



The Point *of* Development

Shrinking spaces

FOR THE Lumad *vis-a-vis*

Logging Projects



Grace Cantal-Albasin

The Point *of* Development

Shrinking Spaces for the Lumad *vis-a-vis* Logging Operations



Loggers move timber in Butuan City. Many loggers understand the environmental concerns surrounding logging, but have little other opportunities for employment. Photo by Mark Esplin





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This book is produced by the Mindanao Interfaith Institute on Lumad Studies, and published by RMP-NMR Inc and the 'Healing the Hurt' Project partners.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of RMP-NMR Inc and the 'Healing the Hurt' Project partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Publisher:

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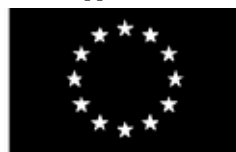
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EUROPEAN UNION

ISBN: 978-621-95356-1-8

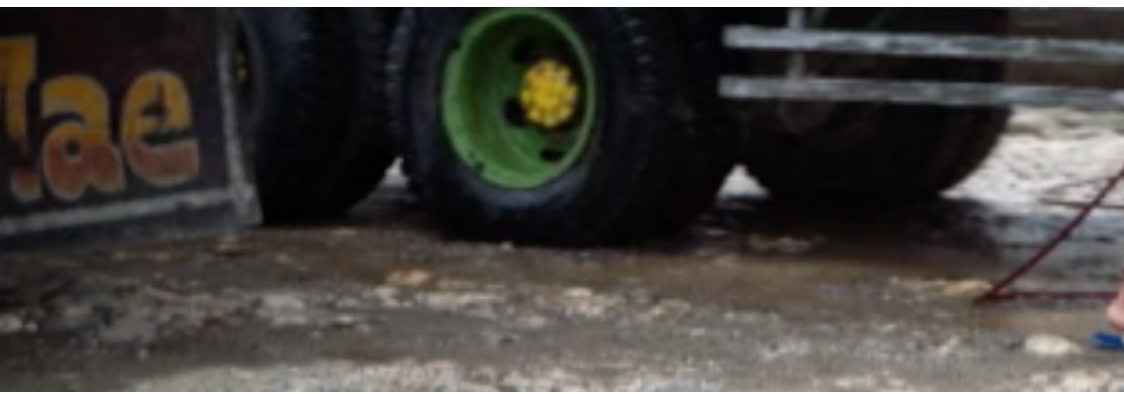


Loggers use rivers to transport timber. During the storm, the rivers burst carrying timber with the flow of the water. It is believed these logs were responsible for much of the resulting damage and deaths. Photo by Mark Esplin



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List *of* Acronyms

4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
AD	Ancestral Domain
ADC	Ancestral Domain Claim
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
BFD	Bureau of Forest Development
CBFM	Community-Based Forest Management Agreement
CDMP	Comprehensive Development and Management Plan
CDORB	Cagayan de Oro River Basin
CLENRO	City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CTO	Certificate of Origin
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
DOJ	Department of Justice
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction Management
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ESSC	Environmental Science for Social Change
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FLAg	Forest Land Use Agreement
FLAgT	Forest Land Use Agreement for Tourism Purposes
FLGMA	Forest Land Grazing Management Agreement
FMB	Forest Management Bureau
FRA	Forest Resources Assessments
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HUCs	Highly Urbanized Cities
IBA	Important Bird Area
ICCs	Indigenous Cultural Communities
IFMA	Integrated Forest Management Agreement
IK	Indigenous knowledge
INTERPOL	International Police Criminal Investigation
IP	Indigenous Peoples
IPMR	Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative
IPRA	Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997
KBA	Key Biodiversity Areas
MCCT-IP	Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Indigenous Peoples
MKRNP	Mt. Kitanglad Range and Natural Park
NCIP	National Commission on Indigenous People

NDFP	National Democratic Front of the Philippines
NDRRMC	National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council
NFI	National Forest Inventory
NPA	New People's Army
NSMNP	Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park
PO	People's Organizations
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
REDD	Deforestation and forest Degradation
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEPO	Senate Economic Planning Office
SIFMA	Socialized Industrial Forestry Management Agreement
TAMASCO	T'boli-Manobo S'daf Claimant Organization
TFDI	Top Development Forest, Inc.
TINDOGA	Tribal Indigenous Oppressed Group Association
TLA	Timber License Agreement
TOG	Tactical Operations Group
TRB	Tagoloan River Basin
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
WB	World Bank
WHC	World Heritage Center



This portrait of a Lumad from Bukidnon photographed in 2010 during the Feast of San Isidro Labrador in Malaybalay City shows him visiting houses in the villages at the city's commercial centre. Some groups of Lumad in Bukidnon also come down from their communities during Christmas to sing Christmas songs in houses, stores and other business establishments in the city. Photo by Lloyd Albasin

Foreword:

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Rights

The United Nation's General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on September 3, 2007 after 25 years in the making. The UNDRIP contains the "indigenous historical grievances, contemporary challenges and socio-economic, political and cultural aspirations" of Indigenous Peoples around the world. It is hailed as the "culmination of generations-long efforts by indigenous organizations to get international attention, to secure recognition for their aspirations and to generate support for their political agendas".¹

The UNDRIP has 46 articles and 23 preambular clauses. The first 40 articles laid down the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples including the obligation of the State to fulfill these rights. Four countries previously voted against it in the General Assembly: The United States (US), Canada, Australia and New Zealand, while 11 countries abstained (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russia, Samoa, and Ukraine). The Philippines is among 143 nations that voted for the UNDRIP promulgation.

Salient features of the UNDRIP

The UNDRIP is not justiciable but is the most comprehensive framework on indigenous people's rights. It declares the rights contained therein are "the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world".²

There are many provisions in the UNDRIP that are hailed as historic by human rights organizations. It contains salient provisions on discrimination, consultation, participation, consent, improvement of social and economic status, education, cultural integrity, self-determination, land rights, and natural resources. The State is the duty bearer and the UNDRIP lists down the actions and principles that States as represented by governments in relation to the implementation of such rights.

On consultation, the UNDRIP provides that States must consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned in order to obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them. Article 30 has provisions referring to some forms of veto power of Indigenous Peoples over activities including military activities in their territories, while Articles 19 and 32 imply such power of Indigenous Peoples over legislative and administrative matters. States should consult with Indigenous Peoples in these instances:

1. Taking measures to eliminate discrimination;
2. Taking measures to protect IP children from economic exploitation or hazardous work;
3. Taking measures to make sure that military activities do not take place in their lands unless Indigenous Peoples requested or freely agreed;
4. Taking measures to implement the right of indigenous people for cross-border contacts; and
5. Taking measures such as legislation to enforce UNDRIP.

On eliminating discrimination, the UNDRIP states that governments should implement measures to eliminate discrimination and combat prejudice and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations

such as the correction of textbooks and educational materials. Article 2 cites the principle of equality and that Indigenous Peoples have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination and in the exercise of their rights in particular rights that are based on their indigenous origin or identity. Article 8 tasks governments to provide effective mechanisms for prevention of and redress for any form of propaganda to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against Indigenous Peoples.

The UNDRIP contains provisions on participation of indigenous people on political, economic, social and cultural life, on the right to participate in decision-making matters which would affect their rights and to maintain and develop their own indigenous making institutions, and establishment of ways and means of ensuring this participation.³

The UNDRIP also includes the recognition of the right of indigenous people on self-determination, as articulated in in Articles 3, 23 and 24. This includes the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. They have the freedom to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. They also have the right to autonomy or self-government in relation to internal affairs. Indigenous Peoples also have the right to be secure in their enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development and engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities and those who are deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress. Indigenous Peoples have the rights to their traditional medicines, maintain health practices, and conservation of medicinal plants, animals and minerals.⁴

The UNDRIP contains provisions on the right to cultural integrity such as to maintain and strengthen their political, legal, economic, social

and cultural institutions, while the Indigenous Peoples retain their right to participate fully in the life of the rest. Indigenous Peoples should not be subjected to any act of genocide or violence including removing children of the group to another group. They have the right to not be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture. The government should provide effective mechanisms to prevent or provide redress for action that deprives them of their integrity, their cultural values or their ethnic identities, actions dispossessing them of their lands, territories and resources, forced population transfer, forced assimilation or integration and any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination. Article 11 is about the right of Indigenous Peoples and cultural communities to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. The State as the duty bearer shall provide redress through effective mechanisms including restitution in cases where their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property are taken without FPIC.⁵

Article 28 mentions the right to redress including restitution “or when it is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation”, which “shall take the form of lands, territories and resources” unless otherwise “freely” agreed upon by the people concerned. Article 29 talks about the right of Indigenous Peoples to conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for such conservation and protection.⁶

On the improvement of social and economic services, the UNDRIP reiterates the right of Indigenous Peoples to the improvement of these conditions, among others, in education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security, and focusing in particular on elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

The UNDRIP also ensures that Indigenous Peoples have the rights to lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired. They have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by traditional ownership or other traditional occupation as well as those which they have otherwise acquired. The State should recognize and protect these lands, territories and resources. Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources. State should consult and cooperate in good faith to get the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples in projects affecting their land or territories and other resources in particular about the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water and other resources.⁷

According to a study of the UNDRIP and other laws related to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, there are several examples of what the UNDRIP mandates governments to do in order to fulfil their obligations as duty-bearers.

List. Government Responsibilities under the UNDRIP:

Article 8

1. Indigenous Peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
 - (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;
 - (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories, or resources;

- (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;
- (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;
- (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

Article 11

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual, and performing arts and literature.
2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious, and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions, and customs.

Article 12

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop, and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.
2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples concerned.

Article 13

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems, and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places, and persons.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that Indigenous Peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal, and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means⁸

FPIC

Among all of UNDRIP's provisions, the most talked about is Article 10 or the provision on "free, prior and informed consent" (FPIC).

Article 10 is the recognition of indigenous people's claim on their land. It declares that Indigenous Peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands and that all relocation or displacement should be with the FPIC of the Indigenous Peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation, and where possible the option of return.

There are several provisions in the UNDRIP relating to the need for governments or other actors, e.g. corporations:

1. Article 10: No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the Indigenous Peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

2. Article 11: The cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property of IPs cannot be taken without their free, prior, and informed consent
3. Article 19: States shall consult and obtain the free, prior and informed consent of IPs before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.
4. Article 29: States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous Peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.
5. Article 30:
 - a. Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous Peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed with or requested by the Indigenous Peoples concerned.
 - b. States shall undertake effective consultations with the Indigenous Peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, prior to using their lands or territories for military activities.
6. Article 32 - States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNOHCHR), consent has to satisfy the three characteristics, which should be followed completely as well. Free means that there is no coercion, intimidation or manipulation; prior means that consent has to be sought sufficiently in advances of any authorization or commencement of activities and respect is shown to time requirements of indigenous consultation/consensus processes; and, informed means that information is provided, which covers a range of aspects, including the nature, size, pace, reversibility and scope of any proposed project or activity, the purpose of the project as well as its duration, locality and areas affected, a preliminary assessment of the likely economic, social, cultural and environmental impact, including potential risks, personnel likely to be involved in the execution of the project, and procedures the project may entail. This process may include the option of withholding consent. According to the UNOHCHR, consultation and participation should be ensured to fulfill the consent process.⁹

The FPIC process rests on the procedures and institutions determined by Indigenous Peoples themselves, which means that this is also in accordance with their customary laws and practices. Also, States have the responsibility to provide mechanism for redress when the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples has not been sought.¹⁰

On one hand, the FPIC may view the indigenous people as merely bystanders or as passive actors in relation to national development by merely getting their consent. On the other hand, the UN argues that the general underlying principle of the free, prior and informed consent is the universality of the right to self-determination as stated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This is affirmed in the UNDRIP itself through Articles 3 and 4.

IPRA

The Philippines is one of the countries that have legislation reflecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples even before the UNDRIP. The Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) was passed in 1997 or a decade before the UNDRIP and two years after the Mining Act of 1995.

The IPRA is aimed to reflect Section 5 of Article XII of the Philippine Constitution, which recognizes customary laws in relation to property rights and ancestral domain. It contains rights of what the IPRA termed as indigenous cultural communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) and the responsibilities of the Philippine government. It also includes the formation of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), a commission under the Office of the President, which is mandated to implement the IPRA.¹¹

The IPRA defined Indigenous Peoples as a group of people identified by self-ascription and ascription by others who have “continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos”. The IPRA also includes those who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations who have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains as long as they have retained some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.¹²

The IPRA recognizes ancestral domains or lands through the granting of a CADT or CALT. The government accords several rights to holders of such certificates as official recognition of being indigenous and having a culture and political structures apart from the existing dominant ones. The IPRA created the NCIP under the Office of the President to implement the law. The IPRA designated the Ancestral Domain Office of the NCIP to be responsible for the identification, delineation, and recognition of ancestral lands and domains.

The IPRA defined certain rights associated with the recognition of ancestral domains and lands. One of this is the right to ownership of those holding ancestral domains “over land, bodies of water traditionally and actually occupied by ICC/IPs, sacred places, traditional hunting and fishing grounds and all improvements made by them at any time within their domains.” The IPRA also provides for their right to develop lands and natural resources, right to stay in territories, right in case of displacement, right to regulate entry of migrants, right to safe and clean air and water, right to claims parts of reservations and right to resolve conflict. For ancestral lands, holders have the right to transfer property/land and right to redemption.¹³

Continuing structural discrimination

The UNDRIP was promulgated amid the increasing discrimination and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples all over the world what with the aggressive drive of transnational corporations, big local business and domestic governments towards resource extraction and plunder. Alas, a UN instrument has come to recognize the historical injustice and national oppression committed against the Indigenous Peoples – from colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources to violation of their right to self-determination.¹⁴

Yet, structural discrimination of Indigenous Peoples continues to this day particularly by corporate offensive brought about by neoliberal globalization policies. Despite its failing, the UNDRIP remains a powerful tool to measure the extent of rights violations against the Indigenous Peoples' rights, especially with huge 'development' projects such as mining, dams construction, power plants and corporate plantations.

In particular, the FPIC clause has been the fulcrum of most issues on development economics in countries with indigenous populations. This is especially so in the context of privatization of land and natural resources and other 'development' projects in areas where indigenous people live. In many cases, corporations and governments have used FPIC to advance their agenda. The experiences range from not conducting the FPIC process at all or lacking the three necessary ingredients for the FPIC to having an FPIC by taking advantage of the very intrinsic context of Indigenous Peoples – that of being disenfranchised from social and public services and in dire poverty as a whole.

In 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that, "At the national level, the Declaration has inspired new legislation and mechanisms for dialogue with Indigenous Peoples. Despite these positive signs, the promise of the Declaration is far from being universally fulfilled. (...) Rights of Indigenous Peoples are frequently the first victims of development activities in indigenous lands, often pursued with no regard to the principle of free, prior and informed consent and other guarantees of the Declaration."¹⁵

The studies presented here provide evidence that much remains to be talked about, done and fought for.



Falcata logs transported along the Agusan River.
Photo by Erwin Mascariñas



Introduction

Logging has remained one of the biggest industries on a global scale. Efforts to curb its devastating impact on the environment and on the lives of the people living in these forest-dependent communities have been relentless. Yet, logging still persists including its illegal operations, particularly in poor countries like the Philippines.

While the forest-based industry has been raking huge profit, the forestry laws imposed to sustain and recover the environmental losses have remained partial towards the concessions than the affected forest dweller communities.

In the Philippines, the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) reported in 2016 that the total forest-based products exports of the country for 2015 amounted to \$3.156 billion which contributed 5.30 percent to the total exports of the country (Calderon, 2016).

The Senate Economic Planning Office (SEPO) in its bulletin citing the 2014 Philippine Statistical Yearbook also reported in 2015 that the forestry sector in 2013 contributed about Php5.26 billion or 0.12 percent to the national gross domestic product or GDP (AAG, 2015).

For centuries, the demand for forest-based products extracted through logging has never ebbed. Its revenues fluctuate, but it has driven the industry to scour untouched forests around the globe. Today, ubiquitous construction projects are growing worldwide. In

the Philippines, the real-estate boom is being felt everywhere even reaching the rural areas where agricultural lands are converted into gated communities owned by large-scale estate developers. It has also prompted local housing developers to join in this venture. The two cities and a few municipalities in Bukidnon have a few posh estates and several middle-class housing on the rise.

To make sure the supply of these forest-based products doesn't dwindle, the colonial powers in the past particularly the United States (US) ensured their footing in resource-rich but poor countries like the Philippines. With the US running the affairs of the country in the early part of the 20th century, the rapid depletion of forest resources began, even faster than the rate of destruction Spain inflicted on the Philippine forests. The US annexation and occupation of the Philippines relied in part on America's desires to both exploit and manage valuable foreign resources. Roberts (2014) attests that the US Forestry officials became excited at the possibilities that they saw in the tropical Philippine forests with both the chance to exhibit US forest management and the opportunity to exploit tropical hardwoods.

The centuries spent in the massive harvesting of forest products without let-up has resulted to the thinning of forest covers displacing the Indigenous Peoples (IP) inhabiting in these forest-dependent communities who have been perpetually dispossessed and deprived of owning the richness of their ancestral lands.

With the accelerated environmental degradation, the ecological balance has been disrupted. Storms have become devastating when they hit land as barren forests could no longer hold water dispensed by a heavy downpour. The country experiences more than twenty storms every year resulting in disasters at varying

degrees and largely affecting communities where the marginalized sectors settle including the Lumad, the collective term of the IP groups in Mindanao.

The changing climate made worst by deforestation due to logging has also disturbed the planting cycles forcing many of the Lumad to settle farther at the heart of the forests where government basic services could hardly reach or go down to the urban areas where they become informal settlers compelled to live in geo-hazard spaces.

In Malaybalay City and in the municipalities of Impasug-ong, Libona and Baungon, the Lumad complain how their daily subsistence has become more difficult to come by due to the changing climate, bald forests, and lands leased out to corporate plantations, livestock, and poultry raisers. For the first time, the Lumad witnessed and experienced how the storms Sendong (International name: Washi) in 2011 and the category 5 typhoon Pablo (International name: Bopha) in 2012 battered their communities destroying their forests resources, crops, and properties.

The forest laws and policies created by the State to help avert the destruction of the environment wrought by the massive logging in the country aren't enforced to protect the Lumad and empower them as peoples who have every right to live in peace with their culture and traditional knowledge intact and improved.

This study aims to present the current environmental situation of the areas that had been logged in the decades past. It looks into what has become of the logged areas – environmentally, socially, and politically and the effects of the massive logging in the past

on the culture and traditions of the Lumad living in the areas where the state-backed concessions were present. It seeks to establish how logging has become the precursor of the structural discrimination of the Lumad inhabiting in Mindanao.

The study covers the areas along the headwater and tributaries of Cagayan de Oro river which claimed more than a thousand lives when it swelled in December 2011 during tropical storm Sendong.

Information in this study mainly relies on the interviews of key informants, accessing public documents from local government units and agencies concerned and going through online published studies, researches and projects or programs related to the topic under study.





Lawaan transported along the highway in Butuan City after it was discovered by authorities. Photo by Erwin Mascariñas







These natural old growth trees provide canopy at the second highest peak of the country, Mt. Dulang-Dulang, in Kitanglad range in July 2010. Photo by Lloyd Albasin

Chapter 1

Forest Is Life

Forests are indispensable to the perpetuation of life. Its resources are vital to providing for the basic needs of the human race. The symbiotic dependency of the forests and the living creatures necessitates for the survival of the species.

The rich biodiversity of the forests interacts with the soil, air, and water leading to the availability of food, water, medicine, clothing, shelter and other materials that support people's basic needs and the ecosystem services that contribute to the comfortable living environment. The forest resources also serve as the foundation of industries that provide livelihoods to millions of people, such as forestry, pharmaceuticals, construction, water distribution and others (PTFCF, 2015).

Any disruption of this dependency destroys the balance that sustains life. The massive logging in the Philippine forests creates this imbalance that impacts the people dwelling in these forest-dependent communities dominated by the IP.

According to Maohong (2012), before the Spaniards arrived in 1521, the forest was an integral part of Philippine life. Indigenous belief systems, including animism, were closely tied to their environment and contained invaluable local ecological wisdom.

The lives of the IP are interwoven with the forest resources that provide them with the basis of their culture. They believe that spirits found in mountains, trees, lakes and other facets of nature govern their way of life, thus performing rituals are obligatory in their traditional natural resource management activities (PTFCF, 2015).

But, the plight of the Lumad in Mindanao shows otherwise; they are bereft of these resources. Instead, perennial displacement has been haunting them since colonization began. They have become beggars of their own naturally-sourced wealth due to the incursion of capitalists who only want to plunder their resources for colossal profit in the guise of bringing development to their communities.

In the Philippines, approximately 30 percent of the population, including an estimate of 12 to 15 million IP, depend on forests for their survival, and their cultures revolve around their interactions with their natural environment (DENR-FMB, 2009).

The country is one of the 17 mega-diversity countries for having two-thirds of the earth's biodiversity and possessing 70 to 80 percent of plant and animal species in the world. While it ranks fifth in terms of plant species, it maintains five percent of the world's flora (DENR-FMB, 2009).

In 2013 the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced that the country has the second-lowest forest cover in Southeast Asia (SEA) and its biodiversity is among the most threatened in the world that in the past 100 years the forests have dwindled from 30 million hectares to only 7.2 million or 24 percent of the Philippines' land area (Andrade, 2013). Thus, the 80 percent demolished forestland has placed the country as one of the biodiversity hotspots around the globe (Pearlman, 2017:49).

It isn't surprising that the Philippines reached such a deplorable state of the forest considering the exploitation of the forests in the tropics by these imperial powers to address the shortage of forest-based products in their regions. The wars in their homes for centuries depleted their own resources forcing them to explore beyond their continent and find the regions that were still keeping lush forests filled with quality and abundant resources they so needed.

These resources-seeking navigations reached the shores of Southeast Asia (SEA) and thus began the rapid plunder of the resources in the countries around the region like the Philippines which started the dispossession of the indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) and their people from their ancestral domains.

The emergence of the modern world-system in the early sixteenth century made forest products one of the most important components for industrialization which became the major source of economic development since the Middle Ages (Wallerstein in Sunaryo, 2005:27).

Northern Mindanao: A Threatened Biodiversity Frontier

Forests have a vital role on a global scale for they bind carbon dioxide and store it – known as Green Carbon – and help mitigate climate change. However deforestation, largely of tropical rainforests, is responsible for an estimated 17 percent of all man-made emissions – 50 percent more than that from ships, aviation and land transport combined (UNEP, 2012).

One of the biodiversity-rich regions in the Philippines is Northern Mindanao where about 1.5 million Lumad inhabit. Where there are forests, indigenous communities thrive. The region hosts the watershed that drains into the eight river basins on Mindanao island. It houses three mountain ranges. Two of the declared natural parks and protected areas for conservation in the Philippines mightily stand in the region – Mt. Kitanglad range in Bukidnon and Mt. Malindang range in Misamis Occidental. And it is also hosts to another vital watershed, the Mt. Kalatungan range located in the southwestern part of Bukidnon.

Northern Mindanao is an administrative region in the Philippines. It is bounded on the north by the Mindanao Sea, Western Mindanao on the west, CARAGA Region on the east, and on the south by Regions 11 and 12. It geographically lies within Latitude 7°15' to 9°15' North and Longitude 123°30' to 125°30' East (DENR).

Mount Kitanglad Range: The ASEAN Heritage Park

Mt. Kitanglad Range and Natural Park (MKRNP) in the province of Bukidnon is a protected area covered by Republic Act of 2000 as it is one of the key biodiversity areas (KBA) in the country hosting the headwaters of several major river systems draining in the north and central Mindanao towards Pulangui, Manupali, Cagayan de Oro and Tagoloan rivers as catchment areas (FMB).

DENR says Mt. Kitanglad is a natural habitat for several endemic mammals and birds and recognized as an important bird area (IBA) for being one of the nesting places of the majestic, yet threatened Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*).

The range has an area of 47,270 hectares and straddles parts of Malaybalay City and the municipalities of Baungon, Talakag, Lantapan, Impasugong, Sumilao, Libona, and Manolo Fortich. It is the ancestral domain of the Talaandig, Higaonon and Bukidnon lumad groups. It also provides irrigation, power generation and domestic water for the provinces of Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental (DENR).

DENR says it has been declared in October 2009 as an ASEAN Heritage Park for being one of the last sanctuaries of the country's natural heritage, thus of high conservation importance.

Mt. Kitanglad has about a dozen peaks, with the main ones: Mt. Imbayao, Mt. Kaatoan, Mt. Nangkabulos, Mt. Dulang-Dulang and Mt. Kitanglad. Five of its highest peaks (the mountains Kitanglad, Lumuluyaw, Maagnaw, Tuminungan, and Dulang-Dulang) have an average elevation of 2,718.2 meters. Dulang-Dulang is the country's second highest peak while Kitanglad peak ranks fourth. The latter is an inactive volcano (DENR).

The DENR admits that the conservation of the biodiversity of Mt. Kitanglad range is threatened by high-value crops plantation, slash and burn farming (kaingin), small-scale logging, establishment of buildings and roads for telecommunications, gathering of non-timber forest products, tourism as it is a popular hiking trail, hunting, fishing and grazing (DENR).

The River Basins in Northern Mindanao

Two major river basins are located in the region. Mt. Kitanglad is host to one of the major river basins in the country – the Cagayan de Oro River Basin (CDORB) which has an area of 1,373.84 square kilometres. The basin encompasses three provinces. It is bounded by Northern Cotabato in the south, by Lanao del Sur in the south-west and by the Bohol Sea in the north. It is the white water rafting capital of Mindanao and hosts to eight sub-watersheds namely Bubonawan, Tumalaong, Tagiti, Kalawaig, Munigi, Pigkutin, Picalin-Ticalaan, and Batang (MinDA).





Every year, Mt. Kitanglad range is frequented by mountain climbers such as these trekkers who are headed to the peak of Mt. Dulang-Dulang in July 2010. DENR says climbing as tourism lure threatens the conservation of Mt. Kitanglad if regulations are not fully enforced. Photo by Lloyd Albasin

Another is the Tagoloan River Basin (TRB) which is the 13th largest river system in the Philippines in terms of watershed size, with a drainage area of 1,801.027 square kilometres. It straddles in the provinces of Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon and its main drainage path is the Tagoloan river following the northwestern flow.

Both these river basins exit and merge into the Macajalar Bay in Misamis Oriental.

Mount Malindang Range Natural Park

According to the World Heritage Center (WHC) of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) the province of Misamis Occidental is home to the Subanen Lumad group who inhabit the hinterland areas surrounding Mt. Malindang range. It straddles the provinces of Misamis Occidental, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte. After the Kitanglad declaration, the declaration of Mt. Malindang as another Natural Park followed in 2002. Like Kitanglad, it is rich also in biodiversity and home to endemic animals and birds as well. It has a six-hectare crater named Lake Duminagat and two sunken areas of about 20 hectares each surrounded by high rock walls, cinder cones, dome volcanic plugs, amphitheatre structures, extensive distribution of volcanic rocks, carbonized wood found in pyroclastic deposits and two sulphuric hot springs. The range covers 53,262 hectares, bigger than Kitanglad. Its forest vegetation is about 33,000 hectares and the remaining 20,000 hectares populated by about 4,000 Subanen families. The mountain range has several canyons and ravines. Mt. Malindang, unlike Kitanglad, still needs further exploration in terms of its richness.



Philippine tarsier
Tarsius syrichta

ENDEMIC MAMMALS

Endangered golden-crowned flying fox (*Acerodon jubatus*) and Mindanao moon rat (*Podogymnura truei*); the vulnerable Philippine brown deer (*Cervus mariannus*), Philippine tailless roundleaf bat (*Coelops hirsutus*), Philippine flying lemur (*Cynocephalus volans*), Philippine pygmy fruit bat (*Haplonycteris fischeri*), Phil. warty pig (*Sus philippinensis*) and Mindanao tree

ENDEMIC BIRDS

Threatened Blue-capped Kingfisher (*Actenoides hombroni*), and Red-eared parrot finch (*Erythrura coloria*); the Philippine hanging parakeet (*Loriculus philippinensis*); Grey-hooded sunbird (*Aethopygia primigenius*); mountain shrike (*Lanius validostris*).



Mindanao Bleeding Heart Pigeon
Gallucolumba criniger



Philippine pygmy woodpecker
Dendrocops maculatus

POPULATION

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Census of Population of 2015 records 4,689,302 inhabitants in Northern Mindanao. It increased by 391,979 compared to the population in 2010 at 4,297,323 and at 1,183,584 in 2000. However, the growth rate of the region showed an annual 1.68 percent average decline in 2010 to 2015 compared to the higher growth rate recorded in 2000 to 2010 at 2.06 percent. (FIGURES 1 and 2)

The Province of Bukidnon tops among the five provinces in the region with a population of 1,415,226. It is one of the twenty-seven provinces in the country surpassing the one million population mark, thus, ranks the 16th biggest in population among the 81 provinces in the country (PSA, 2016).

Among the highly urbanized cities (HUCs), Cagayan de Oro City is the most populous with 675,950 settlers even with the combined population of the provinces of Misamis Occidental and Camiguin. It also has the fastest growing population rate at 2.23 percent in 2010 to 2015 among the HUCs (PSA, 2016).

With regard to the fastest growing component cities, Malaybalay City in Bukidnon registered a rate of 2.54 percent every year in the period 2010 to 2015 which showed about three persons were added per year to every one hundred persons. Such rate even surpassed Cagayan de Oro City within the same period covered (PSA, 2016).

The region has 84 municipalities with the three largest in terms of the population of more than 100,000 located in Bukidnon

province. These are the municipalities of Quezon, Maramag and Manolo Fortich which are homes to the Lumad. While the smallest populated municipality is Guinsiliban in Camiguin province (PSA, 2016).

The region has 2,022 barangays (villages) and 464 of these belong to Bukidnon. Among the barangays in the municipalities, Barangay Poblacion Kiokong in Quezon is the most populated while Barangay Poblacion of Valencia City records the highest for the component cities and Barangay Carmen in Cagayan de Oro among the HUCs (PSA, 2016)).

Bukidnon is the food basket of the region. It is a landlocked plateau that lies in the southern part of the Philippines and located in the north-central part of the island of Mindanao particularly within Northern Mindanao (Region X). It is bounded in the north by Misamis Oriental and Cagayan de Oro City; on the east by Agusan del Sur and Davao del Norte; on the south by North Cotabato; and on the west by Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur and part of Misamis Oriental. It lies between the parallels 7o 25' and 8o 38' north latitude, and meridians 124o 31' and 125o 16'' east longitude (BPDPF, 2014).

The Lumad groups in Bukidnon

The country is culturally diverse with an estimated 14 to 17 million IP belonging to 110 ethno-linguistic groups. Sixty-one percent are settled in Mindanao, the second largest island in the archipelago, while 33 percent abound in the Cordilleras in Northern Luzon and some groups in the Visayas (UNDP, 2013).

The National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) has recorded 11,320,476 indigenous peoples in the country and ranks Northern Mindanao second with the most populated region of Lumad presence following the Davao region with 1,882,622 lumad populace.

But, the latest PSA census doesn't show a separate count on the population of the indigenous peoples. Although, the NCIP has its own statistics on the IP in the country yet some local government units also did their own count in the barangay levels.

The Lumad groups are present in 345 of the 464 barangays in Bukidnon. According to the NCIP data, there are 249,103 Lumad of the 1,299,192 population of the province in 2010.

Most Lumad groups identify themselves based on their roots. Their marked identities may come from the distinct features of their ancestral homes which may refer to rivers, mountains or maybe from the dominant living creatures that surround them. It may also be the distinct characteristics of their tribe based on behaviours or physical attributes.

The province of Bukidnon is home to seven Lumad groups. These are the Higaonon, Bukidnon, Talaandig, Umayamnon, Tigwahanon, Matigsalug, and Manobo.

Table 1. Population of Indigenous Peoples

Region	Population
Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR)	1,252,962
Region I	1,039,447
Region II	1,014,955
Region III	230,270
Region IV	714,527
Region V	185,488
Region VI and VII	175,109
Region IX	993,232
Region X	1,509,436
Region XI	1,882,622
Region XII	1,447,972
Region XIII	874,456
Total	11,320,476

Source: <https://www.ncipro67.com.ph/indigenous-peoples-of-the-philippines/>
 Accessed December 12, 2017

Those who live close to Mt. Kitanglad range in which areas belong to Malaybalay City call themselves as Bukidnon. This group has been actively doing programs to preserve their culture and several of them attended college. A lot of them have settled in the urban barangays of Malaybalay City and in some nearby municipalities. The Higaonon mostly reside in the municipalities of Talakag, Baungon, Libona, Sumilao, Impasug-ong, Malitbog and they but live close at the foot of Mt. Kitanglad. There are also Higaonon who inhabit in some of the municipalities of Misamis Oriental that border Bukidnon and Agusan provinces and the upstream barangays of Cagayan de Oro.

Those Lumad whose ancestors live along or nearby the Tigwa river are the Tigwahanon while the Matigsalug are the Lumad who live along or nearby the Salug river. Tigwa and Salug rivers are tributaries of Pulangui river along San Fernando town. Tigwa river flows within the bounds of San Fernando while Salug river converges into the Davao river in Davao del Norte.

The other group who lives along the Umayam river call themselves Umayamnon. This river flows in the mountains of Pantaron range in the eastern side of Bukidnon province bordering Agusan del Sur areas.

The Manobo inhabit the hinterlands of Bukidnon along the borders of Misamis Oriental, Agusan, Davao and Cotabato. They are also found in the southwestern part of Bukidnon in Muleta, Kalilangan and Pangantucan.

Meanwhile, the Lumad group in the municipality of Lantapan is the Talaandig. They, like the Bukidnon, inhabit at the slopes and foot of Mt. Kitanglad range. Fearing that their culture might vanish,

the elders of the tribe have strictly instituted the preservation of their culture and tradition as seen through their arts, music and the strict use of their language. They have established their heritage center in Barangay Sungko in Lantapan.

Forest Resources Data

Several surveys conducted to record the forest statistics in the past had failed. The Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC) in its study cites the disappearance of the forest surveys in the Philippines carried out from 1954 to 1961. The national forest inventory (NFI) from 1962 to 1968 was never made public which coincided with the logging boom and concessions surge from 4.5 million to 11.6 million hectares covering one-third of the country. Timber companies were then owned by the multinational companies, the local landed elite, politicians and the military.

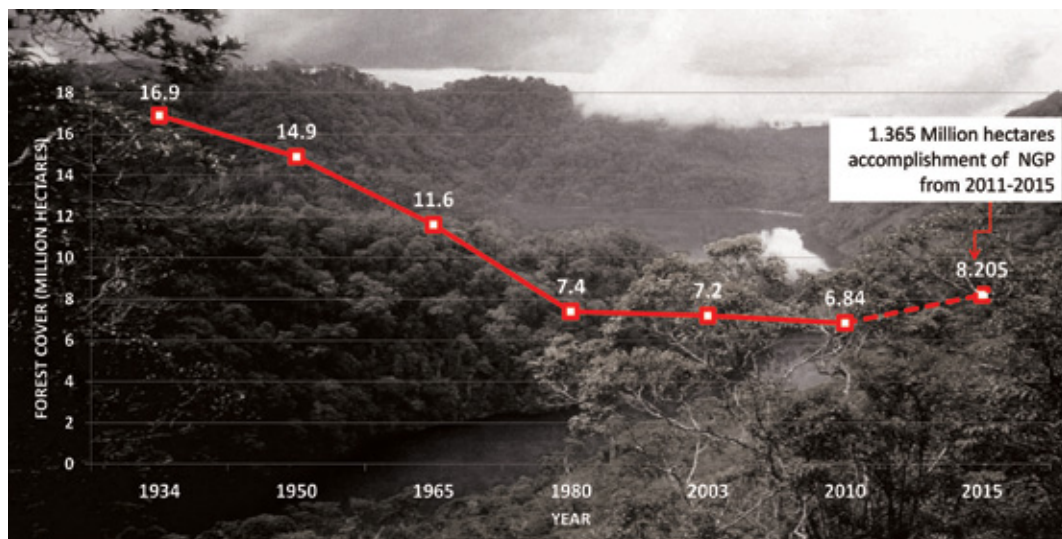
Reliable data on the forest cover in the period 1521 to 1930 in the country couldn't be established. The fire that gutted the office of the Bureau of Forestry in Manila and Los Baños in Laguna in 1945 worsened the predicament of precise data collection (ESSC, 1999:20).

According to MacDicken (2015) data on global forest resources became available only in the 1920s when the first comprehensive global forest assessment was produced by Rafael Zon and Sparhawk in 1923. That knowledge changed the shape of how forests were viewed by the public – and it influenced the investment of public and private money in forestry. It became the ground-breaking work that set the stage for all future global forest resources assessments (FRA) although it didn't include all countries at that time, the report showed the world forest area was just over 3 billion hectares.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted the first global resources assessment (FRA) and published it in 1948. The main interest was well expressed in the first sentence of the report: “The whole world is suffering from shortages of forest products (FAO in MacDicken, 2015).”

FRA (2015) insists that the extent of forest resources is an important indicator of sustainable forest management. Understanding changes in forest resources are necessary for policy and management actions, as well as for guiding public and private investments. Ensuring adequate forest resources to provide social, economic and environmental functions for future generations is essential for sustainable development.

The interests of keeping and updating data on forests resources by FAO, the World Bank (WB) and other agencies concern including private organizations and donors can be seen as instruments in expanding and systematizing the trading of forest-based products in the guise of sustainable forest management to guarantee that the supply of logs meets the global demand for timber. They lobby solutions to solve the forest problems, but they are too compartmentalized. In essence, these groups are partial to the capital. They push for strategies to attain the balance between protecting the forests and its inhabitants while continuing the forest industry, yet they couldn't make the governments in these poor countries accountable in imposing the rights of the IP to life, land and self-determination by reclaiming their ancestral lands and governing their domains.

Table 2. Forest Cover Trends in the Philippines

Note: Forest cover decreased by 328,682 ha i.e. from 7,168,400 ha in 2003 to 6,839,718 ha in 2010 or an **ANNUAL FOREST COVER LOSS** of 46,954 ha.

Source: Forest Management Bureau, DENR.

A laborer transfers large-cut lawaan.
Photo by Erwin Mascarinas



Chapter 2

The Colonial Forest Plunder

The entry of logging in the country dates back to the Spanish rule in the Philippines that lasted for almost four hundred years. Logging activities were reinforced with the rapid rate of concessions during the American occupation of more than thirty years. There aren't definite data on the exact destruction that can be found on record except for some estimates. But the rate of devastation the flooding and landslides brings after heavy downpour due to storms or monsoon rains, the occurrences of phenomena El Niño and La Niña at an extreme level and the attacks of pests on crops could very well give us an idea of how dismal the remaining forests could be after the centuries of plunder.

Apart from logging, various studies also attribute to the population increase, the ushering in of commercial crops, the growth of pasture lands and intense exploitation of the forests in the lowlands during the Spanish colonization as factors that contributed to the thinning of the forest cover in the archipelago.

Forest cover in the country began to dwindle due to the population increase from 500,000 in 1521 to about 7 million in 1900 during the Spanish colonization and the introduction of commercial crops such as abaca, tobacco, and sugarcane and the growth of pasture lands for cattle-raising as the country became part of the world economy. Exploitation of the forests was intense in the lowlands, particularly

in Cebu and Bohol that resulted to the issuance of the Royal Decree in 1874 prohibiting the felling of trees for commercial purposes especially in the affected areas. Spain used the finest quality timber for the construction of their trade galleons (ESSC, 199).

Under the Spanish colonial rule, the regime failed to exploit the deep forests of Mindanao because of the resistance of the Lumad and the Moro settlers. Only the lowlands and coastal forests were encroached and those communities whose inhabitants defied the colonization retreated to the upland forest areas as they continued fighting back the Spanish occupation.

The Americans introduced logging for export. It had a great impact on the forests in the country since the demand for tropical woods made the export of timber profitable. Such demand cleared the forests in Romblon Islands and Central Plains of Luzon while the provinces of Bukidnon and Cotabato were opened up (ESSC, 1999).

According to Sunaryo (2005), the forest cover of the Philippines was relatively untouched compared to that of the Dutch Indies and British colonies when the Americans arrived in the country. Despite the US interest in plantation industry, it opted to develop the forest sources because it was the only investment available during its colonial reign in the Philippines. The US found developing the forest sources much easier since the labour force was replaceable using the machinery and other heavy equipment.

However, in the course of America's occupation, plantation industry also began with sugar and pineapple. Del Monte Fresh Produce Inc. has huge tracts of pineapple plantation in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon which has now expanded in the other municipalities of the province. Today, the company has also

ventured into banana plantations in Talakag and Baungon towns in Bukidnon through its subsidiary, the Agrinanas Development Company Inc.

The American colonial government immediately transformed the Philippines from a wood importer to a wood exporter after the turn of the twentieth century (Tucker in Sunaryo, 2005:88). The US following its Forestry Law of 1904 rushed the advancement of the timber industry by forging a close relationship between its Bureau of Forestry and both domestic and international (American, British and Spanish) large-scale timber companies to get maximum profit with little direct involvement in everyday operations by modernizing the Filipino firms and local entrepreneurs (Potter in Sunaryo, 2005: 88).

After World War II, logging and farming increased rapidly in the forest due to the shortage of food in the country. The extent of deforestation in the years immediately after the war had not been known. Between 1900 and 1950 Americans and Filipino, elite reduced the forests by 20 percent. It is at a faster rate compared to Spain whose colonial rule lasted for almost four centuries (ESSC, 1999).

The Insular Lumber Company

In its four years in the Philippines, the United States established the Insular Lumber Company which was the first modern large-scale timber company in the Philippines. The company took advantage of the new laws to claim a 300-square kilometre timber concession to harvest dipterocarp forests on Negros Island. Later, the Insular converted it into sugar plantations. With the unprecedented land grabbing by the Americans, the woods in the country was exported

at about 40 million board-feet in a year and significantly hiked and reached 112 million board-feet in 1913 (Sunaryo, 2005:89-91).

The need for the US to ensure that its economy was well-oiled, grabbing lands in the pretext of forest and land regulations began as soon America set foot in the country to ensure wanton forest resources exploitation. Sunaryo (2005) says,

Like other colonial powers, the United States' colonial government took over forest lands from the natives and gave them to private companies by passing both forest and land regulations. The Forest Law of 1904 was not the only law that facilitated land concentration into private ownership for large-scale commercial exploitation. There were a number of laws like the Public Lands Act of 1902, the Mining Law of 1905, and Executive Order No.27 of 1929 (Chew, 1998:209; Hurst 1990:172). The Land Registration Act of 1902 was meant to be used to consolidate the messy land system left by the Spanish colonial government. Landowners had to register their lands and claims with the United States colonial authorities. This Act was the cornerstone of an era of land-grabbing by well-to-do, well-educated individuals and large-scale US interests (p.90).

English was a language barrier in the early occupation. The US used it to amass lands belonging to small farmers and indigenous groups. Three years later after the enactment of Public Lands Act of 1902, which wasn't really made public at all, the unclaimed lands were registered as "public lands" and owned by the American colonial government. Later, these lands were handed over to the wealthy. When the Mining Law of 1905 was passed, "all public lands" were freely open for exploitation and purchase by citizens of the US and the rich Filipinos. What completed the land grabbing scheme was the prohibition of the IP entry to the forests following

the Commonwealth Act of 1935 that declared all of the mountain areas in Northern Luzon as public parks and forest reserves while Executive Order No. 27 sealed the fate of the lands in the Philippines as America gained complete control over these vast landholdings (Hurst in Sunaryo, 2005: 90).

According to Vitug (1997) the Philippines used to be the proud overseer of lush forests and that one of the strongest arguments for the continued US colonization of the country at the turn of the century was the abundant wood supply that, in the words of one American senator, “[could] supply the furniture of the world for a century to come” (Schirmer & Shalom in Vitug, 1997:334).

Sunaryo (2005: 230) adds saying, “the Philippines prewar tropical forest product trade that was concentrated on the US market, had become diverse to several US Northeast Asian ally countries: South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, which processed the Philippine logs into plywood and sold them to the U.S. market.”

The US was the largest single market for the Philippines wood – mahogany and lauan – followed by the European market for red lauan and the many other specialty kinds of woods. It also controlled the most capital in the timber export. Earlier in the 1920s, there was Filipino, American and British-Chinese partnership in the capital but eventually changed in favour of the US capital which controlled 42 percent compared with the Filipino 25 percent, Chinese 12 percent, British 7 percent and Japanese by only 4 percent (Tucker in Sunaryo, 2005:92).

Under the American colonization, the Filipinos who lost their rights to the lands they owned for failing to comply with the land regulations the US implemented to make legal its land grabbing in

the country were made poorer because of the insatiable capitalist expansion of the US in the Asia Pacific region.

Today, the presence of the US in the region has continued to manifest in the much more complex economies geared towards exploiting more resources in poor countries. These exploitations have become more multifaceted and bled dry local economies resulting in ballooning government deficits, people in dire poverty, hefty taxations and spiralling human rights violations.

For Sunaryo (2005: 92-93), the exploitation of the Philippine forest by the US was materialised through its Depletive and Hyper Development of Capitalist Tropical Forestry model. Its main characteristics are large-scale capital, a technology-intensive global market for mass consumption of tropical wood, and short-term profit for hyper-development of capitalist forestry. It quickly generated capitalist forestry in the country rendering the Filipinos impoverished and depleted their tropical forest. This model assumes that the usefulness of the forest to human beings comes only when it fulfils the human needs, thus, mainly taking into account profit. Harvesting logs needed expensive capital goods and intensive capital investment which demanded speedy return of investments. With this, only short-term economic gain was the sole concern through earning foreign currency by exporting tropical wood products. The model also assumes that the forest harvested was owned and inhabited by no one. Since the state alienates the people from their forests, it is considered as public land leased to private companies. The model reflects the logic of financial capital that subsumes the social, cultural, political and ecological facets of the forests to strengthen its own while the capital weakened what it subsumes.



A man tries to cut an old tree using a chainsaw.
Photo by Erwin Mascarinas

Chapter 3

Knocking the Trees Down: A Billion Dollar Trade

Logging has been blamed on the massive destruction of the forests worldwide. The wanton felling of trees has resulted to flash floods, flooding and landslides when heavy monsoon rains or storms occur in tropical countries where state-backed logging industry is widely spread and forestry policies and laws violated.

Multinational companies into logging stripped our forests of their natural bounties causing the disruption of the ecological balance and bled dry the economies of the nations where the trade intensified and boomed. These companies triumphed in their economic pursuits with much ease through the aid of the local landed elites and the systemic corruption in the government that allowed the crime to persist.

The coming of America to the Philippines was due to its immense interest in the resources of Southeast Asia. It is widely known that apart from possessing rich resources, the Philippines is a strategic location for the US to hold dominion in the Asia-Pacific region in shoring up its economy and military.

According to Ross (1996) in 1950 some of the most valuable forests in the tropics were found in Southeast Asia — in the Philippines, Indonesia, and the British colonies of Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah). All four states pledged to manage their forests sustainably; all passed laws that reflected this commitment, and all received sound

forestry advice from international agencies and consultants. Yet by the mid-1990s each of these states had been through unsustainable logging booms that brought them exhausted forests, degraded soils, and declining timber supplies for their wood processing industries (p.1).

The US positioned itself in the post-war reconstruction where inevitably logging played a major role in rebuilding countries whose vital installations, infrastructures and communities had been reduced to ashes. Multinational logging companies saw such a heyday in foreign investments.

Thus, the Philippines had become the frontline of the “world forestry movement” to mobilize particularly the tropical forests in Southeast Asian countries for post-war reconstruction under the US auspices. As profits climbed for loggers together with the increase of insatiable world market, Filipino and foreign loggers accelerated their operations by using “a new generation of more powerful logging and milling machinery (Tucker in Sunaryo, 2005: 227).”

Logging: A Revenue Star Performer during Martial Law

The declaration of Martial Law under the former dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos whose reign lasted for two decades put a rapid rise of logging concessions and the plunder of the forest resources since wanton clear-cut of trees without regard on the selective cutting mandate persisted.

Dauvergne (1995) argues that after World War II, ubiquitous patron-client networks at the top and middle levels of the state debilitated state capacity to enforce timber policies, as he adds,

In the 1950s and 1960s, Congress members used timber profits and licenses to reward clients and finance expensive electoral campaigns. In the 1970s, President Ferdinand Marcos (1965-86) built a large and dominant patron-client network, especially after declaring martial law in 1972. As Marcos battled to remain supreme in the societal web of clientelist relations, he allowed rent-seeking, particularistic patron-client clusters to flourish at all levels of the state and society. On an unbelievable scale and at a frantic pace, powerful patrons and well-connected clients plundered natural resources to support extravagant whims and opulent lifestyles. In this setting, poorly supervised, demoralized state implementers were absorbed by timber-based patron-client networks. State bureaus were captured by private interests; rather than enforcing management principles, the Philippine clientelist state protected and facilitated rapid and destructive logging.

In the 70s, timber licensees and Timber License Agreement (TLA) holders enjoyed a windfall of profit at \$42.85 billion and only 200 families in the country had control over these resources (ESSC, 1999).

As Vitug (1997) points out,

The timber license agreement (TLA) was a tool of political patronage, deftly used in the past by a succession of presidents, especially the late Ferdinand Marcos, to win favours from and gain the loyalty of wealthy logging magnates. Marcos used the TLA to reward supporters, enrich his friends and family, and keep politicians under his wing. A typical license covered anywhere from 40,000 to 60,000 hectares of forest. Marcos's favoured friends and relatives, however, got more than 100,000 hectares each (p.335).

At one point, the Philippines supplied at least 30 percent of the world's requirements, which made the country the biggest, single log producer in the world. The Philippines also topped the log-exporting countries. It was the star performer in the country's export industry. The downside to this glory was massive deforestation putting the Philippines as one of the worst deforestation rates in the Asia-Pacific region (Vitug, 1997:334).

In the 1960s, they contributed as much as 29 percent to total export earnings. From 1969 to 1972, they raked in an annual average of \$300 million. This reached its peak in 1973 with a record earnings of \$472 million. Overall, they accounted for five percent of the gross national product of the country (Vitug in Sunaryo, 2005:233).

Also in the same period, about 80 percent of the recorded log production was exported as logs and processing lumber and plywood was almost seen as residue industry (Hammond, 1997).

By 1977, 8.3 million hectares of forest area were licensed for logging (Dolan [ed], 1991).

In fact, logging was one of Marcos' sources of his ill-gotten wealth. He built his crony and spread it throughout various businesses most especially logging which was at its peak. His rich cronies established logging concessions in Indonesia. Marcos' regime was riddled with corruption and tainted with brutality as hundreds were slain and thousands went missing as the tide of defiance against Martial Law, activism, and armed revolution grew in magnitude.

Dauvergne (2002) aptly puts it,

It is common to find senior military and bureaucratic officials with personal stakes in logging. Politicians have handed out timber licenses in exchange for electoral, financial, and military support. Because of this, the criteria for granting, renewing, and revoking timber licenses are based more on a firm's political connections than on an objective evaluation of the quality of operations. Few loggers appear to follow official environmental rules that do exist. For the most part, states do not have the capacity – equipment, personnel, or legislative authority – to enforce these rules. And, too, political and state allies of many loggers shield law-breakers from prosecution or penalties. In a rather ironic twist, breaking environmental rules has in some ways become a necessary part of working in the timber industry (p. 81).

According to Sunaryo (2005), seventeen Filipino-owned logging companies committed to a huge investment in Indonesia that amounted to \$179.5 million within 20 years starting in 1970. “Some of them were: Jessmag Inc. owned by Jesus Magsaysay, promised to invest \$2.5 million in joint venture with an Indonesian firm to operate 120,000 hectares of forest land; Philippine American Timber Company - \$1.5 million; Valgosons Inc. - \$10 million; Gonzalo Puyat and Sons Inc. owned by Gonzalo Puyat...” (Vitug in Sunaryo, 2005: 228).

By the end of the 1970s, the following islands were either almost completely deforested or had less than 5 percent forest cover: Polillo, Babuyan, Burias, Palaui, Tablas, Batanes Islands, Lubang, Marinduque, Ticao, Guimaras, Masbate, Siquijor, Cebu, Bohol, Samal, Siargao, Tawi-tawi, Jolo and Camiguin (ESSC, 1999).

Most of these deforested areas have become top tourist destinations of the country like Batanes, Siargao, Siquijor, Cebu, Samal, Bohol, Camiguin, and Guimaras which take pride with their white sand beaches, waterfalls, springs and sceneries but gone were the forests that stood lush. Tawi-tawi and Jolo are potential tourist destinations but the security situation in the two provinces hindered the tourism industry access.

Hammond (1997) says that the attempt on restricting unprocessed log exports and the imposition of the logging ban in three regions in the country in 1985 to control harvests failed because of the large-scale graft and corruption in the public sector. Rampant timber smuggling in banned areas continued. Had the restrictions been enforced, the country could have saved about 500,000 cubic metres of timber for the next two years' harvest.

In 1988, two years after the restoration of democracy in the country, 120 licensed loggers operating on a total area of 4.74 million hectares cut an estimated 4.2 million cubic metres of logs and exported 644 million board feet (ESSC, 1999).

With the huge market and demand for logs and the revenues logging can generate, the attempts on restoring deforested areas can be rendered futile as reforestation could not catch up owing to the massive and accelerated illegal logging operations in Southeast Asia that continue amid the crafting of reforestation laws, policies and programs as smuggling logs go beyond borders.

Illegal Logging: A Transnational Crime

After, the Philippine government stopped renewing the TLA, illegal logging, timber poaching and other illegal forest-based

products transactions has begun to swell. However, government revenues on the logging industry have declined as the nature of doing business with logging has been rendered illegal yet it has continued to rake huge profit syphoned directly to the pockets of the operators and politicians who engage in such corrupt dealings leaving almost empty government coffers.

Reboredo (2013) citing the 2006 WB data which estimated that illegal logging causes losses of approximately US\$15 billion every year while the legal forest industry loses more than US\$10 billion while governments lose about US\$5 billion in revenues.

The full extent of illegal logging activities in the country was difficult to determine, but the discrepancy between Philippine and Japanese statistics on log exports from the Philippines to Japan provided one source of information. From 1955 through 1986, log imports from the Philippines, according to Japanese statistics, averaged about 50 percent more than log exports to Japan according to Philippines statistics. In 1987 and 1988, the discrepancy was considerably reduced, perhaps an indication of the Aquino government's stricter enforcement policy (Dolan [ed], 1991.

Illegal logging and timber smuggling are well recognized as a transnational environmental crime in Asia-Pacific since it is generally committed in more than one state (Elliott in Reboredo, 2013: 298-299).

The Anti-illegal Logging Task Force formed in the country in August 2008 was meant to handle the illegal logging in the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park (NSMNP) in Luzon. In its 18 months of operation, the Task Force confiscated about 4,000m³ of

illegal timber as compared with a three-year period seizure of wood at 1,083m³. The volume of illegal logging in NSMNP was estimated between 20,000m³ to 35000m³ per year with a minimum market value of \$4.75 million which maximum volume was close to the allowable cut, pegged at 37,794m³, of three logging concessions in Isabela province where Sierra Madre Park is located (van der Ploeg et al. in Reboredo, 2013).

Reboredo (2013) argues that illegal logging can be controlled and minimized if policies are adequate and enforced. That the lack of notification of forest crimes does not mean the violations didn't happen.

According to United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the International Police Criminal Investigation (INTERPOL), organized crimes carrying out 50 to 90 percent of logging in key tropical countries of the Amazon basin, Central Africa and Southeast Asia threaten efforts to combat climate change, deforestation, conserve wildlife and eradicate poverty. Globally, illegal logging now accounts for between 15 and 30 percent of the overall trade.

With the increase in organized criminal activity, INTERPOL has also noted associated crimes such as murder, violence and atrocities against indigenous forest dwellers (Reboredo, 2013).

The Rapid Response Report entitled "Green Carbon: Black Trade" reveals that the illegal trade, worth between US\$30-100 billion per year, has been hampering the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) initiative – one of the principal tools for catalysing positive environmental change, sustainable development, job creation and reducing emissions (UNEP, 2012).

The report concludes that without an internationally coordinated enforcement effort, illegal loggers and cartels will continue to shift operations from one haven to another to pursue their profitable trade at the expense of the environment, local economies and even the lives of the IPs (UNEP, 2012).

REDD and the expanded REDD+ initiative provide national and international legal frameworks, including agreements, conventions and certification schemes, to reduce illegal logging and support sustainable practices. The report said that if REDD+ is to be sustainable over the long term, payments to communities for their conservation efforts need to be higher than the returns from activities that lead to environmental degradation (UNEP, 2012). There are 30 ingenious ways of procuring and laundering illegal timber. Primary methods include falsification of logging permits, bribes to obtain permits (up to US\$50,000 for a single permit in some countries), logging beyond concessions and hacking government websites to obtain or change electronic permits and mix illegally cut woods with legally cut timber, process and launder them through saw, paper, pulp and board mills. Another big scam involves selling timber and wood originating from wild forests as plantation timber often with government subsidies for plantations (UNEP, 2012).

In the Philippines, these methods of smuggling out logs have been tried countless times. Forest law enforcement agencies have already made several apprehensions on mixing prohibited logs with those harvested from forest plantations. In some cases, drifting prohibited logs to the rivers were opted to avoid seizures from DENR checkpoints positioned on the major highways. Despite the presence of DENR checkpoints, some would take the risks of transporting illegally cut logs showing bribed papers.

Most of these apprehensions happened whenever the communities tipped the DENR off about illegally cut logs. Without this system, the chances of smuggling out logs can be successful. The DENR has been engaging communities where illegal cutting of logs still persists to report such activities but poverty has been one of the hindrances that these incidents went unreported.

In 2014, the DENR announced that illegal logging hotspots – areas in the country where the crime is rampant – declined from 197 in 2011 to 31 or by 84 percent. The environment agency credited the decline to the Executive Order 23 signed by former President Benigno Simeon Aquino III in 2011. The order bans the cutting down of trees in natural forests nationwide. About 25.5 million board feet of illegally processed and cut wood were confiscated since the implementation of EO 23. More than 1,200 cases against persons involved in illegal logging have been filed in court with 186 convictions as of 2014 (Ranada, 2014).

Illegally cut Lawaan loaded into a truck
after authorities discovered it
Photo by Erwin Mascariñas



Chapter 4

Logged over areas: Disasters waiting to happen

Climate change is the new normal. Combating it is worldwide. Nations around the globe have been on constant conferencing to address the changing climate. Measures have been made but the IP around the world have been constantly facing neglect.

The IP know their domain well. They know that where they live – the resources needed to survive are in abundance. Some species of plants provide them medication for illnesses apart from being sources of food for daily sustenance. The huge tracts of land their ancestors own are fertile grounds for agricultural crops such as rice and corn while other Lumad areas are endowed with metallic and non-metallic mineral resources and sources of hydroelectric powers. Unfortunately, some Lumad leaders and even communities have been co-opted to work with parties interested in extractive industries such as logging, mining and energy.

Because of the loose of regulations implemented by the state in these industries operating in the forests and the vast tracts of land in the country, countless devastating natural and man-made disasters have been occurring and whose impact made those in the margins more marginal including the Lumad who have been continually dispossessed from their lands.

This “rush to destruction” phenomenon is blamed on the multinational logging companies who work in cahoots with the rich Filipino doing business in heaping up together enormous profit from continued growth of harvesting volumes due to the voracious demand of Japan for logs and the Philippine government who took pride in the ever-increasing foreign exchange and revenues. Despite the rationalization program on logging in 1975 that ordered concessions to do some processing and the ban on log exports; the small, inefficient and underutilized mills mushroomed to comply with the new rules. But the concessionaires continued with exporting logs amid the ban (Hammond, 1997).

The utter disregard of the state to address the widespread logging has resulted to deforestation which up to now the government could hardly cope with vis-à-vis its reforestation targets as implementations of these projects grind so slow due to weak political will that outweighs massive earth plunder in the wake of widespread mining, quarrying and corporate plantations in the country.

Maohong (2012) defines deforestation as the replacement of forest cover in favour of other forms of land use by human and natural activities. The history of deforestation deals with the replacement of forest by human activities. He furthers that the deforestation of the Philippines is a process that began in 1521 with the coming of the Spanish colonizer. After 1521 the forest became commercialized and lumber given economic value. With the import of modern forestry into the Spanish Philippines, the forest became the factory for producing timber and money. Under the large demands of the colonizers Spain and the United States, deforestation became more and more widespread and serious.

Flash floods and Landslides

Devastating floods and landslides are the immediate consequence when storms or monsoon rains come. Experts have been one in blaming logging as the culprit since the remaining scanty trees in the forests could no longer hold the soil and water. For over 25 years the country has been seeing disasters of varying magnitude resulting in loss of lives and damages in agriculture, infrastructure and properties.

Three days before Christmas in 2017, severe tropical storm Vinta (International name: Tembin) hit most of the regions in Mindanao, the country's second biggest island; it barrelled its way into south of the Visayas islands. After it unleashed its fury, it left about 200 deaths and 150 missing persons in the regions of Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao due to landslides and surging floodwaters (AP&PNA, 2017).

Vinta sent raging waters off the Cagayan de Oro river basin and submerged again hundreds of houses found along and near the riverbanks.

As of December 26, 2017, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) recorded about more than half a million persons living in 1,019 barangays in eight regions affected by Vinta as it hit the hardest in the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte and the Zamboanga Peninsula. Damages in agriculture and infrastructure have amounted to Php213.80 million in the provinces of Zamboanga Peninsula and Northern Mindanao (AP&PNA, 2017).

Among the villages in Bukidnon affected by the wrath of Vinta were barangays Simsimon and Kalagangan in San Fernando town and Panganan in Kitaotao town. These are homes to the Matigsalug communities (Balane, 2017).

A week earlier before Vinta, tropical storm Urduja (international name: Kai-Tak) also swept across the central Philippines leaving more than 50 people dead and 31 others missing, mostly due to landslides which damaged more than 10,000 houses (AP&PNA, 2017).

A month-long rain in January 2017 also inundated many parts of Mindanao. It didn't spare Cagayan de Oro City whose commercial district in its downtown area was flooded due to just a heavy downpour made worst by the city's poor drain system. Photos of submerged vehicles, people stranded in schools, offices, and malls and stuck at a monstrous traffic as parents went en masse to fetch their children had gone viral on social media sites. Images and conditions like these no longer surprise the Filipinos, but they have escalated the fear and trauma of the usually affected populace.

In December 2011, Tropical Storm Sendong submerged the areas beside the rivers in the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan, which are located about 450 miles south of Manila, the country's capital. Sendong's wrath sent rampaging waters from the tributaries of Mt. Kitanglad range down the Cagayan de Oro river basin. The raging waters swept and drowned more than a thousand lives and sent hundreds missing while it destroyed millions worth of properties.

Many of those who perished were allowed to build their shanties in a geo-hazard site known as Sitio Cala-cala in Barangay Macasandig. Others were informal settlers living beside the river embankments

in barangays Balulang, Consolacion, Carmen, Kauswagan and those smaller barangays in the city proper.

In an interview in May 2016, Edwin Dael, the former City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office (CLENRO), confirmed that several Higaonon families from the hinterlands barangays of Cagayan de Oro which are home to Higaonon survived the Sendong tragedy. “I know several of them since we still keep in touch. I am glad they survived Sendong. They are those who tipped us on logging activities in the upland barangays in the city when Task Force Subangan was formed in 1996 to rally against illegal logging which took place when the timber license of the concessions expired.”

Dael who was then a fresh graduate from college joined the city agriculture office had his first assignment in Barangay Tignapoloan, a remote barangay bordering Cagayan de Oro and the provinces of the two Lanaos.

Dael mentions reverse migration as one option that the government could take so that these Higaonon families could go back to their homes provided stable and permanent sources of income will be guaranteed. “When these people are sent back home, we can decongest the areas in the city where informal settlers thrive. It is a longshot program, but doable. Sadly, Tignapoloan which is a logged over area under Vicmar logging concession could no longer grow corn in abundance like 30 years ago.”

Less than a year after the Sendong tragedy, in December 2012, Typhoon Pablo with a diameter of 500-kilometre scope barrelled into the midsection of eastern Mindanao hitting New Bataan town in Compostela Valley the hardest.

It flattened the forests and more than a thousand lives perished while hundreds also went missing. It also registered millions worth of agriculture, infrastructure and properties destroyed. Pablo has been the strongest typhoon to hit Mindanao in two decades.

The Pablo-affected regions have been identified as one of the logging hotspots in the country. Many of those who perished came from poor communities including some Lumad, the Mandaya, in Davao Oriental and Compostela Valley.

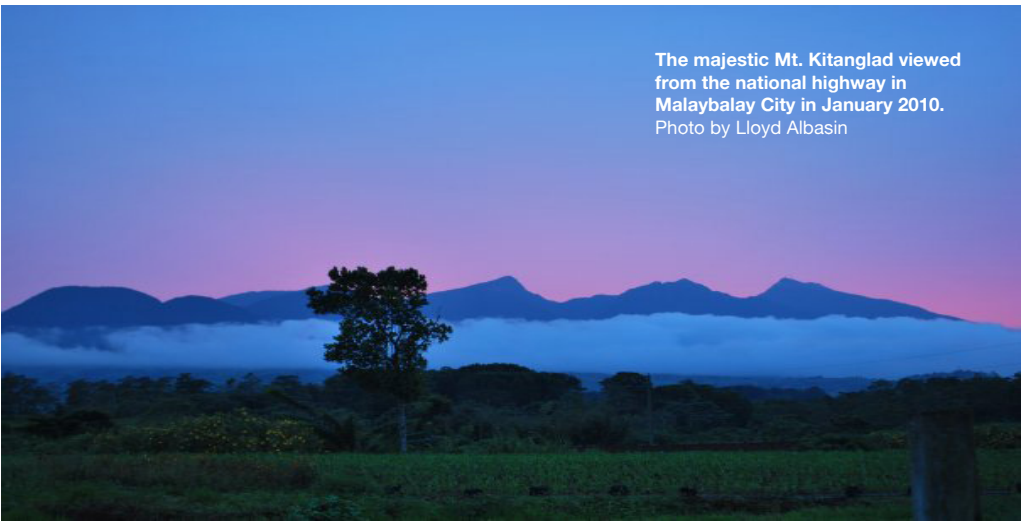
Current state of Mt. Kitanglad

Watersheds are natural divisions of the landscape. It is the sum area of land from which water can drain, through a river system to a common outlet which could be a larger river, lake or the sea. Following this definition, the province of Bukidnon has six major watershed divides drained by Tagoloan, Cagayan, Agusan-Cugman, Davao-Salug, Pulangui (Upper and Lower), and Maridugao rivers. Discharge from these river systems drains into three cities (Davao City, Cotabato City, and Cagayan de Oro City) and four provinces (Davao del Norte, North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Misamis Oriental) (Egnar in Geollegue, 2012).

Batang subwatershed is the headwater of Cagayan de Oro river which is located in the valley between Mt. Kitanglad and Mt. Kalatungan ranges.

The constant flooding in Cagayan de Oro has been attributed to the volume of water drained from Batang during heavy rains. The Cagayan de Oro river basin is the catchment of the watersheds found in the Kitanglad range.

The majestic Mt. Kitanglad viewed
from the national highway in
Malaybalay City in January 2010.
Photo by Lloyd Albasin



The upland barangays Besigan, Tignapoloan, Dansolihon, Mambuaya and Bayanga are the areas where the tributaries of Cagayan de Oro river stream down the basin. In these areas, Lumad communities populate.

According to Geollegue (2012), Bukidnon is the main life support system of Mindanao as myriad of springs flowing from its tall mountains nourishes and defines the lay of the land around it – the foaming white waters cascading in the northwestern slopes of Mt. Kitanglad dug the precipitous ravines and canyons to Macajalar Bay; the Salug river that flows from the high reaches of Pantaron range shaped the river bends meandering towards Davao Gulf; and from the mountain ranges in the south, Pulangui river creates the gullies that drain to the fertile plains of south-central Mindanao. There it joins Kabacan river to form the famous Rio Grande which first settles across the vast expanse of Liguasan marsh before emptying into the Moro Gulf.

Geollegue explains that any watershed which is densely covered with multi-layered forest trees naturally retains more precipitation

compared with barren slopes. However, most watersheds in Bukidnon including Mt. Kitanglad range have decimated forest covers. The slopes, he adds, are now sites of extensive commercial plantations (pineapple, banana, and corn) while swidden agriculture practice and expanding settlements have also disturbed these slopes.

Geollegue blames timber poaching and encroachment in Mt. Kitanglad to have degraded the headwater of Cagayan de Oro, Maridugao and Lower Pulangui rivers while land misuse and unsustainable farming practices diminished the environmental condition of the headwaters feeding the Tagoloan and Salug-Davao rivers. The decline of forest covers in these watersheds has compromised the life support system of these watersheds.

In 2012, Geollegue briefed the media in Cagayan de Oro on the status of the Kitanglad watershed citing that the destruction of the forest in Kitanglad came in the wake of the logging boom in the 1960s towards the 70s. He went on saying that the former Bureau of Forest Development (BFD) now the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) awarded TLAs to three logging companies operating in the region. These are Pedro N. Roa Enterprises whose areas covered the municipalities of Libona, Baungon, and Talakag in Bukidnon. Elias Dacudao Company also logged in Talakag areas and R.O. Fortich Timber Company covered the areas of the municipality of Lantapan and Malaybalay City. For almost 30 years, these companies logged these municipalities that straddle parts of Mt. Kitanglad.

Fifty years after logging, an aerial validation inside the Batang subwatershed shows over 18,000 hectares of grassland, a portrait of forest denudation and land abuse in the upstream. Geollegue claims the open cultivated, idle lands, and grasslands in the mid-slopes of Batang watershed send rampaging waters down the Cagayan de Oro river during heavy downpour.



Laborers move large Lawaan
along a creek in Butuan City.
Photo by Erwin Mascariñas



Chapter 5

The Altered Lumadscape

Four of the twelve members of the Council of Elders of Mt. Kitanglad range were interviewed in this study from the last week of May 2016 to the first week of June 2016. They viewed logging as the primary reason for the changing landscape of their communities in terms of decimated economic resources, altered social practices and watered down political dynamics due to the intrusion of people whose intents were to assimilate and divide them to exploit the resources in abundance in the name of development and progress.

The Lumad have become more marginalized as resources within their territories could no longer provide for their daily needs. They could not even decide on what to do in their environments because of the laws the government imposed. Environmental laws which limit and run counter to their traditional indigenous knowledge because the process of crafting these laws didn't give much adherence to the voices of the IPs.

Though commercial logging had ceased operations in their areas, the remnants of the concessions led the Lumad to trail on what was left behind and compelled them to fell trees as illegal logging and timber poaching have become the trend after the government stopped issuing the TLA to salvage what has remained in the Philippine forests.

Prior to the dawn of logging, the Lumad inhabiting the periphery and slopes of Mt. Kitanglad range live in simple and comfortable lives despite the absence of the basic services the government ought to deliver. They plant root crops such as sweet potatoes (camote), cassava (binggala), and taro (gabi) to aid the lack of cereal crops. Planting rice and corn at the slopes of Mt. Kitanglad is difficult because of the temperature; it is too cold for the rice and corn seeds to grow. They also rely on wild pigs, frogs, the bees' honey, and some other edible living creatures in their environment for food. When illness strikes the community, the Lumad bank on plants with curative ingredients to provide them healing. The "Baylan or ritualist" (shaman) in the community create potions fit for particular illnesses following their indigenous knowledge (IK).

According to Hilhorst et al. (2015) Indigenous knowledge (IK) in the IP communities are time-tested practices on customs and beliefs involved in their agricultural system, river and resources management, health, cultural and economic systems handed down from generations to generations.

Hilhorst et al. (2015) explains that,

Indigenous communities hold time-tested knowledge and coping practices that could develop due to their intimate connection with their natural surroundings and that make them resilient to climate-related natural hazards and disasters. The argument is that this knowledge has been unduly neglected in formal disaster management policies due not only to the predominance of technocratic thinking, but also due to the lack of connections between mostly non-indigenous state officials and engineers and the indigenous population (p. 509).

When it comes to major decisions for the community, the chieftains or the elders give the final say after everyone's opinions are sought. It gives the community the spirit of oneness for coming out with communal decisions that everyone adheres to with much regard on the greater good and in harmony with their environment as they seek wisdom from the “Magbabaya” or the higher spirit that steers them as they coexist with nature.

The Entry of Logging in Mt. Kitanglad

At the foot of Mt. Kitanglad, in Barangay Kibenton of the municipality of Impasug-ong in Bukidnon province, 85 percent of the estimated 5,000 residents are Higaonon. The municipality has the most number of Lumad inhabitants in the province.

The Higaonon in Kibenton, like the IP in the other parts of the country, are mostly recipients of the current programs of the government aimed at helping the poorest population in the country. According to Datu Tinuosan Juvidy Deconlay, the Higaonon's chieftain in Kibenton, about 345 individuals in the barangay are receiving aid from the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Indigenous Peoples (MCCT-IP) or cash-for-work program intended for the IP. And that there are more Higaonon families in the village who are also enrolled under Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), the conditional cash grants. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) facilitates both programs.

Datu Tinuosan, also the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) in Kibenton, recalls how the community would make bonfires at noontime in the late 50s prior to the entry of logging in their area. The logging under the Fortiches didn't last

long in Kibenton and the only benefit it brought to the community was the opening of the roads that lessened the hours spent in transporting the produce of the community to the town centre.

Datu Tinuosan says that despite the absence of illegal logging after R.O. Fortich Timber Co. terminated its logging venture in the area, the community resorted to cutting logs using chainsaws and axes for personal consumption. It was late for them to realize that failing to replant those trees they felled wreaked havoc to the community whenever torrential rains come as he adds saying, “it was a mistake (felling of trees) they never knew would be detrimental to their community.”

For Bae Inatlawan Adelina Tarino logging operations under Fortich didn’t materialize in their area since her father Datu Makaatol Anecito Dosinos cut it short through his personal advocacy against the felling of trees and the opening of roads in their area.

Bae Inatlawan shares how his father Datu Makaatol approached the operator of the bulldozer that flattened the natural old growth trees spread within their ancestral domain to pave the way for the roads to easily transport the cut logs.

“My father gathered all his knives before he went out to talk to the bulldozer operator who was levelling the grounds. He warned the operator that he was armed with knives for protection in case he’d be attacked after demanding to halt the operation. My father asked the operator to relay his message to Governor Carlos “Totoy” Fortich that our clan wanted the cutting of trees to stop. Our opposition reached the governor and my father was later summoned to see the former in his office. Governor Totoy tried to persuade our father for the logging to continue in our area but my

father was adamant with his no and the governor yielded. When my father came home he was bringing with him a “petromax,” a kerosene powered lantern, as some sort of a gift for the disruption done in our forest without our consent,” Bae Inatlawan narrates in an interview at her office inside the hall of Barangay Dalwangan.

Bae Inatlawan further says, “My father saw how logging could ruin our lands. He didn’t want the roads Fortich tried to build for it would only bring people in who might be devious. And then when logging stopped, we started to feel some changes. Our scallions (sibuyas dahunan) and corn were infested with armyworms. We started offering prayers to the spirits of the worms to avert the pests from consuming our food and to never come back to bother our crops.”

The Higaonon communities in Barangay Sil-ipon in the municipality of Libona and in Barangay San Vicente in the municipality of Baungon were involved in the illegal logging activities in the late 90s towards the early 2000s after the concessions left their communities.

Growing up in the 60s, Bae Liluan Edelita Sayongan of Sil-ipon shares that their community was forested where wild pigs and monkeys just roamed around and the bees produced their honey nearby which they easily harvested for consumption. But after the logging left, the climate has started to change. It is no longer cold as it used to be when she was still younger. The wild pigs, monkeys and the bees have gone farther to the deep of the forest.

“The forest now has gone farther from us. It is difficult to catch wild pigs for consumption and even getting the honey for the bread. The Diamond Company did logging here using the carabaos prior to

the entry of the Roa logging concession,” Bae Liluan recalls. What worsened the decline of the forest in Libona was the involvement of the community in the illegal logging after the concession left. Those cut trees left behind by the concession were made into “tablon” (rough sawn lumber) while cutting more trees without regard to size grew as the demand for lumber spiked.

“People from the coast came here to buy ‘tablon.’ It was an opportunity to earn more and without thinking of how it would come back to us. We kept on felling trees. I didn’t know much math but I learned how to scale just to sell the ‘tablon.’ Our elders were angry on what the community was doing. They were already seeing the effect of the waning trees at that time,” Bae Liluan narrates.

Three logging concessions entered in Sitio Kalanganan, Barangay San Vicente, Baungon. The concessions came one after the other. Datu Bagani Alfredo Lake discloses that while he was growing up in the late 50s, the Fernandez logging concession arrived and opened roads in their area. The Wilkoms followed suit from 1958 until 1963. The two concessions were short-lived. The following year, P.N. Roa Enterprises came and logged the areas until the early part of the 90s and continued for another decade before finally putting its concession to a halt.

“We lost our small farm lots when logging came in. Those who can read and write, about 10 persons in the community, were able to work at the Roa concession. The rest had to leave the community and moved to the different barangays to continue farming since the Roas also planted crops in their areas,” Datu Bagani recalls.

When the Roas left, Datu Bagani says some members of the community came back and started felling trees and adds saying,

“I was even involved in cutting fresh and small trees using chainsaws because the demand was really high. We delivered the cut trees to Cagayan de Oro. We couldn’t resist it because we need to put food on our tables.”

Logging in upstream villages of Cagayan de Oro

Prior to the creation of the Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) in the country, settlers along and near the riverbanks have already noticed the changes of height of the flood but still, they make do of what they could whenever it floods. It was like getting used to it. Until one tragic night in December 2011, a torrential rain due to tropical storm Sendong sent rampaging waters down the swelling Cagayan de Oro river and swept more than a thousand lives to death while others went missing. Those who survived mostly lost a member or two and worst an entire family.

The tragedy has emboldened the city government to equip its DRRM program. Six years after Sendong, deaths have been avoided with the aggressive DRRM enforcement in the city. However, damages on properties and infrastructure didn’t show much decline. Relocation areas for these communities near and along the riverbanks are at a slow pace or none at all in some areas which are hampering projects that could mitigate the impact of inundation.

How did such tragedy happen? It isn’t as if it was sudden. There were already signs before Sendong occurred. Environmental advocates were raising alarms over the degradation of the forests in Mt. Kitanglad and logging had been blamed for it. Despite the apprehensions made against illegal logging operations in the remote barangays in the city and in nearby municipalities of Bukidnon and the two Lanao provinces, the reforestation in the

watershed areas have been at a slower rate while illegal logging remained widespread.

Perfecto Mangadlao Jr. whose father has Muslim and Higaonon roots married his mother who is a “dumagat” (from the shore), says he grew up seeing his grandfather and father worked at Vicmar and he too joined the concession in 1988 as a security personnel escorting the survey team who were tasked to mark the trees with sizes 30 diameters up for cutting.

“Vicmar at that time was very strict in implementing the felling of trees with sizes above 30 diameters. Vicmar stopped its operations in 2000, but those moneyed in Tignapoloan and the former workers at Vicmar continued the logging operations without papers and the cutting of trees without regard on the sizes became rampant,” Mangadlao recalls.

Mangadlao furthers that a certain Mr. Nasser (who he claimed was Chinese) owned Vicmar whose concession papers were registered in Lanao del Sur but its operations included the forested areas in the upstream barangays of Cagayan de Oro bordering Lanao areas. He cites Sitio Langag in Barangay Dansolihon as the first camp of Vicmar. Its field office was located in Kapai, Lanao del Sur.

“The concession has a processing plant, the Top Development Forest, Inc. (TFDI) based in Barangay Gracia in the municipality of Tagoloan in Misamis Oriental. “The logs were brought there and processed into plywood for export,” Mangadlao discloses.

Prior to Vicmar’s concession in those remote villages, PN Roa Enterprises started first the logging operations in the areas using carabaos. Both companies had TLA for their concessions in Cagayan de Oro.

After the concessions, the inhabitants of Tignapoloan including Higaonon families have slowly left the village to seek opportunities in Cagayan de Oro and elsewhere to survive. Some have landed doing construction work or labour while others have become a help in market stalls or households.

For his part, Dael said that in the late 70s to early 80s, the families in Tignapoloan relied on corn as their main source of income. “In fact, he added, these families were able to send their children to high schools in Cagayan de Oro at that time. They could plant corn three times a year back then.”

Today, Tignapoloan is into poultry growing. “The barangay can no longer rely on corn as its main source of income. Only one cropping is sure to get through in a year’s time if ever one is still intent to plant corn,” Mangadlao says.

Though illegal logging operations have slowed down in Cagayan de Oro, it didn’t happen without the massive campaign launched against it which was headed by local environmental coalitions. Dael recounts the difficulties they went through in apprehending the transport of illegally cut logs. He reveals that before Vicmar halted its operations after its TLA expired, it transported logs using recycled documents such as the Certificate of Origin (CTO).

“When we started arresting trucks carrying cut logs, we found out that the CTO documents were repeatedly used. We impounded three trucks and stored them at the Tactical Operations Group (TOG) compound in Lumbia to ensure the trucks won’t be released until due process was exercised. It was a big haul because 19 DENR officers in the region were suspended. And for one month Vicmar ceased its operations,” Dael recalls.



Logged areas in the hinterlands of Agusan del Norte.
Photo by Mary Louise Dumas

Chapter 6

Legal Land Grabbing: Constricting the Lumad Space

And how does land grabbing come into play with logging? The land laws employed since colonization was designed to only favour the colonizers and the landed local elite, thus expelling the IP from the lands they occupied because they failed to acquire these through the process stipulated in these laws. The areas that the IP inhabit were declared public lands forcing the Lumad to leave their territories which Spain and the US explored and exploited.

The colonial rulers who annexed the Philippines to theirs had one thing in mind – usurp all of the resources it possesses. Spain nailed it through its “Regalian Doctrine” which according to Acosta (1994) appropriates land as a commodity to be owned and exploited; it provides the basis for the existing system of land ownership in the Philippines that mainly features titles and land registration. Acosta further states,

The subsequent American colonial regime did little to alter this arrangement. After the Spanish-American War Spain ceded the entire Philippine archipelago to the United States under the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898. Spain had sold its Asian colony to the United States for 20 million dollars, a blatant display of territorial commodification. A complete transfer of ownership of the archipelago was made. The underlying premises of the “Regalian Doctrine” were thus upheld by the new colonial power. As the Philippine Bill of 1902 stated, “all property and rights which may have been acquired under the treaty of peace with Spain” are assumed by the United States. The Philippine Islands thus became part of America’s “Insular Possessions” (p.166).

While the Americans declared all ancestral lands as public land or state-owned following the enactment of the Land Registration Act of 1902 and the Public Land Act of 1905. The Torrens system which was adopted and institutionalized through the Land Registration Act No. 496 passed by the Philippine Commission was the instrument used in registering and titling privately-owned lands whether owned by individual or corporation. The same system started first in South Australia known as the Real Property Act of 1857-1858 (Rodil in Acosta 1994: 167).

Under Torrens system, the certificate of title is the ultimate proof of land ownership which accords the private owner the right to use and dispose of one's land while the state guarantees the certificate cannot be annulled or made void. The Torrens title allows the passing on of land titles to another owner via exchange of money and the requisite execution of the document or the transfer of certificate of title to another individual (Libarios in Acosta 1994: 167).

The failure of those individuals and the IPs to register their lands was due to their lack of information reinforced by non-literacy as Spain prohibited education among the majority of the Filipinos during their reign in the land. The Torrens system and other land acts systematized the legal land grabbing of ancestral domains of the IPs. Registering their lands to acquire certificates of ownership of the land they tilled or signing deeds of sale was foreign to the IPs as it was with the non-indigenous peoples who were non-literate. That phenomenon of becoming landless when the colonial powers arrived was beyond their grasp as they were used to the communal ownership to preserve their land with respect to the spiritual element. This custom was utterly opposed to the Torrens. The actual use and occupancy was their

measure of ownership while modern property law treats land as only alienable and disposable thus subject to private ownership (Acosta, 1994). Citing Libarios (1990), Acosta states that the national land law is basically Western in origin and orientation that only responds to a capitalist economy.

The Philippine Bill of 1902, according to Acosta (1994), rules that forest and mineral lands are inalienable public land. And in these lands inhabit the IPs. Because of America's intent to exploit the Philippine resources, the said law was enacted to ensure America's full control over these resources. And from then on, this ruling was retained in the 1935 and 1973 Constitutions and again after the restoration of democracy in 1986 wherein the 1987 Constitution was crafted, it still manifests strict adherence to the Regalian Doctrine as articulated in Section 2 of Article XII:

All lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forests or timber, wildlife, flora and fauna, and other natural resources are owned by the State. With the exception of agricultural lands, all other natural resources shall not be alienated. The exploration, development, and utilization of natural resources shall be under the full control and supervision of the State. The State may directly undertake such activities, or it may enter into co-production, joint venture, or production-sharing agreements with Filipino citizens, or corporations or associations at least sixty per centum of whose capital is owned by such citizens. Such agreements may be for a period not exceeding twenty-five years, renewable for not more than twenty-five years, and under such terms and conditions as may be provided by law. In cases of water rights for irrigation, water supply, fisheries, or industrial uses other than the development of water power, beneficial use may be the measure and limit of the grant.

Acosta (1994) cites the discrimination by the state as implied in the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines;

All public lands 18 percent or more in slope as not alienable and disposable and thus not subject to titles and private ownership – implies that agricultural lands open for individual titles can only be those below 18 percent slope. Both laws automatically exclude indigenous peoples since much of their ancestral domains are above 18 percent and thus not agricultural. Thus, the upland forest and mineral lands (all above 18 percent slope) are not considered for private ownership no matter how long claimants have occupied such lands (p. 169-170).

Land laws in the Philippines have proven to be instruments of downright discrimination against the Lumad's right to self-determination despite the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA) because the local landed elite who sit in power in the political ambit still work in cahoots with America thus laws, enacted during the American regime, pertaining to ownership of public properties including lands are still entrenched in the current land laws and its regulations and policies.

Complexity of Claiming Ancestral Domains

The tedious process of claiming ancestral domain (AD) has cowered many of the IPs in the country. Only those who have relentlessly learned the ropes of the process have been quite triumphant in achieving the first few steps but once the financial aspect draws in, the claims reach a halt. For those who failed to go through the rigours, they have become or have chosen to become dependent on others who know the nitty-gritty of the process. Others have remained lukewarm about AD claim and chose to be content with what they have and could do to survive.

For the IP, the Lumad in particular, their ancestral domain is simply their land where they have established their roots. Thus land and the Lumad has always been inseparable.

Datu Tinuosan blames the lack of government support to empower the Lumad to decide on the kinds of crops, plants and trees to grow for their livelihood pondering on how they could even decide on what to plant when claiming for their ancestral domain has remained very challenging as it requires logistics like money and the skill to write down of the oral historical narrative of their ancestral land.

For how can the Higaonon collectively decide when the lands they own are contested and now they are required to claim these lands officially from the government through the Ancestral Domain Claim (ADC) process.

The 67-year-old Datu Tinuosan said their 6,000-hectare ADC is named Tibud originating from the sacred sites within their domain known as Tuminungan, Ipoon, Batalan, Ungawan and Dalag-ayan (Tibud). “It hasn’t been filed yet. There is just so much confusion going on. It is frustrating as it requires too much work which we couldn’t cope without genuine help to pursue it.”

The plight of the Tibud ancestral domain claim isn’t an isolated case for it is what the majority of the claimants are going through in their attempts to follow the regulations of the state. Take the claims of the Higaonon in Barangay Sil-ipon in the municipality of Libona and in Sitio Kalanganan in Barangay San Vicente in the municipality of Baungon.

Bae Liluan, the chosen elder of Sil-ipon whose residents are 90 percent Higaonon, is reluctant in pushing for their ancestral domain claim citing the complicated processes of filing it. She says the claim is about 4,000 hectares at the foot of Magantol, one of the sacred sites in Mt. Kitanglad which is part of Libona. “There are about six ancestral domain claims here but not one of the claims has been filed. Personally, I am not quite interested since I am not very capable of writing down our oral narrative. We don’t have the money. I heard Governor Jose Maria Zubiri is allotting P1 million for the filing of ancestral domain claims in Bukidnon, perhaps, we will wait for that so maybe we can start.”

The 66-year-old Datu Bagani of Sitio Kalanganan in Barangay San Vicente in Baungon said no one in Baungon has filed an ancestral domain claim. “Though none has filed it yet, there is a plan I heard for Baungon. There is the Barangay Lacolac claim, maybe we are part of that. But Datu Ubod who heads the claim is now imprisoned for his alleged illegal entry. There was that unified claim with Datu Makapukaw Adolino Saway of the Talaandig in Barangay Sungko in Lantapan. We are quite reluctant about it in terms of the livelihood allocation for it might just be concentrated in Sungko. If it is possible the claim must be per municipality.”

Fortunate is the Daraghuyan clan of the Bukidnon Lumad group whose ancestral domain claim of 4,203.89 hectares in Barangay Dalwangan in Malaybalay City was approved in September 2014. The Daraghuyan ancestral domain has a heritage centre located at the foot of Mt. Kitanglad in Barangay Dalwangan. But, the approval didn’t come easy for the Daraghuyan. If not for Bae Inatlawan’s persistence and determination to submit all the requirements despite the countless times their documents were returned because

they were incomplete, the Daraghuyan ancestral domain claim might have still been gathering dust at the NCIP.

Bae Inatlawan who heads the Daraghuyan clan said her father had started the claim in the 50s.

Forest Tenure Instruments

After the government stopped issuing the TLA because of the rapid degradation of the Philippine forests and the failure of TLA holders to reforest, the government created mechanisms to save the thinning forest cover of the country. Despite the call to involve the forest-dependent communities which are mainly IP populated, these current programs don't reflect the genuine participation of the IPs. Instead, the involvement of the IPs remains in the margin.

With the rising global forest degradation and depletion, the community forestry concept sprung to salvage and compensate for what the global forests lost.

When people and forest and their relationship come into play, the community forestry concept emerges. Community forestry has been defined based on the communal use and management of forests by organized groups of people (Pulhin in Hartanto et al., 2003).

According to Hartanto et.al (2003) citing Gilmour and Fisher (1997) community forestry programs have been initiated by the state to legitimize the access to forest resources by communities whose primary aim is earn income to sustain their daily needs because without the active participation of these local communities, managing the forests by the state and other actors outside these forests territories alone have been proven ineffective.

This concept met no opposition when the DENR formally brought it up in 1990 as a result of a forestry master plan crafted during the late Corazon Aquino's presidency. There were no interest groups only a meeting of the minds from the academe, NGOs, bureaucrats and foresters of the industry (Vitug, 1997). Though reservations about the readiness of the communities and the lack of expertise, equipment and capital came up former DENR Secretary Fulgencio Factoran in a personal communication to Vitug said only fine tuning was needed than re-examining the concept (Vitug, 1997:336).

Presidential Decree No. 705 issued in 1975 remains to be the basic forestry law governing the forests in the land which provides for a system of land classification and the basis for utilization and management including reforestation and forest protection based on sustained use management and penalties for illegal logging and other forms of forest degradation (Calderon, 2016).

The government has established the forest resource utilization in which tenure instruments issued as of 2015 cover 2,646,475 hectares. These instruments with the first two as the largest are the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFM), Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA), Socialized Industrial Forestry Management Agreement (SIFMA), Forest Land Grazing Management Agreement (FLGMA), Forest Land Use Agreement (FLAg), and Forest Land Use Agreement for Tourism Purposes (FLAgT) (Calderon, 2016).

In 1995, Executive Order 263 adopted the CBFM as the national strategy to ensure sustainable forest management. This has integrated all the people-oriented forestry programs and projects of the government (Israel, 2016:15).

The CBFM as a sustainable reforestation program has been created to empower the forest-dependent communities including the IP but since its implementation, those involved have been clamouring for the insufficient financial support and worst the People's Organizations (PO) failed to reap its supposed benefits. Most of the CBFM projects in the country are nearing its completion but the Lumad have been seeing it as another version of exploitation and neglect. The Lumad haven't seen the CBFM as a solution to their well-being or sustain forest management and not even a reflection of social justice.

In March 1992, Factoran said that communities are in the best position to manage and protect the forests, but poverty and tenure must be addressed first to persuade them to assist the government (Vitug, 1997:336).

In two to three years, many CBFM programs in the country will end their contracts granting these forest plantations started between 1995 and 1996. Most of the CBFM locations are within the ancestral domains of the IP. Has CBFM been an effective intervention in reforesting the abandoned logging sites and providing for the livelihood of the communities living in the perimeters of this flagship program?

Bae Inatlawan has vowed she wouldn't allow any CBFM to enter the Daraghuyan ancestral domain despite a new pending application and the existing one whose contract terminates in 2019.

"Gmelina trees have been grown in this existing CBFM inside our ancestral domain. The trees have been drying up our soil. Though the project was initiated by our fellow Lumad when we harvest we are threatened with imprisonment since it is a DENR project. The

DENR and its people have already harvested and sold the matured trees planted there. I thought this CBFM is for the community. When my older brother attended a CBFM meeting and expressed his views on how CBFM has not benefited the Lumad, no one listened to him. Instead, they just laughed at him,” Bae Inatlawan narrates.

Datu Tinuosan has realized that the CBFM program in Barangay Kibenton has not been the solution to alleviate poverty in this part of Bukidnon. “It (CBFM) is not the answer to our financial woes because the government only gave us the seedlings and left us to tend these young plants without the financial assistance required for this program to become successful within its targeted period.”

For his part, Datu Bagani feels the CBFM in their community didn’t serve its purpose for it hasn’t improved the dire situation of the Higaonon population in the area. “What the DENR allowed for planting like mahogany, gmelina, and mangium were inappropriate for the community. Those who rendered work under the CBFM had somehow benefited from it. But the community didn’t get any share at all.”

The next largest tenure instrument is IFMA. When the TLA was abolished, the need to support timber production still remains, thus IFMA was crafted. This agreement is a production sharing contract entered into by and between the DENR and a qualified applicant wherein the DENR grants to the applicant the exclusive right to develop, manage, protect and utilize a specified area of forestland and forest resources therein for a period of 25 years and may be renewed for another 25-year period, consistent with the principle of sustainable development and in accordance with an approved Comprehensive Development and Management Plan (CDMP) and under which both parties share in its produce (DENR AO No. 99-53).

SIFMA is an agreement between a qualified applicant (individual or association) and the DENR who grants the right to develop, utilize, and manage a small tract of forest land consistent with the principle of sustainable development. This has been intended for small to medium investors and small farmers. (DENR AO No. 24 of 1996).

Table 3. Area reforested in the Philippines, by component, 2001-2013 (hectares)

Year	Government	Percent to Total	Non government	Percent to Total	Total
2013	326,106	97.88	7,054	2.12	331,160
2012	207,044	93.36	14,719	6.64	221,763
2011	102,884	80.03	25,674	19.97	128,558
2010	32,384	87.82	4,493	12.18	36,877
2009	53,842	98.27	950	1.73	57,792
2008	27,752	63.64	15,857	36.36	43,609
2007	25,024	89.89	2,813	10.11	27,837
2006	4,476	61.97	2,747	38.03	7,223
2005	7,187	43.56	9,311	56.44	16,498
2004	12,436	61.15	7,902	38.85	20,338
2003	13,195	87.45	1,893	12.55	15,088
2002	20,681	80.72	4,939	19.28	25,620
2001	26,524	84.35	4,920	15.65	31,444
Average					
2001-2013	66,118.38	79.24	7,944.00	20.76	74,062.38
2001-2010	22,350.10	75.88	5,582.50	24.12	27,932.60
2011-2013	212,012.67	90.43	15,815.67	9.57	227,828.33

Source: Forest Management Bureau, DENR. (various years)



Transporting timber through the
Agusan River in Butuan City.
Photo by Mark Esplin

Chapter 7

Blood in its Hands: The Killings of Land Rights Defenders

In countries where attacks of land rights defenders are prevalent, the State is seen complicit in these killings. Allowing any multinational companies to engage in extractive industries to enter into territories particularly ancestral domains without permission from the IPs is already an act becoming an instrument in consenting actions against the communities involved.

In its complicity, the state has used its law enforcement and the military in ensuring the installation of these controversial projects in areas where Lumad rights have been blatantly ignored. This has almost been the case, save a few exemptions maybe. But these exemptions didn't come on a silver platter as these were fought with blood.

At the height of the logging concessions during the Martial Law, countless had been dispossessed from the margins particularly the Lumad, the military were instrumental in shoving the IP away from their homes. Marcos, the ousted dictator, fed his military cronies with vast logging holdings. Those who resisted the encroachment were silenced. They had become numbers and forgotten. Despite the restoration of democracy after Marcos fled from the country, justice has remained elusive to those who died protecting their land rights.

Logging may no longer be the main reason for the recent spate of killings among land and environment rights defenders in the Philippines but land incursion in many forms in the name of development has continued.

According to Global Witness in its report (Defenders of the Earth: Global killings of land and environmental defenders), at least 200 land and environment rights defenders were murdered around the globe in 2016 – the deadliest year on record. The report calls the attacks on land and environment defenders as growing and spreading since killings were dispersed across 24 countries, compared to 16 in 2015. With many killings unreported, and even less investigated, it is likely that the true number is actually far higher.

The Global Witness in its annual report says the Philippine stands out for the killings in Asia while Brazil remains the deadliest country in terms of sheer numbers.

The report furthers that Colombia has seen a spike in murders despite the signing of the peace accords, while killings in India increased threefold. Park rangers and forest guards face heightened risks, with at least 20 murdered last year.

The report discloses that mining remains the most dangerous sector as 33 persons were killed opposing mining and oil projects worldwide, but it sees a growing number of people also killed because of logging. Of these land and environment rights defenders killed, 40 percent are IPs.

The Global Witness blames the governments and business for failing to tackle the root cause of the attacks: the imposition of

extractive projects on indigenous communities without their free, prior and informed consent.

It also cites the investors, including development banks, for actually fuelling the violence by financing abusive projects and sectors, and failing to support threatened local activists; while criminalization and aggressive civil cases are being used to stifle environmental activism and land rights defence right across the world, including in ‘developed’ countries like the US.

In the Philippines, mining and corporate plantations have replaced logging as the culprit of the killings of land rights activists. Some members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), paramilitary, and private armed groups have been accused to be involved in the attacks.

The Global Witness records 28 defenders killed in the Philippines citing it as the highest in Asia in 2016 –four years in a row. Most of these murders were linked to mining, coal and extractive industries and half of those slain were IPs. The Global Witness criticizes that the Philippine government’s rhetoric on mining is contradicted by a discourse of threatening defenders.

Despite the EO No. 23 being carried out in the country, logging operations continue in clandestine. Land and environment rights defenders continue to face threats and harassments. There were many others who fought against logging who were silenced. They have become statistics, but in their communities, they remained emulated for their courage and bravery in protecting their forests.

Of these murders occurring in the Philippines, pursuing justice has even made more difficult with the culture of impunity. With the

changing climate and the marginalized in the frontline, the Lumad in Mindanao have come to band as one in their fight against any environmental hazards vis-à-vis in standing for their rights over their territories as they confront with their day-to-day affairs.

Some church people who worked with the Lumad were targeted for their staunch advocacy of the environment against logging and its illegal operations. Two Catholic priests had been shot for campaigning against illegal logging.

Fr. Mario Estorba, SVD, who was the parish priest of Loreto, Agusan del Sur was gunned down in Butuan City in 1988. The Asian Centre for the Progress of Peoples said that Fr. Estorba was killed for fighting against illegal loggers. Estorba even lobbied for better working conditions and remunerations for those who worked at logging concessions in the province prior to his death (Arguillas, 2011).

In Bukidnon, Fr. Nerylito Satur, 40, parish priest of Valencia, was waylaid on October 14, 1991, while returning to his parish from celebrating mass in Barangay Guinoyoran. Satur was at the forefront of the campaign against illegal logging in the area. Prior to his death, he was one of 45 priests, deacons and local citizens deputized as forest officers by DENR to arrest illegal loggers. He helped seize three truckloads of timber and arrest the responsible loggers in July 1991 (Arguillas, 2011).

Fr. Fausto “Pops” Tentorio, a known environmental and IP advocate who organized lumad communities in Mindanao, was gunned down while he was about to board his vehicle parked outside Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Arakan, North Cotabato on October 17, 2011. It took more than six years for

the Department of Justice (DOJ) to order the filing of murder complaint against Lt. Col. Joven Gonzales, Major Mark Espiritu and several others on December 27, 2017. He was the third Italian Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) priest gunned down in Mindanao and the second in the Diocese of Kidapawan. His death according to Karapatan was extrajudicial killing (EJK) as he was targeted and killed in line with the state's counter-insurgency program (Ballaran, 2017).

On September 13, 2014, Datu Sandigan Fausto Orasan who was a Higaonon leader based in Barangay Tuburan in Cagayan de Oro City was gunned down while he was riding home on a motorcycle. Datu Sandigan was a staunch anti-mining and anti-illegal logging advocate in the upstream barangays of the city. Dael tagged Datu Sandigan as “soul of the forests” since he was the moral force of the Higaonon who refused to join the illegal miners and loggers and citing his death was a great loss to the campaign in preserving the forests in the city's hinterland. It was the second attempt on Datu Sandigan's life. He was supposed to represent the Lumad at the City Council but gave it up to unite the Higaonon in the upland barangays (Gallardo, 2014).

Extended Martial Law on Mindanao

Under President Rodrigo R. Duterte's regime, the extended Martial Law on Mindanao has intensified the spate of killings among peasant and Lumad leaders. These leaders had been staunch defenders of land rights in their areas.

After Duterte terminated the peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the New People's Army (NPA)

– the armed wing of the revolutionary movement in the country, he has tagged the NPA as a terror group. He has ordered his armed forces and law enforcement agencies to destroy the NPA and go after the mass leaders of the militant groups he labelled as the “fronts” of the CPP-NDFP-NPA.

Duterte’s declaration has unleashed his brutality and it has also fuelled the culture of impunity in the country as extrajudicial killings keep rising.

On December 3, 2017, four members of the T’boli Manobo Lumad group in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato were slain after the military tagged the killing as encounter against alleged members of the New People’s Army (NPA). The military claimed Datu Victor Danyan of Sitio Datal, Barangay Ned in Lake Sebu, chair of the T’boli-Manobo S’daf Claimant Organization (TAMASCO), his sons Tantan, Jr., and Artemio, and son-in-law Dodoy, were NPA members but leaders of church, militant and environmental groups claimed the slain Lumad were civilians. An environment group official vouched for Datu Vic as a man of integrity and source of inspiration on upholding environmental rights and social justice. TAMASCO has been opposing coal mining and coffee plantation ventures in their village (Sarmiento, 2017).

On February 3, 2017, Renato Anglao, 42, also known as Tatay Renz was shot dead aboard his motorcycle on his way back home with his wife and child after buying school supplies at the town centre in Quezon, Bukidnon. He was attacked by at least three motorcycle-riding gunmen in Crossing Busco in Quezon. Anglao was shot twice – one in the head and another in the chest. Tatay Renz was one of the leaders of the Tribal Indigenous Oppressed Group

Association (TINDOGA), an organization of Manobo-Pulangihon which is locked in a bitter land struggle with the Montalvan estate that eagerly pushes on leasing out TINDOGA's ancestral domain to pineapple plantations (Manlupig, 2017; RMP-NMR, 2017).

The list can go on as many Lumad in different parts of the island had been targeted and there are still many out there being hunted down as Duterte ordered the crackdown of activists promoting land rights advocacy.

In a joint operation between the City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office, the police and some personnel from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources , illegally cut hardwood trees are seized in Sitio Tabla in Barangay Tagpangi in Cagayan de Oro City on November 13, 2013.
Photo by Cagayan de Oro City Information Office



Chapter 8

Conclusion

The appalling realities that confront the Lumad from the various forms of exploitations on their resource-rich ancestral domains haven't deterred their spirits to persist on their struggle for self-determination despite the perennial coercion of the state by viciously ramming down into their throats the neoliberal policies of the government that favour the capital over human equality and social justice.

Amidst all the legal impediments and the complexities that hinder them to claim their ancestral domains and the threats and harassments on their communities, they remain steadfast in fighting against these anti-poor and anti-Lumad economic policies and the brutalities inflicted to the Lumad who have never faltered to rise up against oppression and discrimination.

As stewards of the forests, the Lumad have remained fully untapped. The government superficially involved them in its reforestation programs resulting only to more blatant discrimination. The Indigenous Peoples in general possess knowledge proven for centuries effective in maintaining ecological balance yet providing the needs of the forest-dependent communities. Their agricultural system, resource management, and river management didn't cause irreparable destructions in the forests where they inhabit. But the incursions of the colonizers, the capitalists and the government land

and reforestation programs have diluted their practices. They have also divided the Lumad populace persuading others to join in the destruction while others have opted to continue the practices in sync with nature and their survival – simple but sustainable.

The Higaonon, Talaandig and Bukidnon living in the slopes and foot of Mt. Kitanglad have remained disillusioned with the government programs aimed at rehabilitating their ancestral domain because the policies governing these programs haven't truly improved their lives as they remain economically impoverished.

The impact of logging operations in Mt. Kitanglad and the upstream barangays of Cagayan de Oro has dispossessed the Lumad because the resources within their ancestral domain dwindled and even the planting patterns were reduced due to forest deforestation that has been causing ecological imbalance contributing to the worsening changing climate.

The economic, geographical, and cultural dispossession of the Lumad caused by the large-scale logging has been made worst with the entry of mining and energy projects that would spawn more destruction than what logging has left behind.

The geographically dislocated Lumad who have gone to the key cities to find ways to put food on their tables have become informal settlers living near river embankments and other geo-hazard areas while they land in construction, labour and domestic chores. As they merge in the cityscape, they are discriminated whenever they continue to speak their language and practice their customs. Their children are bullied at schools for being different. If these continue, their culture is at the brink of extinction.

Despite the law mandating for their representation in the political sphere, many of the IP mandatory representatives (IPMR) have succumbed to traditional politics that circumvents the traditional method of sending their representatives in the legislative halls from the barangay level up to the provincial seat. Only a handful has truly sent their IPMRs to bring the Lumad voices in the legislation but their opinions or recommendations only fall to deaf ears.

The complicity of the state in the attacks of the Lumad land rights defenders have become more exposed with the extended declaration of Martial Law on Mindanao promulgated in the premise of going after the remaining Islamic extremists allegedly spread around the island and the recent tagging of the NPA as terrorists by the government.

The all-out hunt against these extremists who were holed up in Marawi City for more than five months brought the city into ashes and sent hundreds of internally displaced Meranaos living in feeble shelters. The war that broke out in Marawi City became the prelude of putting Mindanao under Martial Law in May 2017.

The continued exodus of the Lumad from their communities to areas far from their homes due to conflict has resulted to contracting diseases among children, the elderly and the women apart from losing their sources of income as they leave behind tended animals and crops. Worst, Lumad schools providing alternative education that promotes their culture and rights as peoples apart from learning reading and writing have been attacked.

With the impending Charter Change being pushed by Duterte and his allies, foreign companies into extractive industries will have

more control in running their investments to the detriment of the environment. Perhaps, it will even systematize in bringing back again and intensify forest plantations for the timber industry that is still performing well in the country's exportation. This Charter Change will fortify a more palpable structural discrimination among the Indigenous Peoples in the country.

Recently, Duterte has announced his intent to choose the investors he would favour to do business in Lumad areas while he has also prepared the military to go after the NPA rebels in the countryside. Definitely, Dutertes actions will exacerbate the dispossession of the Lumad from their territories.

With the Supreme Court upholding this extension of Martial Law in Mindanao, the inevitability of ethnocide looms.

In the midst of all these perils and grim realities, history proves that the struggle of the Lumad to self-determination will endure.

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About the book

This book had aimed to present the current environmental situation of the areas that had been logged in the decades past. It looks into what has become of the logged areas – environmentally, socially, and politically and the effects of the massive logging in the past on the culture and traditions of the Lumad living in the areas where the state-backed concessions were present. It seeks to establish how logging has become the precursor of the structural discrimination of the Lumad inhabiting in Mindanao.

About the author

Grace Cantal-Albasin is a journalist. Her stories mostly delve on human rights, conflict and the Lumad. She served as the Editor in Chief of *Sun.Star* Cagayan de Oro in March 2013 until August 2016. She used to write for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* from 1998 until 2013. She was also a stringer for *rappler.com* and *GMA News TV*. In 2012, she completed her Master of Arts in Media Studies at The New School in New York City while she finished her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at Xavier University. She was also a fellow of the 2004 Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA). She was one of the directors of the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP) from 2004 until 2008.

ISBN: 978-621-95356-1-8



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