “sapa”, “dyandi”, and “tampuda hu balagon” and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (R.A. 8371) and other international declarations...”



A RAY OF HOPE: SIGNING THE MMAA 241 IRR

DUE to the autonomous nature of the Muslim Mindanao Region, it is said that the 1997 Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act was inapplicable.

This, despite the close to 500,000 Indigenous Peoples inhabiting some 81 barangays in the region since time immemorial.

Such governing structures effectively discriminated, putting at a disadvantage and unequal before the law, the IPs which accounts to about 20 percent of the ARMM constituency.

The situation in the region prompted the passage of a law that would ensure the promotion and protection of IP rights, thus, the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act 241 or better known as the Tribal Peoples' Rights Act which was passed into law by the ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly in June 11, 2008.

The law, however, just gathered

dust since its passage mainly due to the lack of an enabling tool to keep MMAA 241 moving.

With IPDEV, a project on the IPs' sustainable development, leaders and stakeholders untiringly worked on an instrument of empowerment that should then be integrated into local development plans through the formulation of an Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan.

The project sought to address the absence of an enabling law in the ARMM that recognizes the IP's rights and social justice as embodied in the IPRA law, the 1987 Philippine Constitution and other existing international law for IPs.

It involved capacity building activities for the empowerment and strengthening of IP self-governance as well as advocacy for socio-legal and administrative reforms in the

ARMM.

Months of working on a draft, the Implementing Rules and Regulations of MMAA 241 or better known as Tribal Peoples' Rights Act was finally signed October 25, 2012, by the members of the IP Technical Working Group headed by Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) Executive Director Bai Fatima Kanakan.

The signing came as the country observes the National Indigenous Peoples Month in October.

The TWG has for its members Assm. Deonato Mokudef, IP representative in the ARMM Legislative Assembly, Upi, Maguindanao mayor Ramon Piang, Deputy Gov. for IPs Hilario Tanzo, Dencio Kadingilan from the Dulangan Manobo, Timuay Labi Sannie Bello of the Timuay Justice and Governance.



AFFIRMING **IPs** **EXISTENCE &** **DESTINY**



EIGHTY tribal leaders from the B'laan, Dulangan Manobo, Erumanen ne Menuvu, Higaonon, Kulamanen, Lambangian, Manobo, Langilan Manobo, Mangguangan, Matigsalog, Monuvu, Pulangiyan Manobo, T'boli, Tagakaolo, Teduray and Tinananon Monuvu tribes gathered in Midsayap, Cotabato on November 3-6.

In that meeting dubbed the "Indigenous Peoples' Conference on the Peace Processes in Mindanao," the tribal leaders made known their inherent, inalienable and non-negotiable right to self-determination and committed to engage in all Mindanao peace processes.

"Today, we continuously and strongly assert our distinct identity as Indigenous Peoples forged by our history and legacy. We therefore demand that our identity be recognized and respected and not to

be subsumed by other identities," the leaders formally declared. .

In such declaration, the leaders asserted that, "As ancestral domain is the seedbed of the Indigenous Peoples' existence and destiny, we reiterate the affirmation of our territorial rights based on traditional territorial agreements forged by our ancestors through sacred peace pacts known as "pakang", "sapa", "dyandi", and "tampuda hu balagon" and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (R.A.8371) and other international declarations. Further, we reiterate our rights to the management, development and control over our ancestral domains and the resources therein."

Furthermore, the leaders invoked "the primacy of our customary laws (adat te kukuman, pooviyan woy gontangan, tena menuwa), guiding our traditional governance and justice systems. Thus, we demand the sole autonomy to oversee our peoples and territories. All issues and concerns pertaining to indigenous peoples should be addressed in accordance to our traditional processes."

The rest of the declaration read: "With these assertions, we generally call on the Government of Philippines and the revolutionary groups and other stakeholders in the peace

October 26, 2012
Solidarity Climb to
Mt Firis; community
consultation conducted

October 27, 2012
Kanduli Temulak
conducted on the Batew
(Sacred Rock a.k.a. Brown
Stone), the 1st in 12 years

October 29, 2012 –
15th Anniversary IPRA;
Presentation of newly
signed MMAA IRR to
ARMM



processes:

1. To work for the full implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (R.A. 8371);
2. To fully implement and establish the Autonomous Region of Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao;
3. To fast track the processing of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) and the issuance of Certificate of Ancestral Domain/Land Title (CALT);
4. To spare the ancestral domains of the Indigenous Peoples from becoming battlegrounds and to support its declaration as Zones of Peace;
5. To stop the recruitment of Indigenous Peoples, women and children in the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the other armed groups;
6. To recognize and correct the historical injustices committed against the Indigenous Peoples

through just reparation and restoration of relationships.

7. To launch open and continuous multi stakeholders dialogues between the communities and the armed groups.

We specifically call for the GPH and MILF peace panels:

1. To recognize and respect the Bangsa-Mamalu autonomy and the tribal self-governance of the Teduray, Lambangian and Dulangan Manobo as enshrined in the customary laws;
2. To fully implement the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) in the proposed Bangsamoro Government;
3. To ensure the representation of IP leaders and IP women to the Transition Commission and the Bangsamoro Government thereafter;
4. To institutionalize conflict resolution mechanisms in accordance to the customary laws of the Indigenous Peoples;

5. To implement broad, systematic and grassroots-based information dissemination and awareness-building on the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

We also specifically call for the GPH and the CPP/NDFP/NPA peace panels:

1. To immediately resume the formal peace negotiations;
2. To activate and localize the Joint Monitoring Committee and guarantee the representation of Indigenous Peoples;
3. To stop the harassments, threats and the summary and extra-judicial killings of indigenous leaders.

With the guiding spirit of Magbabaya and the wisdom and encouragement of our ancestors, we solemnly swear and commit to the abovementioned principles and proposals as Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao who are united to defend and advance our rights and self-determination."



a million, or 20% of its population at that time. Though excruciatingly slow, efforts are underway to have an NCIP or its equivalent in the ARMM to be able to issue a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT).

Not known to engage in armed confrontations to resolve conflict, the IPs retreat to what they think are safer grounds every time they are harassed. What they consider as ancestral land have now been made either camps by revolutionary groups, or subdivided into municipalities, and titled to be their own by political families and settlers. Calls to let them move to evacuation camps which are near the highway are met with the uncertainty that the land that they will return to will already have become logging sites, camps or plantations as what happened in the

past.

We appeal to the media to interview the mayors of the affected municipalities and ask why they allowed these atrocities to flourish; what are their political plans and how they intend to finance it. It would be good to see what type of businesses flourish every time displacements occur. If the answers are incomprehensible, maybe the questions are not precise.

If things are better left unsaid, it is understandable that someone's life may be at stake – or maybe documents can talk.

We call on the Mindanao Humanitarian Team who has the collective capacity and expertise to triangulate data submitted by local government units.

Let it not be said that spoilers of

the peace have higher intelligence quotients in terms of numbers.

And to the consumers of news, a spectator public that has expanded exponentially through social media, may there be more discernment in what is read or heard. May we not be multipliers of lies and halftruths as, according to Socrates, slander becomes the tool of the losing debater.

While all issues and discussions will not fit into this one article, it is clear that self-pity will not solve the crisis symbolized by Hill 224 either. Let us help duty-bearers, policy-makers and each other come up with research-based and informed actions.

Only proactive response will do justice to the faceless indigenous peoples who have long been marginalized.

Citing IPs in the Framework Agreement

RECENT developments on the Mindanao peace process prompted many stakeholders, especially among the Indigenous Peoples (IP) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), wondering what's in store for them in the Framework Agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

With the framework, questions and trepidation surfaced as many IPs expressed apprehensions over losing their own identity and ultimately end up being referred to also as Bangsamoro.

"Is it okay that IPs be not referred to as Bangsamoro?" went one query. "If so, will IPs have the same freedom of choice as the Bangsamoro?"

Timuay Labi (Supreme Chieftain) Sannie Bello of the Timuay Justice and Governance (TJG) of the Teduray and Lambangian tribes in the ARMM has plenty to expound.

The Timuay points out to a provision in the Framework which states that "customary rights and the tradition of the indigenous peoples shall be taken into consideration in the formulation of the Bangsamoro justice system. This may include the recognition of indigenous

processes as alternative mode of dispute resolution.

"But we don't want our justice system to be considered merely as an alternative because we have been practicing this since the time of our ancestors to resolve the conflicts within our tribe. We want this to be clear in the details of the framework.

On provisions regarding territory, the Framework states that "the Bangsamoro basic law shall recognize the collective democratic rights of the constituents of the Bangsamoro". This means that we as Indigenous Peoples also have the collective right to identify our territorial domain, Bello opined.

On basic rights, while the Framework provides that "indigenous peoples rights shall be respected," such provision means "a challenge for us, the baglalans or tribal leaders because we want this to be stated in the Framework holistically and not just in parts," Bello said.

"We want us to be the ones to design what is right for us such as the tribal governance, tribal customary law and justice, and the tribal territorial domain," the supreme leader of the IPs in the ARMM emphasized.

There are about half a million IPs in

the ARMM and they comprise about a substantial 20 percent of the entire population of the region. Substantial in the sense that their rights and interest cannot simply be ignored or neglected.

What needs to be done is to disseminate this information (on the Framework) to the members of the Teduray and Lambangian tribes "because not everybody of us knows and understands this framework agreement, he said.

We need to embark on a massive education and information dissemination to the communities on this issue so as to also ignite critical thinking and points of future actions from the elders, traditional leaders, professionals, youth and women.

Initially, Bello bared, there have been discussions on the issue among baglalan or traditional tribal leaders on how to address such pressing concerns, "coming up with the formation of an indigenous peoples' peace panel who will be sent to lobby for our demands to the establishment of the Bangsamoro government."

Already, the IPs in the ARMM are moving to be involved in the crafting of the fundamental law for the new autonomy, working for an autonomy within an autonomy, a Bangsa-Mamalu within Bangsamoro.

MILESTONES & EVENTS



August 1, 2012
Groundbreaking of
schoolbuilding given by
ARMM to Hill 224



August 5, 2012
Ocular visit to Hill 224

Hill 224: A CYCLE OF OPPRESSION

By **Aveen Acuna Gulo**
IPDEV Project Manager

*(Note: This article has appeared on
the IAG Policy Brief, dated Sept-Oct.,
2012)*

SEVERAL actors figure prominently in a recent armed conflict:

First and foremost is the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters or Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement who harassed military installations in the middle of Ramadhan allegedly to avenge the death of a comrade last June; The military who, under the constraints of the current GPH-MILF peace talks maintains a defensive position considering that Camp Omar of the BIFF/BIFM is still technically an MILF camp; The government on all levels, whose access to the press and cyberspace seems to manifest that emergency relief assistance will already address a situation that repeats itself over the years.



August 8, 2012
IP Leaders hold 1st press
conference hosted by IPDEV re
situation in Hill 224

August 9, 2012
World IP Day Celebrations on Urok
Tawan-tawan (PC Hill)

In this week-old crisis, everybody who has something to say has already been given considerable

time and space on radio, print, television and the Internet despite the Habagat floods in Luzon. The faces of suffering (with children as the easiest sympathygenerating tools), the inhumane living conditions in evacuation centers, the sights and sounds of guns and weapons of destruction, images of reporters with fancy gear in the battle zone, the humanitarian response of rice, medicines and photo ops, the illogical numbers of IDPs – are all the same; only the dates have changed.

Can we still learn?

In this light, may we call upon specifically the media to go beyond the usual reportage. This will help initiatives, i.e. the privilege peeched last July of ARMM Sectoral Representative for IPs Deonato Mokudef calling for a legislative inquiry into the real situation symbolized by Hill 224. Statements issued by IP leaders (both men and women) to declare Mt Firis as a zone of peace still seem not to etch itself in the consciousness of decision-makers, much less the general public.

The rampage that started in the Mt Firis Complex is more than the current peace talks. It is a case of Kêtindég Vol. 1 No. 3

land-grabbing, neo-colonialism, development aggression and annihilation of culture rolled into one.

While it is true that IDPs now start to languish in lowland evacuation centers and truly deserve help, the media can generate action with their sense of fairness and nationhood by covering the plight of the indigenous peoples. Do we really have to wait for the IPs to shed their non-confrontational nature for them to earn precious air time or newspaper space?

Accounts are replete with how IP names were used several times by different sectors either for election purposes or in order to avail of humanitarian and development assistance. Whether it changed their lives for the better is another story.

The Indigenous Peoples (Teduray, Lambangian and Dulangan Manobo or TLaD) know that their ancestral land covers 189,534 hectares with a perimeter of 211 kilometers in Maguindanao alone (The 289,286 hectares documented by the Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) already covers parts of Sultan Kudarat Province and Cotabato City).

This indigenous knowledge has been passed through centuries through oral tradition using natural markers like rivers, rocks, trees

among others. The IP concept of ancestral domain is “private land owned by a community,” and community in this case refers to the three IP groups.

IAG further states that “... between 2002-2006, various Muslim Mindanao Acts created new municipalities carved out from Mt Firis: Datu Unsay, Datu Saudi, Guindulungan, Shariff Aguak and Talayan, which were inevitably ruled by Maguindanao mayors.

Recent regional laws also removed 12 coastal barangays of Upi to form the Datu Blah Sinsuat municipality, and renamed the Teduray ancestral domain portions of Dinaig town into the Datu Odin Sinsuat Municipality.

Faced with the challenge of the Regalian Doctrine where “all lands not otherwise clearly appearing to be privately-owned are presumed to belong to the State” the TLaD have united themselves to have what is left of ancestral domain be given a title on which, under the present IPRA law can only be issued by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

Interestingly, the ARMM chose not to be covered by the IPRA law when it was passed in 1997.

Assurances were made that being autonomous, it can take care of its own IPs who comprise around half



Senirung Deb Firis

(Sheltered at Mt. Firis)

By Timuay Alim Bandara

Chair, TLADMADC

BRIEF historical background of the place:

Mt. Firis is a medium built mountain at Guindulungan, Maguindanao. It has a command view over the surrounding municipalities to as far as Ampatuan in the south to Datu Piang in the east and as far as Cotabato City in the north; and going to the western portions are Upi and South Upi, Maguindanao.

There are however other mountains of high elevations than Firis in the southern portion going west such as Uruk Sayaf in Sharif Aguak, Mt Ketulungan in South Upi and Blit in Upi, Maguindanao. There are also two (2) big bodies of water from the south (Buyaan and Dohon Rivers) that unnoticeably surround Mt. Firis complex. This goes to the marshland and the Cotabato plains.

Other important tribal monuments in the perimeter area of Mt. Firis are Tuduk Meringen, Uruk Lengkuwos, Tuduk Tores, Kenilid and at the foot of Mt. Firis is Batew – a relatively recessed ground area where on

sunny days one can witness the rising sun in the morning and sunset in the evening. To the Teduray, this is the core of their Inged.

For several years, Mt. Firis hosted the MILF Camp Omar under Commander Umbra Kato who now heads the BIFM-BIFF. Mt Firis is also tagged by the military as Hill 714.

Concept of Senirung:

The Bliyan (spiritual leader) believes that there are three (3) basic problems being encountered by humanity while still living on earth and they are as follows:

1. Layaf (hunger) – lack of food due to destruction of nature and misappropriation of natural resources and the products of human labor;
2. Druun (sickness) - physical and emotional pain acquired from bad spirits and energy be it from nature or product of human labor;
3. Sétiboh (war) – existence of unmanageable conflict that resulted or ended up in armed confrontation be it small, medium or large scale.

However, if human beings will

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(Note: This article has appeared on the IAG Policy Brief, dated Sept-Oct., 2012)

take good care of mother earth's food supplies, materials for shelter, medicine and other human needs; layaf, druun and sétiboh will be avoided. And above all, if we treat one another justly with equal opportunity as children of mother Earth, then there is peace and harmony wherever we are on earth. But when this is forgotten or violated by anybody, there will be disorder then suffering follows.

Aware that human beings are creatures that tend to commit mistakes, the Bliyan believe that there will always be problems, hence, disorder and suffering are unavoidable. And in Teduray epics, many instances of conflict between humans and nature, with bad spirits, and with fellow human beings occurred in several places within the Inged. And in their effort to look for solutions, they deeply studied nature and the environment and in doing so – not all but few bliyan were given the power and authority to set free humanity from their sufferings.

The only way through were diyat

and sirungen. Diyat is literally interpreted as bringing the physical human being to heaven to enjoy the eternal and everlasting life. Sirungen is the opposite of the former for the people remained here on earth but that they are re-settled in a secured place by the bliyan and that only the good spirits are visible to them. This way, their status on earth is called SENIRUNG or sheltered.

At times, this was also translated as temporary shelter while waiting for the final diyat to heaven. The Teduray believe that the senirung are still with us on earth but that we cannot see them for they are no longer sinners.

The current situation in the sacred land of Mt. Firis demonstrate the problems mentioned above: layaf,

druun and sétiboh. But DIYAT as a means to set free the victims is now impossible. However, the other legendary way of protecting the people from layaf, druun and sétiboh which is SIRUNGEN can be revisited with an assistance of the real bliyan and use it as an instrument in modern day community peace building activities.

In place of the typical bliyan to spearhead the intervention in the current conflicts at Mt. Firis can be the peace builders, i.e. the civilians, civil society groups, LGU officials, military and police, other agencies of government, the rebel forces and other peace stakeholders locally and in the international levels.



ONE WITH THE WORLD: Celebrating IP Day

WORLD IP Day was first proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 1994, to be celebrated (August 9) every year during the first International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004).

In 2004, the Assembly proclaimed a Second International Decade, from 2005 – 2015, with the theme “A Decade for Action and Dignity.”

The focus of the 2012 International Day was “Indigenous Media, Empowering Indigenous Voices.”

The theme aims to highlight the importance of indigenous media in challenging stereotypes, forging indigenous peoples’ identities, communicating with the outside world, and influencing the social and political agenda.

A special event at the UN Headquarters in New York was held on the 9th of August and featured

speakers and videos of indigenous media organizations.

In the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the World IP Day was planned to be celebrated historically atop Mt Firis, a sacred ground among the IPs.

The IPs and their leaders including their support groups were very excited to join the climb to Mt Firis. On August 3, a team from IPDEV initiated a coordination meeting with IP leaders at Hill 224 and government soldiers posted in the area.

But before the planned celebrations could take place, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters attacked military posts in Maguindanao, including Hill 224 which is the main gateway to Mt Firis. Tension gripped the place for almost a month.

The situation however, failed to dampen the spirit and enthusiasm

of IPs in the area to take part in the world-wide celebrations. It would be a historical part for the IPs in the area to be part of the observance.

Since Hill 224 would pose a security issue, the venue was then agreed to be at Pedro Colina Hill aka PC Hill, which is known to the IPs as Urok (Hill) Tawan-tawan. On it nestles a piece of rock that they consider sacred. (The said rock is now part of the altar of a chapel).

IPDEV Advocacy Specialist Froilyn Mendoza, herself a Teduray, expressed that the “Segoyong” (spirits of ancestors) may not consider it the right time to be done at Mt Firis; and that having it on Urok Tawan-tawan was deemed the guided choice.

The ritual began at dawn of August 9 with a mônêmantad (cultural march) participated in by

representatives from the ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly namely, Assemblyman Deonato Mokudef, Assemblywoman Rahima Datumanong Alba, Assemblywoman Samira Gutoc-Tomawis.

The observance, following the theme “Empowering Indigenous Peoples for Reform and Development” Mênêmantad inok ayon rigonon fêmalangi kêtinanêki kêbati e dêb ingêdê), echoed with the singing of the tribal anthem “Ruray Fusaka (Treasures of the Domains)”.

Timuay Labi (Supreme Chieftain) Sannie Bello made an appeal for thorough understanding of the real issues surrounding the conflict inside Mt Firis.

Timuay (Leader) Alim Bandara, head claimant of the Teduray Lambangian Dulangan Manobo Ancestral Domain Claimants (TLADMADC) together with other IP organizations also made an appeal to the national leadership to declare Mt Firis as a Peace Zone.

Timuay Jovito Martin compared Mt Firis as a sacred place like Mecca to Muslims and the Holy Land to the Christians. They conduct their spiritual rituals on the Sacred Rock (Batew) at Mt Firis regularly until armed men occupied the place.

Mt Firis Complex is also an area that is approximately 90,000 hectares of IP land from which five (5) municipalities were carved: Datu Unsay, Datu Saudi, Guindulungan, Shariff Aguak, and Talayan through various Muslim Mindanao Acts. The said creations were done without consultations with the IPs.



Kētindēg

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