

## Case study

# The Indigenous Peoples of Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park

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### **Ancestral home**

The Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park (MKRNP) in north-central Mindanao is home to three non-Christian and non-Muslim indigenous groups who refer to themselves as *Talaandigs*, *Higaonons* and *Bukidnons*. These indigenous inhabitants are known collectively as *Bukidnon*, a Bisayan word for “people from the mountain,” and they share a common culture and a common language, the *Binukid*.

According to Talaandig tradition, most of Bukidnon was the land of the Talaandig, the people of the slopes (*andig*). When the coastal dwellers moved to the uplands, the Talaandig referred to them as “Higaonon” because the latter came from down the shore (*higa*). The Higaonon claim that their ancestors were coastal dwellers and were the original inhabitants of Misamis Oriental. However, the arrival of the *dumagat* (people from over the sea) during the Spanish times encouraged the natives to move up to the plateaus or uplands, which now belong mostly to Bukidnon province. The Higaonon today occupy communities north of Malaybalay down to the province of Misamis Oriental, while Talaandigs live in communities south of Malaybalay, around Lantapan and Talakag (Suminguit et al. 2001).

According to tradition, as recounted in an epic tale called the *olaging* (a story chanted or narrated for hours), a common ancestor and powerful *datu* (chieftain) named Agbibilin sired four sons who became the ancestors of the present-day Manobo, Talaandig, Maranao, and Maguindanao.

Tribal legend has it that Agbibilin named the mountain Kitanglad, from *tanglad* (lemon grass), a medicinal plant that was associated with the visible portion of the peak left when the mountain was almost submerged during the Great Deluge. The Talaandig and Higaonon claim Mt. Kitanglad as their sacred “temple” and ancestral home. The territory of the Talaandig and Higaonon was set down using several markers established by the *datu*s of times past. The boundaries were usually rivers or peaks of the mountain ranges, locally called *tagaytay*.

The delineation of the different boundaries that separate the different tribes—Talaandig-Higaonon-Bukidnon, Manobo, Ma-

ranao, and Maguindanao—marked the beginning of peaceful coexistence among the four tribes. The tale relates that the four brothers, who became the forebears of the four tribes, were constantly warring with each other over territorial boundaries. Because of the devastating consequences of these wars on the lives of their people, the supreme *datu* commanded the four groups to settle their disputes by delineating the boundaries for each tribe. Tikalaan was the designated meeting place where the *Tampuda ho Balagon* ritual (peace pact) was performed. The warring groups conducted the peace pact by holding on to opposite ends of a rattan vine. The officiating *datu* then cut the rattan in the middle, symbolizing the cessation of the struggle between the groups. For many years, an old house in Barangay Barabyas, Tikalaan, served as a monument to the pact that was sealed on that site. With the coming of the Americans, this structure was destroyed. However, the memory of the exact place where the delineation of boundaries took place still remains.

### **A central presence**

The Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park occupies an area of 47,270 hectares located in the north-central part of Bukidnon, Mindanao. Seven municipalities and a lone city surround it.

Mt. Kitanglad is the highest mountain of Bukidnon province. Its range is centrally located and dominates the Bukidnon plateaus. Its highest peak, called the Dulang-dulang, is 2,938 meters above sea level. The Philippine Volcano Office classifies Mt. Kitanglad as a dormant volcano, along with the other high peaks in southern Bukidnon—Mt. Kalatungan and Mt. Tangkulan. All of these have contributed to the volcanic origin of Bukidnon, its soil having developed from igneous rocks and lahar flows.

### **A natural heritage**

In addition to its cultural significance, MKRNP has also gained prominence as one of the last sanctuaries of the country's natural heritage. As one of the remaining rainforest areas in the country, it is a remarkable biodiversity showcase. In terms of flora, the park is the habitat of many endangered, endemic, rare, and economically important floral species. At least 58 families and 185 species of trees and other woody vegetation species have been recorded in the park. As to its fauna resources, the park is endowed with a variety of rare and endemic species. Of the 63 species of mammals recorded here, about 27 (or 43 percent) are endemic. Thirteen (or 57 percent) of the 25 species of reptiles and 12 (or 46 percent) of the 26 species of amphibians are endemic. Bird life is perhaps the most remarkable biodiversity feature. There are 168 known species of birds found in the park, with about 62 (or 37 percent) being endemic.

Owing to this combination of ecological, economic, social, and cultural importance, the Sangguniang Bayan of Sumilao passed Resolution No. 32 in 1989, endorsing the proclamation of Mt. Kitanglad

as a national park. Then President Corazon Aquino subsequently signed Proclamation No. 677 on December 14, 1990, declaring the Mt. Kitanglad Range a national park.

Two years later, Republic Act No. 7586, otherwise known as the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Law, was enacted, with MKRNP as one of its initial components. Four years later, to operationalize the NIPAS Law, a multisectoral Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) was organized. It has managed the park since then. Legally constituted, the PAMB is the highest governing body of the protected areas. It is made up of representatives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other government line agencies, the local government units (LGUs) at the provincial, municipal, and barangay levels, tribal leaders, private institutions, and nongovernment organizations operating within and immediately outside the periphery of the park.

Finally, on October 26, 1996, during the term of President Fidel V. Ramos, Presidential Proclamation No. 896 elevated MKRNP to a state-proclaimed protected area under the Natural Park category.

MKRNP is now one of the country's 10 sites covered under the Conservation of Priority Protected Areas Project (CPPAP). A seven-year project that took off in 1994, CPPAP's twin goals included biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. It was funded with US\$20 million from the Global Environment Facility. The grant is managed by the World Bank, in partnership with the Government of the Philippines (represented by the DENR) and the NGOs for Integrated Protected Areas (NIPA), all three bound in a tripartite agreement. The NIPA is a national consortium of NGOs that manage the local host-NGOs selected at the site coordinating the project together with its counterpart entity, the DENR-Park Superintendent's Office (PaSu), and its corresponding Protected Area Management Board (PAMB).

The implementation of CPPAP greatly shaped the institutional, community, and cultural developments in MKRNP. The project attempts to demonstrate the interface of community resource management with that of a formal protected area management system. For the first time, DENR linkages with civil society (communities, peoples' organizations, and nongovernment institutions) are proactively initiated and maintained. The project defines a new paradigm of protected area management anchored on local knowledge and experience, while expanding its reach to other stakeholders.

Now on its fifth year, CPPAP-MKRNP has been instrumental in facilitating the formation and strengthening of more than 80 people's organizations, comprising about 1,500 beneficiaries. Most of these are household heads and at the same time members of tribal cooperatives and multipurpose cooperatives, councils of elders, women's groups, and park protection groups. These collective units serve as effective partners in park protection and management. Since 1999, the CPPAP has been instrumental in providing grant funds for nondestructive livelihoods of the IPs (mostly agroforestry-related projects) amounting to Php6.9 million. An additional Php12 million-production grant was released last year from the Livelihood Funds.

Aside from building a critical mass for area protection and operational support for the PAMB, another major accomplishment was the enactment of a specific law for MKRNP on November 9, 2001. This is the first of its kind—a socially legislated agenda—that was adopted by Congress from bill sponsorship to final ratification. Drafting of the Management Plan was completed a year earlier.

## **Social, economic, and cultural profile**

### The absent youth sector

From 1997 to 1998, Mt. Kitanglad's host-NGO, the Kitanglad Integrated NGOs Inc. (KIN), organized the first census and registration of protected area occupants. KIN contracted the Research Institute for Mindanao Culture (RIMCU) to conduct the survey covering all the 28 barangays and 47 *sitios* (cluster of households) of MKRNP. RIMCU reported that there were 451 households who were actual occupants in the buffer zone—a total of 2,512 members, of which 53 percent were males and 47 percent females (Suminguit 1998). An average of 5.57 members constitute each household. This is consistent with the trend on average household size found in rural areas.

The majority of the occupants included in the census identified themselves as Talaandig, and 23 percent said they were Higaonon. Only 7.7 percent claimed they were Bukidnon. Immigrants comprised less than 9 percent, coming from Cebu, Bohol, Iloilo, Zamboanga, and as far as Ifugao in northernmost Philippines.

A synthesis report of KIN (*Talamdan* 1998) reveals that the mean age of the actual occupants is only 19.6 years. High frequencies for ages less than four years old (19.2 percent) and ages five to nine years old (18.2 percent) were observed. This could indicate high fertility incidence among the occupants in the buffer zone.

A salient finding of the census indicated the almost total absence of ages 10 to 19 years old, and this could have skewed the mean age computation. Although the census itself failed to identify the reasons behind the figures, the survey team offers possibilities: the youths might have migrated elsewhere outside the buffer zones, probably in the nearby towns, cities, or plantations, to work or study. Or some of them might have married early and decided to settle in the town center, which is more accessible.

In March 1999, KIN conducted a Stakeholders Workshop prior to the formulation of the PA Management Plan, in which the census report was discussed. The participants pointed out that the occurrence of a seven-month drought that hit northern Mindanao during the survey period caused a high incidence of out-migration from the park. The movements of both young and adults are affected during calamities like the El Niño phenomenon.

RIMCU thus recommends that future social research take into account the mobility of this particular age group. Further discussions

revealed that, if unchecked, this trend bodes ill for the future of these tribes in the buffer zone. Migration exposes the youth to lowland cultures, and there is a high probability that they will eventually be assimilated. Tribal youth's out-migration hastens the process of de-tribalization and de-culturation, so that ultimately the cultures of the indigenous people (IP) become extinct.

#### Indigenous education

Buffer-zone occupants have low formal educational attainment. RIMCU reported that occupants attended an average of 2.7 years of elementary education. Presently, only 66.6 percent of school-age occupants are enrolled in elementary grades. About 28.5 percent of the occupants did not have formal education at all. Only a few of the occupants reached high school (4.4 percent), vocational or two-year college (0.3 percent), and four-year college (0.2 percent) education.

This does not mean, however, that buffer-zone occupants are not educated. Anthropological, upland, and rural development studies and even donor agency policy papers on IPs (e.g., World Bank) recognize the value of traditional or indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). In a national symposium/workshop that focused on indigenous knowledge systems, it was noted that IKS is continuously gaining recognition as a vital tool in sustainable development (PCARRD 1998). In Mt. Kitanglad, the elder segment of the population are even considered cultural experts due to their prodigious and intimate knowledge of their immediate environment. This stock knowledge includes (but is not limited to) land-use management, farming, and other natural-resource utilization techniques, medicinal and edible flora and fauna, cosmology and other intricate ecology systems. With the recognition of the value of local knowledge, social development practitioners are enjoined to pursue development programs anchored on what the people know, what they consider important, and what they consider as their needs and priorities.

#### Of livelihoods and other economic activities

A majority of buffer-zone inhabitants are primarily subsistence farmers. The survey reported that the average size of farm lots is 1.6 hectares. About 45 percent of the occupants cultivate less than one hectare of land, while 36.6 percent cultivate one to two hectares of farmland. There are so-called medium-size farmers who cultivate up to 18 hectares of land, but they constitute a negligible fraction.

Mt. Kitanglad's farmers plant root crops (23.6 percent), corn (20.7 percent), coffee (16.3 percent), fruit trees (12.3 percent), spices (8 percent), sugarcane (6 percent), and abaca (4.1 percent). Less than one percent of them grow rice, tobacco and coconut.

Livestock raising complement the planting activities: 81.8 percent of buffer-zone occupants raise livestock, mostly chicken (51.5 percent), cattle (24.2 percent), pigs (7.8 percent), horses and carabaos (7.5 percent), and goats (0.2 percent). About 49.8 percent of them raise less than five animals each, while 22.4 percent of them own six to 10 animals each. There are some occupants who raise more than 35 head, but their domestic animals represent only 8.2 percent.

Only 39.2 percent of the occupants engage in fishing in nearby creeks or rivers. But the quantity of catch is insignificant and contributes very little to their daily subsistence.

A considerable number of occupants (28.6 percent) resort to off-farm economic activities. Of this number, 11.5 percent gather rattan poles, 11.3 percent weave rattan and bamboo strips into baskets, 2.4 percent are into abaca production, 2.7 percent process raw timber, and 0.7 percent trap wild animals such as deer, wild pigs, mice, and civet cats. Collection or hunting for wild animals is done either for household consumption or as source of additional income. These animals include birds, reptiles, fowl, and butterflies. They hunt these animals using traps, dogs, slingshots, nets (for butterflies), and homemade shotguns. Small birds are caught with *pulot*, a sticky substance from trees. Among the birds, the most widely hunted are *kusi*, *kulasisi* (*Loricus philippensis*), brown doves, and the near-threatened bird called *tungkago*. Except for the brown dove, which is considered a home delicacy, the birds are mostly sold in nearby Cagayan de Oro City as pets.

As to the utilization of timber, which is now strongly regulated, protected area occupants utilize at least eight species of trees for housing and fuel needs and also as source of added income. These species are olayan (*Lithocarpus ilanosii*), lauan (*Shorea contoria*), tolay, sagasa (*Palaquim merrillii*), boya, narig, and bagatamaing.

### Impoverished

Based on the results of a separate random survey among 68 protected-area occupants conducted in June 1999 in nine buffer-zone areas, monthly incomes average a measly Php1,205.40, ranging from the biggest household income of Php2,340 to the smallest, Php405. This only reflects the fact that subsistence farming and hunting are the predominant means of earning a living.

### Dismal lack of basic services

The delivery of basic services in areas around MKRNP leaves much to be desired. Only 0.4 percent of the occupants get drinking water from water faucets. The rest have to source it from rivers (24.8 percent), streams (20.6 percent), springs (11.8 percent), deep wells (4.4 percent), and flowing creeks (2 percent). Meanwhile, a big majority or 81.6 percent of the occupants say that there are no schools in their area. Only 7.3 percent say they have elementary schools, and 11.1 percent say there are nurseries or preschools. There are no high schools, which would explain in part the virtual absence of teenagers in the buffer-zone communities. Health services are almost nonexistent, as 95 percent of the occupants say there is no health center in the area. For those communities that did have a health center, health personnel and medical supplies were not mentioned.

This poor delivery in social services could be a consequence of the social exclusion of these indigenous peoples, but at the same time it is a contributing factor exacerbating such exclusion. Because they are not part of mainstream society, they have often been overlooked as a constituency in dire need of social services. The neglect has contributed to their impoverishment, which in turn has heightened their exclusion and marginalization.

### Issues, threats and concerns

KIN likewise conducted a Productivity Systems Assessment and Planning (PSAP) from 1998 to 1999, in nine of MKRNP's buffer-zone *sitios*. The PSAP is a participatory form of rapid rural assessment. From the point of view of most of its indigenous occupants, the following are their issues and concerns:

- ❖ Dire need of finance capital.
- ❖ Low yields and low prices of farm produce.
- ❖ Lack or absence of draft animals.
- ❖ Transport problems and high cost of hauling.
- ❖ Lack of farm technology.
- ❖ Lack of farm tools and equipment.
- ❖ Absence of veterinary services.
- ❖ Unavailability of good planting materials.
- ❖ Lack or absence of land for farmers to till.
- ❖ Marketing problem.

The above issues and concerns form the basis of community planning, which includes the community's recommended solutions, contained in their action plans and strategies for linkages. KIN made use of these local efforts to complement the CPPAP programs and to make it attuned to the community pace, interest, skill, and commitment.

Communities covered under the PSAP indicated the following social services that are needed in their communities: health services and medicines, water system facilities, facilities for primary and secondary schools, and external support for their livelihoods. That marketing problem was at the bottom list of their concerns, perhaps because the respondents were primarily subsistence farmers. Social development programs of the government and the private sector should be able to match these needs with planned priority projects.

A national workshop of practitioners and advocates of integrated protected area system examined the various conditions affecting four of the country's national and natural parks, which include Mt. Kitanglad (Garrity et al. 1996). The threats, issues, and concerns affecting the park's ecological, social, economic, cultural, and policy frameworks include:

- ❖ Degradation and reduction of habitats.
- ❖ Decline and loss of wildlife species.
- ❖ Reduction of water quality and quantity.
- ❖ Soil fertility depletion.
- ❖ Declining agricultural productivity.
- ❖ Agricultural migrants.
- ❖ Acculturation of the indigenous communities.

Habitat destruction and the concomitant effect of declining wildlife species may in most part be attributed to man-made and induced problems. Degraded habitats and loss of wildlife species are effects associated with activities such as illegal logging or timber-poaching,

slash-and-burn farming, unregulated hunting and collection of wildlife, and inappropriate land conversion from forestlands to farmlands. Of course, natural catastrophes such as drought, forest fires, landslides, and the occurrence of pests and diseases complete the picture.

With the continuing destructive activities in forestlands, the water quality and quantity attributes of MKRNP are also threatened. The mountain range is a major watershed that supports three major river systems—the Cagayan, Tagoloan, and Pulangui rivers. It is also the source of water for large-scale agricultural, industrial, and residential uses such as irrigation, power generation, and water consumption of low-lying communities. Forest degradation resulting from harmful human activities in these areas will greatly affect water quality and decrease water provision during dry months.

Soil fertility is also compromised as a result of illegal logging and inappropriate farming, both of which contribute to surface run-off, leaching, and erosion. In some barangays of the municipalities of Lantapan, Impasugong, and Sumilao and in the city of Malaybalay, high-value crop production is widely practiced by migrants. The coming of the migrants practicing these new farming technologies has influenced IP communities to adopt high-value crop production as one of their livelihoods. The heavy use of chemicals and inappropriate farming technology associated with planting of high-value crops degrades the soil considerably.

Lack of capital, inappropriate farming technology, and depleted soil fertility in most parts of the protected areas contribute to low production. The remoteness of the barangays and *sitios* makes life in the buffer zone even harder.

Due to the continuing population pressure, migrants have entered and encroached on the buffer zones and converted some portions of the forested areas into farmlands. With more migrants inhabiting the park, more agricultural activities (like planting of cash crops) take place in the buffer zones and their periphery. High-value crop production have become a viable source of income even in remote buffer-zone locations. Thus, even some IP leaders themselves have started to instigate migrant encroachments within the buffer zone, hoping by this to pave the way for development in the area. In *sitio* Maecate of barangay Lacolac in the municipality of Baungon and in *sitio* Pamutola of barangay Dagondalahon in the municipality of Talakag, a certain *datu* facilitated the entry of migrants from Cagayan de Oro City. The migrants claimed the area as their ancestral domain and settled in even before the claim was approved. These migrants have an existing case with the courts.

All this indicates the need to sustain local community and government initiatives, and to operationalize effective protected-area management. These realities pose continuing challenges to the indigenous peoples, the PAMB, the government, and civil society. Likewise, these threats, issues, and concerns reflect the complexity of the situation where MKRNP is both a protected area and, at the same time, a claimed ancestral homeland of its indigenous inhabitants.

### **Ancestral domain struggles**

In an exclusive gathering in June 1997, the IP leaders of the three biggest groups—the Talaandig, Higaonon, and Bukidnon—came together for a discussion to make sure that the basis of filing for their ancestral domain claim is anchored on their customs and traditions. Having no conflicting differences in their cultures, they decided that a unified claim over the entire park would be the best solution. However, three sub-groups opposed the big claim and chose to pursue their own limited claims. To this date, the issue remains vague and complicated, with resolution looking almost impossible. One may ask, “Could it be that the problem in fact is that MKRNP is both a claimed ancestral territory and, at the same time, a state-proclaimed protected area? Do separate and conflicting policies on these dual realities serve as obstacles rather than enabling mechanisms that facilitate genuine realization of the aspirations of the indigenous peoples?”

Recent studies (Cairns 1995; Dagondon et al. 1997; Sumbalan et al. 2001; Suminguit et al. 2000) suggest that these two perspectives can be reconciled. The goals of having an area declared protected can be harmonized with the people’s view of the area as being sacred and regarded as their homeland. Long before MKRNP was declared a national park and a protected area, its *lumad* (indigenous inhabitants) had been zealously guarding this sacred mountain for centuries. But with MKRNP’s protected-area classification, a kind of double-layer protection has been sealed in.

### **State recognition vis-à-vis de facto governance**

The Philippine government supposedly recognizes and promotes the rights of indigenous peoples or of so-called indigenous cultural communities. Many of these indigenous peoples and communities are found in the few remaining forested areas, most of which have now been declared protected areas. The State recognition of IP rights is embodied in the Philippine Constitution (Article II, Section 22) and reiterated in Section 13 of RA 7586, the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Law of 1992.

Following the passage of RA 8371 (the Indigenous People’s Rights Act of 1997, or IPRA) and the recent RA 8978 (the Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park Act, or MKRNPA), the struggle of the IPs from time immemorial to be secure in their ancestral domains has gained adequate policy support. This has renewed the people’s hopes to better their well-being while their traditional cultures remain respected and functional. The three laws—NIPAS, IPRA, and MKRNPA—underscore the goals of recognizing IP rights and cultures, and ensuring their welfare and development, while maintaining ecological diversity and the integrity and stability of their territories.

Many IP scholars and social-development advocates believe that the recognition of indigenous people’s rights through the provision of tenurial security over their land provides the better incentive to use the land in a sustainable manner. Yet, as demonstrated in MKRNP, even if a formal state recognition has yet to be issued in their favor, indigenous peoples have long and unceasingly demonstrated their traditional authority over this sacred mountain range.

## Milestones in collective efforts

In the last decade, traditional structures in MKRNP are rediscovering their cultural foundations. This illustrates how much the leadership of the Talaandig, Higaonon, and Bukidnon peoples, either through united or independent initiatives of their *datus* and *baes* (women chieftains), have advanced their struggle for recognition, governance, and co-management in MKRNP.

KIN (2000) and several anthropologists who did studies on MKRNP (Burton and Canoy 1991; Cairns 1995; Gatmaytan 2001; Saway 1998; Suminguit et al. 2000) documented their experiences and encounters with prevalent indigenous management practices, as these are influenced by the tribe's strong belief system regulating their social, economic, political, and spiritual life.

For the Talaandigs, economic and spiritual lives are closely intertwined because of the strong belief in the seven nature elements that sustain mankind, elements corresponding to the material and nonmaterial world: water, trees (wood), wind, land (earth), fire, word (language), and thought. As the Talaandig chieftain, Datu Makapukaw Adolino Saway, puts it (*Talamdan* 1996): "We cannot talk about the land without talking about the spirit of the water, the spirit of the trees, the spirit of the wind, the spirit of the land, the spirit of the fire, the spirit of the word, and the spirit of the thought. Agriculture has declined and the environment has become degraded because we have not entertained all the spirits equally. To avoid conflict, we must listen to all the seven spirits." Thus, in keeping with their belief in spirit presence in nature, rituals either precede or conclude farming and other livelihood activities such as hunting and resource extraction (Mordeno 2000). These rituals must also be observed when following a certain annual cycle of welcoming seasons, controlling of pests, summoning of rains (during drought or forest fires), renewal of medicinal skills, and mere thanksgiving.

For the past decade, the indigenous peoples of Mt. Kitanglad have exercised strong and critical leadership, shown a high level of awareness in development and conservation programs, and tested their ability to pursue collective actions. These were manifested in various undertakings:

1. Revival and strengthening of their traditional structures, such as the Council of Elders (CoE). Aside from being the spokespersons of their communities, these elders decide on matters affecting the future development of MKRNP as their ancestral domain.
2. Activation of the community-based park protection group through the *paggalad*, or tribal guards, who take the lead in enforcing customary laws inside their ancestral domain.
3. Proclamation of ownership over the biological and genetic resources of Mt. Kitanglad to protect it from biopiracy.
4. Successful assistance in controlling forest fires during the El Niño phenomenon of 1998.
5. Undertaking of site restoration projects through the establishment of community tree nurseries and managing of model farms for assisted natural regeneration and *lauan* specie domestication.
6. Developing of strong linkages with other territorial leaders to enhance their

- social relationships; adherence to *sayuda ha batasan*, the tribal system of consensus-building on matters affecting the territory.
7. Holding of cultural day celebrations in honor and recognition of all IP practitioners and experts.
  8. Establishment of the Talaandig School for Living Traditions to ensure cultural survival and to promote a deep sense of ethnic pride among pre-school children.
  9. Initiating cultural reorientation to inspire a new breed of IP leadership.
  10. Agreement among the three tribes to pursue their ancestral domain claim in MKRNP in one unified claim instead of separate piecemeal claims; conduct of independent consultations and consensus meetings on matters relating to ancestral domain claim and to cultural issues; development and management of MKRNP, and the framework for Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) designed to evaluate support programs in MKRNP.
  11. Tribal policy formulation and proclamation.
  12. Participation in cultural zoning workshops, community three-dimensional mapping as a prelude to land-use assessment, planning and land-use opportunity scanning.
  13. Promotion of annual traditional ritual rites.
  14. Enforcement of ritual requirements among climbers, visitors, and researchers.
  15. Enforcement of the tribal justice system, alternative dispute resolution, and conduct of reconciliatory rituals following the precepts of the customary laws.
  16. Enforcement of free and prior informed consent (FPIC) as recognized in IPRA (RA 8371).
  17. Setting up of *bangkaso* (altar) or cultural monuments in sacred places around the park, which shall be exempt, as much as possible, from ecotourism and research activities.

These reveal how much the tribes have achieved in asserting themselves and how competent they are as equal partners in the management of MKRNP.

Their representation in the PAMB has resulted in a successful recognition of their cultural norms. In 1999, a *bae* IP representative of the Talaandig tribe was able to muster support for a resolution to enforce ritual requirements for all climbers and researchers coming to MKRNP. Thus, all visitors must secure two permits—one from the PAMB and the other from the IPs. The permit is processed at the Park Superintendent's Office and by the local *datu* assigned in each of the entry points to the park's famous peaks.

There have been institutions and private entities that the Talaandigs have either sanctioned for their cultural transgressions or engaged with in order to assert authority over the area. In 1995, the National Museum was penalized for conducting extensive inventory and collection of flora species without asking permission from the tribal leaders. Also, last year, the tribal leaders in the Council of Elders met with the Mt. Kitanglad Agri-ventures, Inc. and Dole Corp., which are private entities operating large banana plantations in Lantapan municipality. Representatives of the Center for International Forestry (CIFOR) and the International Centre for Agroforestry (ICRAF) have

paid courtesy calls on Talaandig elders at the barangay level and participated in ritual-based discussions of their field activities.

Some time ago, the Talaandigs subjected the DENR to a cultural penalty for perceived cultural violations (Sumbalan et al. 2001). Talaandig leader Datu Migketay Saway cited several issues against the DENR, foremost among which was issuing permits and implementing projects such as Community-Based Forestry Management inside the ancestral territory of the IPs of the park without the free and prior informed consent of the communities. This, the IP leaders claim, has driven a wedge in tribal unity and destroyed everyone's cooperation in the protection, conservation, and management of the environment, and has cast aspersions on the integrity of the leadership of the tribe.

This problem needs to be resolved under the *salà*, following the tribal justice system. Suminguit et al. (2000) observe that NIPAS, IPRA, and MKRNP all respect and recognize customary laws. In enforcement, however, the major objection to customary law and tradition is that it is oral. Government officials usually would like to take hold of a document specifically outlining the customary laws and tradition as a point of reference. Initially, there is a need to carefully document tribal policies on resource use in lieu of the codification of customary laws and traditions for the sake of the non-IPs who may not be knowledgeable about this.

### **Sustained strengthening of stakeholders**

The CPPAP is scheduled to end in June 2002. Institutions that the project has involved and strengthened in the process—such as the PAMB; the LGUs and their barangay counterparts; the DENR and NGOs; and the local indigenous and migrant communities who are directly dependent on the park—continue to maintain their stake in MKRNP. External funding to MKRNP is about to be terminated. This may stymie the IP collective efforts, and perhaps result in divided movements.

If future support will engage their direct partnership in ways that will make use of their indigenous knowledge—as well as promote and document this knowledge, highlight their individual and collective capacities, and respect their cognitive view of the landscape and its cultural value, along with their tribal customary laws and policies—then the inherent strength and tenacity of Kitanglad indigenous peoples will be reinvigorated. Moreover, the Talaandig-Higaonon-Bukidnon peoples' pride in their culture will continue to inspire all other indigenous communities in the country whose own abodes are now targets of development.

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