

The Challenge



Like many other indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Philippines, the Tboli and Ubo people in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato have long lived in an ancestral domain blessed with natural beauty and resources.

Despite this however, they often face various development challenges such as poverty, discrimination, and marginalization. Limited access to basic services, socio-economic, and political opportunities is an everyday reality for them.

Many families have also lost their lands after they became indebted as they struggle to meet their basic needs.

The Response

The International Labour Organization (ILO) extended its support to Tboli and Ubo people through a project called “Support to Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Human Rights Among the IPs in the context of Ancestral Domain Development and Protection”. The programme was implemented from April 2006 until December 2010.

In this programme, the IPs are given the chance to develop their own capacity by taking greater responsibility for and leadership in their own development processes. This approach has been drawn from lessons and good practices generated under the previous “Inter-regional Programme to Support Self-reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples through Cooperatives and other Self-help Organizations (INDISCO).”

The programme was designed to advance the IPs empowerment through a strategy that is based on the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA) and the ILO Convention (No. 169) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. It integrates the four pillars of the ILO’s Decent Work agenda: protection of fundamental rights, creation of employment opportunities, promotion of social security, and strengthening of mechanisms for social dialogue.

The IPs have long been seeking justice not just at the community level but at the national level as well. Instead of tagging IPs as marginalized sectors of the society, they can be considered as partners towards development. This starts by empowering them with the skills and knowledge that they need.

If basic services and socio-economic opportunities are more accessible, the IPs of Lake Sebu can certainly attain the development they deserve in the context of protecting their ancestral domain.

Key Statistics

- The Municipality of Lake Sebu is composed of 19 villages.
- The IP population is around 30,000 in the Lake Sebu area or 56 per cent of its total population.
- The two major tribal groups in Lake Sebu are the Tboli and Ubo tribes.

Objectives

- To contribute to the enhancement of the capacity of IPs to protect their rights and to take greater responsibility for reducing poverty in line with the development and protection of their ancestral domains.
- To improve the IPs' knowledge and understanding of their human and other fundamental rights and their capacity to assert and protect their rights.
- To strengthen the IPs' traditional livelihoods and help them develop enterprises for income and employment generation anchored on the sustainable development and protection of their ancestral domains.
- To increase the IPs' knowledge and access to available social protection programmes.
- To help the IPs develop and adopt a sustainable mechanism for participation in social dialogue and in the promotion of peace in the region.



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Achievements

- An Ancestral Domain Management Council was created to serve as a mechanism for Tboli and Ubo peoples' participation in social dialogue and peace and development processes.
- A Lake Sebu IP Paralegal Volunteers Group was organized to provide paralegal services and promote the rights of the IPs based on the IPRA.
- The Cooperative of Women in Health and Development (COWHED), composed of indigenous women, was institutionalized to serve as a mechanism for individual and collective self-reliance.
- A pool of IP enterprise development trainers was formed under the COWHED to provide entrepreneurship capacity-building services for both IPs and collaborating migrant settlers.
- Community handicraft production and tribal houses were constructed to enhance socio-cultural and economic activities in the ancestral domain.
- A community micro-finance facility was set up, likewise under the COWHED, to provide corresponding services to both IP and non-IP entrepreneurs in Lake Sebu.
- Farm improvement mechanisms, including organic farming methods and community farm support systems, were developed with the IP farmers as part of the capacity-building process.
- Community facilities such as sources of potable water and electricity were installed to promote the well-being of the IPs in the villages.

Relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations

- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Rural Workers' Organizations Convention, 1975 (No. 141)
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

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- There is an increasing number of Tboli and Ubo families who are willing to enroll in PHILHEALTH, a government-run social protection system.

Components

Donor: Embassy of Finland in Manila

Acronym: IPDP Lake Sebu

Start Date: April 2006

End Date: December 2010

Budget: US\$434,700

Partners: Cooperative of Women in Health and Development, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations of the Barangay (village level), and Local Government Units in Lake Sebu

Project Site: Lake Sebu

