

The Philippine Platform on Indigenous People's Rights¹

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ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED Indigenous Peoples (IPs) from Aklan, Boracay, Antique, Cebu, Guimaras, Negros Occidental, Iloilo and Capiz travelled by land and sea for the 1st Visayas-wide consultation on the Philippine Platform on Indigenous Peoples Rights (PPIPR) held in Baranggay Aglinab, Tapaz, Capiz.

Held from 18–19 January 2014, the event was jointly convened by two of the country's biggest IP networks: the Koalisyon ng mga Katutubong Samahan ng Pilipinas (KASAPI, National Coalition of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines) and the Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KAMP, National Alliance of Indigenous Peoples Organizations in the Philippines).

IP Situation and the PPIPR

KAMP National Coordinator Joana Jaime provided a general situationer of indigenous peoples and shared how they are coping with natural and man-made disasters such as typhoon Yolanda and aggressive development projects. She said resistance to such projects, including large-scale mining, logging, plantation, mega dams and militarization, have resulted in the extra-judicial killing of IP leaders. To date, 40 IP leaders nationwide have been killed under the Aquino government.

The PPIPR is the first in a series of consultations under KASAPI-KAMP partnership, which seeks to bring together membership-based indigenous peoples' organizations (IPOs, not NGOs). It aims to help them get to know each other, and bridge the isolation that has kept them separate

for several centuries. In addition, even IPOs not affiliated with KAMP and KASAPI were allowed to join the platform's activities and participate in consensus-building processes, making agreements, and arriving at common positions. The platform is not organized as an umbrella organization, but as a venue that facilitates IPs' exchange and sharing, and respects the organizational integrity of each participant.

The 2013 Indigenous Peoples Agenda

Since 2010, national and regional IPOs have consolidated an IP Agenda and have had it updated yearly during the annual celebration of World Indigenous Peoples Day every August. Among others, the 2013 IP Agenda includes the following:

- 1. On ancestral lands, resources and development**
—to put a stop to the land grabbing of indigenous peoples' territories, and to halt large-scale mining and the building of mega dams.
- 2. On human rights and militarization**—to stop Oplan Bayanihan and de-militarize indigenous communities; dismantle para-military groups sowing fear amongst IP communities; to stop the use of schools, barangay halls, barangay health centers, meeting centers of tribal councils as army camps; and to investigate the killing of 35 IP leaders and bring those accountable to justice; and to stop the tagging of IP leaders resisting plunder of natural resources as “terrorists.”
- 3. On the NCIP, IPRA implementation and Conflicting Laws**—to respond to the institutional assessment of the NCIP (National Council of Indigenous Peoples) that was done by the University of the Philippines-Baguio; to totally revamp of the NCIP and, after due process, bring into accountability officials

who violate the law; to junk/repeal the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and pass the people's mining bill; and to stop the implementation of the Joint DENR-DAR-NCIP-Register of Deeds Administrative Order. The Joint Administrative Order should not be allowed to undermine the rights of IPs to their lands, but should, instead, fast-track the processing of the IPs' legal recognition of their ancestral lands.

- 4. On Delivery of Basic Social Services**—to provide access to free health services and support indigenous health care systems, and to ensure the conduct of a participatory review that aligns the policies of various government agencies involving education and culture (e.g. DSWD, DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DOST, LCC, NCCA, NCIP)² so that it ensures that education policies and programs for IPs are anchored on indigenous education systems and the right to self-determination.

To date, the Aquino government has not responded to any of the above. Instead, assaults against IP leaders resisting the plunder of natural resources within their ancestral domains continue as killings of IP leaders rise to forty (40).

The 2013 IP Agenda coincides with key demands embodied in an international document approved by IP representatives and delegates around the world—the Alta Outcome Document. The document was approved by the Saami Parliament in Alta, Norway, a preparatory gathering for the high-level special plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) to be held in September 2014.

A workshop followed and participants discussed latest issues and emerging concerns in their own communities. They also shared their views and responses regarding the KASAPI-KAMP partnership on the PPIPR.

Common issues and experiences on disaster and land grabbing of ancestral lands highlighted the discussions. One group spoke about government relief goods, reporting that rice distributed by the Department of Welfare and Social Development for disaster victims was unfit for human consumption. Thus, the rice was fed to chickens, but they died later on. Another group identified threats posed by the South Korean-funded Jalaur Megadam Project. Three indigenous communities in possession of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) issued by the Office of the President of the Philippines will be submerged because of the dam. Moreover, the dam site is 11 kilometers away from the active West Panay fault that had once triggered an 8.3-magnitude earthquake in 1948, destroying 55 churches, 17 of which are beyond repair.

According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the project area itself is prone to rockslides because of the sedimentary nature of the land. The land is therefore unsafe. Also, given that an average of 17 to 19 typhoons hit the Philippines each year, the megadam can also overflow and flood one city and nine municipalities downstream. About 17,000 indigenous peoples and thousands of people downstream of the river can be affected. Moreover, because water in the Jalaur river is insufficient in irrigating the vast rice and sugarcane lands downstream, constructing the megadam will aggravate this problem during the dry season.

Notes

- ¹ This is a shorter, slightly-edited version of a press release issued by KASAPI and KAMP. The full-length version may be viewed at <http://iphndefenders.net/mediabox/docs/PR%20Visayas-wide%20PPIPR%20Consultation.pdf>.
- ² DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development); DepEd (Department of Education); CHED (Commission on Higher Education); TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority); DOST (Department of Science and Technology); LCC (Literacy Coordinating Council); NCCA (National Commission for Culture and the Arts); and NCIP (National Coalition of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines).