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International Labour Organization

ASIAN 2006  
DECENT WORK  
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# Decent Work for All

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Volume 6, Special Issue • August 2008

## Helping indigenous peoples help themselves

By Ma. Theresa Matibag  
National Project Coordinator

More than a year has passed since the Tagbanuas started a community-based micro-enterprise center in Barangay Barake, Aborlan, Palawan. The Tagbanuas belong to one of the 110 indigenous and tribal groups in the Philippines, living predominantly in the province of Palawan with an estimated population of over 130,000.

The Tagbanuas built the center through the *Bayaan It kampong It Tagbanua (BKT)*, a community-based organization of the Tagbanua tribe. The center was used to process wild honey and cashew nuts including rice and corn mill. The Tagbanuas now have their own forest honey and milled sacks of rice and corn, which helped increase the income of the whole community. The enterprise centers are also used as barangay (village) multi-purpose halls. *Nagakaisang mga Tribu ng Palawan (NATRIPAL)*, a Palawan province-wide federation, provides technical support to improve honey production and to market bottled honey in the *Arandeman Shop* in Puerto Princesa, the provincial capital.

Two centers were built and completed in October 2005. In May 2006, Her Excellency Ambassador Riitta Resch of the Embassy of Finland and ILO Director Linda Wirth opened the centres. The mayor of Aborlan expressed her appreciation for supporting the Tagbanuas.

The Palawan project was one of the projects under the partnership of the ILO and the Embassy of Finland. The partnership was based on a common interest to improve the situation of indigenous peoples using a community-driven participatory approach.

The ILO and Embassy of Finland partnership with indigenous peoples covered several areas in the Philippines. Indigenous peoples themselves identified and implemented the project under this partnership. Projects included water systems, agricultural development and production and women-specific food production.



T'nalak dreamweaver of the T'boli tribe in Lake Sebu (Photo by ILO / M. Rimando)

## Breaking the bondage of illiteracy

By Carmen Untang  
T'boli Tribe, Lake Sebu

“Tey tilob gemnom du k'sok hegetob te ebe kem dumu te yom kut deng t'ngon?” (It is really enjoying and fulfilling when you extend and share what you learn to others, isn't it?). This was uttered by para-teachers at the end of the Lumad Literacy Program. The Federation of Lake Sebu T'boli Ancestral Domain (FELSTAND) Lower Valley Cluster implemented the literacy programme together with 25 para-teachers and 324 adult recipients covering five barangays of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, Mindanao in early 2008.

Feelings of joy and gratitude filled the occasion as the participants shared their experiences of learning together. Tears of joy fell as indigenous peoples, learning to read, understood the significance of becoming free from the bondage of illiteracy. Now, the participants can read, write and count in their own dialect. They can now vote for the person they choose during elections rather than having someone write a politician's name in their ballot whom they do not even know. They can also compute for the appropriate price of their produce considering expenses incurred in production. They know how to determine if products they buy and sell are weighed and priced correctly. “It's a great feeling!” they exclaimed.

“This project is indeed a big help!” The indigenous communities of Lake Sebu expressed their gratitude to the Embassy of Finland, the ILO, PANLIPI and the Santa Cruz Mission in the Para-teachers' Graduation held in June 2008.

Funded by the Embassy of Finland, Lumad literacy is one of the activities supported by an ongoing project which ILO started in 2006. It adopts a community-driven, integrated, participatory development strategy that applies the principles of ILO Convention No. 169. It also delivers the aspirations of the indigenous peoples using a decent work framework that covers rights, employment, social protection and social dialogue. Under the strategy, the project helps the Ubos and T'boli indigenous peoples group of Lake Sebu in strengthening their self-reliance through the promotion of self-help potentials, of policy improvement, sustainable environment and natural resource management. It looks into decent employment and income generation, and social protection and dialogue within traditional territories. It is envisaged that support will contribute in addressing major causes of conflict in the area.

The participatory approach is based on the ILO's experience in the Philippines in working with indigenous peoples for over a decade, implementing a broad range of community-driven pilot initiatives.

## Decent Work for All

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Linda Wirth

### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Keiko Niimi  
Diane Lynn Respall

### MANAGING EDITOR

Minette Rimando

### CONTRIBUTORS

Imogen Howells  
Ma. Theresa Matibag  
Carmen Untang  
Julita Yap

### LAYOUT & DESIGN

Minette Rimando

Decent Work for All is published quarterly by the ILO Subregional Office in Manila. The electronic version can be accessed at [www.ilo.org/manila](http://www.ilo.org/manila). Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the ILO.

### ILO SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

19F Yuchengco Tower RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue,  
Makati City, Philippines  
Tel. No. +63 (2) 580 9900  
Fax. No. +63 (2) 580 9999  
E-mail [manila@ilo.org](mailto:manila@ilo.org)  
[www.ilo.org/manila](http://www.ilo.org/manila)

## EDITORIAL

In celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we are releasing this special issue of the Decent Work for All newsletter featuring projects and stories about indigenous peoples in the Philippines.

The ILO has been working with indigenous and tribal peoples since 1920. It is responsible for the international legal instruments that deal exclusively with the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples: ILO Convention No. 107, the Indigenous and Tribal Populations, 1957 which is no longer open for ratification but remains legally binding to ratifying states, until they ratify ILO Convention No. 169. Indigenous and Tribal Peoples adopted in 1989.

As a legally binding instrument, ILO Convention 169 is subject to ILO's supervisory mechanism, which follow-up each country's application of the Convention, in law and in practice. Ratifying countries send regular reports to the ILO, which are examined by an independent body of 20 experts of good international standing, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR). Based on the report of the CEACR, problematic cases are selected and discussed during the International Labour Conference by the tripartite Committee on the Application of Standards consisting of workers, employers and government representatives.

Within the context of the Decent Work Country Programme for the Philippines, the ILO Subregional Office in Manila is supporting

poverty reduction among indigenous peoples through community development initiatives and management of ancestral domains in areas like Lake Sebu. This is in partnership with the Embassy of Finland. Through the combined resources of the ILO including PRO 169, the office also provides policy support by promoting ILO Convention No. 169 as well as better implementation of existing policies and laws which includes the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of the Philippines.

We also acknowledge past and present donor partners who supported ILO initiatives on indigenous and tribal groups in the country. In particular, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Arab Gulf Fund (AGFUND), the Netherlands Government, Rabo Bank Foundation, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Philippine Association International (API), the New Zealand Embassy, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Embassy of Finland. The ILO has also partnered with the European Union and the Canadian Embassy in celebrating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and raising awareness on indigenous and tribal groups in the Philippines.

As we partner with indigenous and tribal peoples, together we can help them have a stronger voice and work their way out of poverty.

Linda Wirth  
Director

## Brief information on the ILO partnership with indigenous peoples in the Philippines

In 1994, the Philippines was one of the pilot countries of the ILO Inter-Regional Programme to Support Self-Reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Communities through Cooperatives and Self-Help Organizations (INDISCO) programme, which was launched in line with the declaration by the United Nations on the Decade of the World's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. The INDISCO component is now coordinated by ILO Indigenous Peoples Local Economic Development (IP LED) programme.

ILO's current initiatives in the Philippines are founded on the lessons learned after 13 years of working with indigenous peoples, which applies as a core strategy, community-driven and participatory development (CDPD) based on meaningful consultation and participation of indigenous peoples. CDPD is in line with ILO Convention No. 169 and existing national policy on indigenous peoples. The strategy also incorporates indigenous knowledge, systems and practices in the realization of development

aspirations. In practical terms, facilitative support is provided to indigenous women and men to develop their individual and collective capacity to free themselves from their traditional role as passive recipients and to become more pro-active partners in development. The ILO's facilitative support uses a combination of technical advice, advocacy, capacity building and training, among others. Local partners and non-government organizations are also partners in providing facilitative services.

ILO's contribution to policy included the Republic Act 8371, otherwise known as "Indigenous Peoples Rights Act" (IPRA), which was passed in 1997. It is the current major national policy on indigenous peoples.

The provisions of the IPRA, including principles of meaningful consultation and participation, are consistent with ILO Convention No. 169. The ILO also contributed to formulation of the Medium-term Philippine Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples 2004-2008.

### AUGUST 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples



Indigenous peoples of the T'boli tribe in Lake Sebu. (Photos by ILO / M. Rimando)



### For more information, please visit:

ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/indigenous/index.htm>  
Text of ILO Convention 169, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp1.htm>  
List of ratification of ILO C. 169, [http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/ratifce.pl?\(C169\)](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/ratifce.pl?(C169))  
List of ratification of ILO C. 107, [http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/ratifce.pl?\(C107\)](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/ratifce.pl?(C107))  
Guide to ILO C. 169, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/egalite/itpp/convention/index.htm>  
ILO Subregional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific, <http://www.ilo.org/manila>

## Looking back after a decade: the Kankanaey-Bago tribe

By Julita Yap  
Library and Documentation Assistant

Started in 1994, the ILO Inter-Regional Programme to Support Self-Reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Communities through Cooperatives and Self-Help Organizations (INDISCO) was used for innovative approaches towards indigenous peoples' development in the Philippines. The INDISCO approach enhances the capacity of indigenous and tribal peoples to plan and implement community development initiatives. Bakun, home of the Kankanaey-Bago tribe, was one of the pilot sites under the ILO programme implemented in 1998 to 2001. The Government of Netherlands provided funding support for this programme. In Benguet province, the programme worked with Bakun's indigenous women and men through their representative peoples' organization, the Bakun Indigenous Tribes Organization (BITO).

As a former technical cooperation staff of the ILO-INDISCO project, I, together with my colleagues visited Bakun in June 2008 to gauge the sustainability and impact of the ILO project, 10 years after it was first implemented.

We also explored possibilities of replicating the project in neighboring communities. When we arrived in Bakun, the officials of BITO gave us a warm welcome.

Mr. Amos Beta-a, BITO Executive Director and Council of Elders, acknowledged that insufficient communication facilities, inaccessibility to banking institutions, and bad weather conditions continued to challenge the community. Despite these challenges, BITO still existed and continued to function. It achieved a strong sense of self-reliance and had many accomplishments. Some of these accomplishments included increased capacity of BITO to assist other communities and partners to implement their projects. BITO members continued to uphold their accountability. They were able to preserve indigenous culture and practices as well as protect and rehabilitate the environment. They became more vigilant in protecting their biodiversity. Moreover, functional literacy graduates volunteered to organize "literacy and skills training classes" in remote villages. The spill-over impact of literacy training was significant. Indigenous peoples of Bakun can now understand and choose their own candidate during elections.

The accomplishments and experiences of BITO serve as a foundation for ILO's future implementation of indigenous peoples projects in the Philippines. Two neighboring indigenous communities in Ilocos Sur and one in Benguet are among the proposed areas for future replication of BITO.



An indigenous woman pounding rice in Bakun. (Photo by ILO-INDISCO)

## Voices of indigenous women open new opportunities

By Imogen Howells  
ILO Intern

"Economic power begets political power." This is just one of the lessons learned through the ILO-INDISCO programme which includes components on the promotion of gender equality. INDISCO adopts a culturally sensitive approach to the promotion of gender, and as a result of project interventions, some indigenous women have increased their economic and social status and in so doing, increased their voice and even political clout.

The ILO-INDISCO programme aims to raise the self-reliance of indigenous and tribal communities through community-led, participatory projects including a number of projects run by women's organizations. For instance, a 2005 livelihood project for women in Tinoc, Ifugao Province provided financial assistance on the production of yam, peanuts and yacon, empowering women to become successful entrepreneurs and increase their incomes. As part of INDISCO's pilot projects in 1994 funded by DANIDA, a livelihood project implemented in partnership with the Baguio City Indigenous Women's Council (BCIWC) saw the strengthening of weavers' and ambulant vendors' associations in the Baguio city area. The associations have become more profitable to the women and they have found new voice as their economic power has increased. During an evaluation workshop,

indigenous women partners described the impact of the INDISCO project on their lives, and pockets, detailing how the projects increased their incomes.

In terms of political power, women now have more influence in decision making at home and in the community, and in some areas, women's associations are being spontaneously consulted by barangay officials. Women became, and are now actively involved in, decision-making processes and have played a major role in conflict resolution preventing the occurrence of tribal wars. Some are leading and participating in community meetings or have been elected as members of the board of trustees and of tribal councils.

INDISCO projects have also fostered an increase in the number of women's organizations in project areas. Community leaders, churches and schools are actively supporting continuous advocacy on the rights and welfare of women and children. INDISCO resulted in the promotion of the "salayan" practice (where mothers take turns in staffing the local day-care centre) in support of the community day care programmes. In all project areas, the complementary roles of men and women, in the development of the ancestral domain, were highlighted.

Yet while some gains have been made, more work needs to be done as many indigenous women still suffer from a lack of control over ancestral lands, lack of access to

basic services, such as maternity care, poverty and insufficient resources. Many indigenous women belong to the low income, unemployed and underemployed sectors of society. They are a subset of a marginalized sector in society, and challenges faced by all indigenous people tend to be intensified for women as they are exposed to a double layer of discrimination.

Nonetheless, ILO-INDISCO enables partner communities to design and implement projects based on their own needs and is empowering to all sectors of society. This approach has made projects more sustainable as communities feel a greater sense of ownership and activities are often kept running long after direct funding has ceased.



A young girl of the Ubo tribe in Lake Sebu. (Photo by ILO / M. Rimando)

# Organizing out of poverty

By **Minette Rimando**  
Senior Communication and Public Information Assistant

Lake Sebu is known as the summer capital of the Philippine province of Southern Mindanao due to its cool climate, panoramic views and rich cultural heritage. Yet, amidst its beauty and serenity, Lake Sebu has also seen the struggles of indigenous peoples to defend their land, their rights and their culture. Lake Sebu is home to the T'boli tribe, which comprises 70 per cent of the population here. The recent paving of roads leading from the national highway has made Lake Sebu more accessible for migrants and traders from cities.

“My father used to own 15 hectares of land. Migrant settlers and lowlanders tried to make friends with my father. They gave us canned goods. Then, they asked my father if they could use a small portion of our land for gardening, not knowing that they would expand to a wider area,” explains Blino Odon of the Federation of the Lake Sebu T'boli Ancestral Domain and Lahit Tribal Development Association. As a result Blino Odon and other members of the tribe lost their land. “We can't do anything. We don't even have money to hire a lawyer or file a case” Mr Odon says.

Indigenous and tribal peoples becoming landless is a common problem. They often lack control over land and resources and face high levels of discrimination and poverty. As a result, in almost every country where they live, indigenous peoples belong to the poorest of the poor, have the lowest income levels and limited access to basic education, health care and other services. Indigenous peoples making up five per cent of the world's population, compose over 15 per cent of the world's poor.

Recently, the Embassy of Finland in the Philippines and the International Labour Organization renewed their commitment to reduce poverty and promote human rights among indigenous peoples in Lake Sebu, launching the third phase of an ongoing project.

“Our people first had doubts about this project. There were projects before which tried to help us but nothing happened,” says Datu



A T'boli woman protects her son from the rain in Lake Sebu.  
(Photo by ILO / M. Rimando)

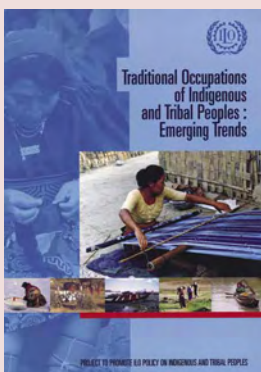
Ponciano Bandalan of Barangay Bakdulong, Lake Sebu. Datu is a royal title conferred to respected leaders or members of royal families.

“However under the project, our people were not treated as merely as beneficiaries. They were directly involved in planning and identifying their needs even in implementing the project. The project helped us in developing our community,” he adds. The T'boli tribe also learned about the rights of indigenous peoples under ILO Convention No. 169.

In order to protect and promote the rights of the 370 million indigenous and tribal peoples worldwide, the ILO has adopted the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). It covers a wide range of issues, including land rights, access to natural resources, health, education, vocational training, conditions of employment and contacts across borders.

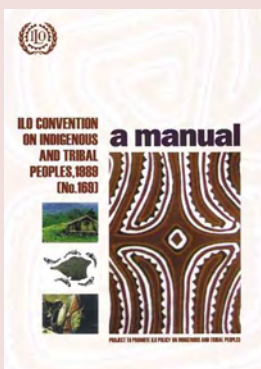
“We ensure that indigenous peoples have a say in building their communities and shaping their future. We encourage them to organize. Individual voices count and rights are respected. It is important to listen to their priorities and recognize their culture,” says Linda Wirth, Director of the ILO Subregional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific. “The ILO is committed to promote the ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 in the Philippines. The Convention is a platform for action and dialogue. It is a way to protect vulnerable groups such as indigenous and tribal peoples and help people to work their way out of poverty.”

## MUST READS



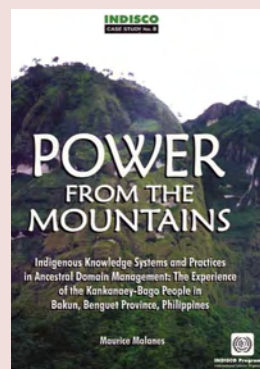
### Traditional Occupations of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: Emerging Trends

This publication seeks to increase awareness of major difficulties facing indigenous and tribal peoples from an employment and occupational perspective, and to further evoke indigenous participation in formulating and articulating solutions to the social, economic and occupational issues they are facing.



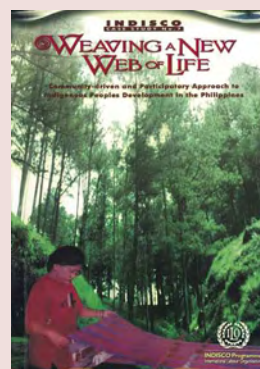
### ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989 (No. 169)

In general, indigenous and tribal peoples are not effectively protected by existing laws and policies. This situation has led to the development and adoption of ILO Convention No. 169, aimed at the protection of indigenous and tribal peoples and their rights. A number of examples of real situations involving indigenous and tribal peoples have been included in this manual.



### Power from the Mountains INDISCO Case Study

Features the indigenous knowledge systems and practices in ancestral domain management based on the experience of the Kankanaey-Bago people in Bakun, Benguet Province of the Philippines. This case study can serve both the people of Bakun and other indigenous peoples and advocates of indigenous peoples rights.



### Weaving a new Web of Life INDISCO Case Study

In this documentary, indigenous communities in the Philippines have started 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 southern islands of Tawi-Tawi, they pursue a common dream: to regain their self-esteem and culture of self-reliance, lost due to colonization and migration.