

PRELIMINARY REPORT

Highlights of Tagbanwa Calamian Group Of Islands General Assembly
4-7 April 2014, Cabugao, Coron Island, Palawan



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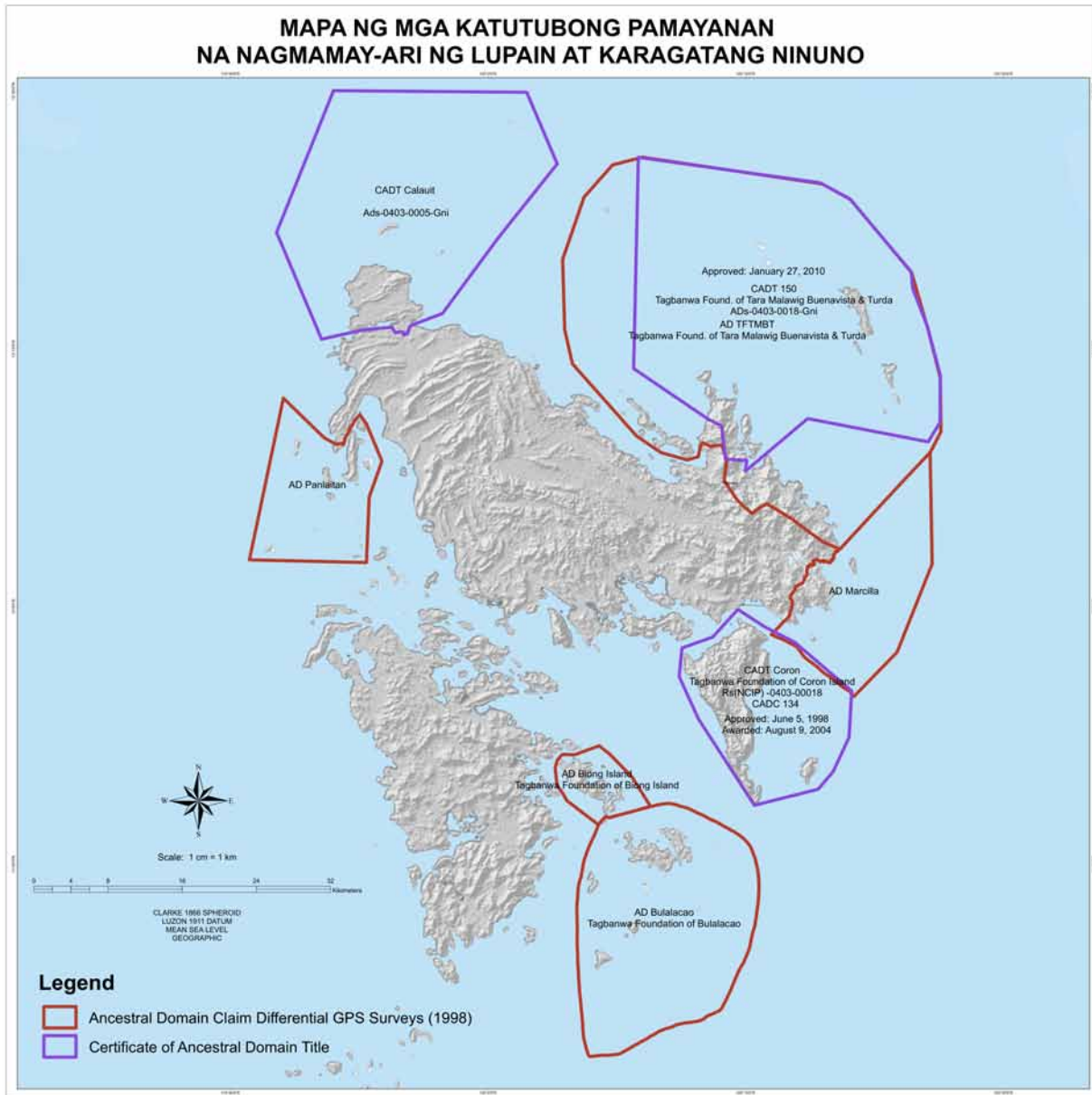
The National Coalition of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines (Koalisyon ng Mga Katutubo at Samahan ng Pilipinas) expresses its deep gratitude to the Paul K. Feyerabend Foundation for the support extended to Tagbanua Indigenous Peoples Assembly of the Calamianes Group of Islands

Our sincere appreciation to the Philippine Association for Inter-Cultural Development (PAFID) for the continuing partnership and for backing the assembly with maps. With the maps, the peoples' struggle to traverse the "self-determination highway" is less tortuous.



Above, participants pose for posterity with the KASAPI Secretary General. Below, a Tagbanwa sunrise ritual signals the start of the assembly.





MAP OF TAGBANWA INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES WITH TIME IMMEMMORIAL POSSESSION OF ANCESTRAL LANDS AND WATERS, CALAMIAN GROUP OF ISLANDS, NORTHERN PALAWAN

Introduction

On April 4-7, 2014 around two-hundred (200) Tagbanwa indigenous peoples from the Calamian Group of Islands gathered for the first time since Typhoon Yolanda (international code name Haiyan) hit the country last November 8, 2013. The participants came with the unspoken theme “without the Tagbanwas, the land and waters are lost. Without the lands and waters, the Tagbanwas are lost” – a theme “*we continually talk about these days due to threats of unhampered entry of migrants, land grabbing and rehabilitation of our destroyed communities*”.¹ Typhoon Yolanda, which hit the country November 8, 2013 is considered the most powerful storm to make landfall in history, killing more than six (6) thousand people within hours of landfall with winds 315 kilometers per hour and tsunami-like surges. It affected 14 million people and made homeless 4 million.. The passage of the typhoon from central Philippines to North-eastern Palawan cut off the Calamian Group of Islands from the outside world. Entire homes, health centers, school buildings, village halls, motorized boats, padded boats and piers, fruits trees and sea weed farms have either been totally or partially destroyed leaving immense pressure on the human psyche of every Tagbanwa.

Apart from natural calamities, Tagbanwas have identified migrants, commercial fishers, investors and the intrusive behavior of the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Coron as threats due to continuing attempts to destroy Tagbanwa solidarity and coveting of their islands for tourism. Already, one whole island has been sold by a non-Tagbanwa to a Manila-based oligarch while a migrant appropriated for himself an island traditionally used as burial ground. The most recent threat includes the Coron LGU call for a province-wide LGU resistance against the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) aimed at putting a stop to the titling of Tagbanwa ancestral lands and waters by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

Emerging from the assembly was the desire for effective community response to man-made and natural calamities in a participatory process Tagbanwas themselves determine. Given the geographic location and isolation they find themselves in, the assembly concluded with overwhelming resolve to first strengthen the Coron-wide federation SARAGPUNTA and put in place a Community-based Disaster Preparedness Program (CDPP).

¹ Rodolfo Aguilar, incumbent chairman, Tagbanwa Tribe of Coron Island Association (TTCIA)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONSULTATION AND PLANNING

Day 1, April 4, 2014/Friday, Coron town

I. KASAPI convenes Organizing and Program Committee.

- 1.1 Organizing team is made up of KASAPI & PAFID Central Office while the program committee and sub-committees consists entirely of Tagbanwa leaders. The organizing team and committee leaders reviewed the program and roles of sub-committees including;
- 1.2 Transport committee;
- 1.3 Food committee;
- 1.4 Physical Preparations committee;
- 1.5 Sounds and lights systems committee;
- 1.6 Hosting, accommodation & Peace and Order Committee.
- 1.7 Early arrivals of 50 leaders at Coron Town (instead of April 5) was due to unpredictability of sea waves. Workshop 1 was tackled at Coron town instead of at Cabugao village – venue of assembly. The Revised Program is attached hereto as Annex "A".**



*Above, Tagbanwa leaders discuss program flow and review of committee tasks
After which workshop 1 followed.*

For Workshop 1, participants were divided into three clusters:

- 1.8 Cluster 1: Coron Island, Tara, Malawig, Buenavista and Marcilla;
- 1.9 Cluster 2: Biong, Bulalacao and Borac;
- 1.10 Cluster 3: Calauit and Panlaitan.

Workshop 1 questions tackled include:



- a. Extent of damage of typhoon Yolanda in terms of habitat, livelihood (e.g sea weed farms), infrastructure & utilities (e.g health & education);
- b. Identify community-conserved areas and threats to these

- c. The State of *affairs of SARAGPUNTA*²: *Plans and programs or projects that it addressed and failed to address. If addressed, how did the community benefit, If not, why not?*

Day 2, April 5, 2014/ Saturday, Cabugao village

- II. **Arrival at Venue, 4:30 PM with the following Declared Agenda Items;**
 - a. The State of the Calamian Group of Islands in the post-Yolanda/Haiyan period;
 - b. National and local Situation of Indigenous Peoples;
 - c. ICCAs and the 2013 Philippine Indigenous Peoples Agenda;
 - d. Planning & Community-Disaster Preparedness Program
 - e. Strengthening of SARAGPUNTA

III. Program flow went as follows:

² Calamianes-wide Federation of Tagbanwa Indigenous Peoples Organizations made up of 23-member "foundations".



3.1 Opening Ceremony started with traditional Tagbanwa dancing called **Suring**. The Suring created a mood that was festive in format and eco-cultural in content. Tagbanwa leaders took to the center stage to dance and later, introduced themselves and their community delegates.

3.2 Opening Remarks by elder Benjamin Aguilar mentioned the great damage suffered by Tabanwas because of Typhoon Yolanda. He called on the assembly to prioritize areas for rehabilitation and their immediate restoration to normalize lives of people ;

3.3 Elder Gonzalo's Inspiration Message challenged SARAGPUNTA members not be overpowered by migrants and local government officials who want to have the IPRA³ cancelled. He said these are among reasons for the assembly of Tagbanwas whom he described as *"the real people of the place"* – the right people to talk about pressing issues affecting them as Tagbanwas.

3.4 The leader of Barangay Cabugao (Cabugao Village), Village Captain Renato Dacullios called upon his constituents to ensure peace for the 3-day conference. He said the assembly has important objectives and warned against any form of disruption.



Left, TTCIA Chairman Rodolfo "Kodol" Aguilar.

"Let us listen and reflect on what each has to say. Because of the disaster, we are back to "ground zero".

³ Republic Act 8371 or Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 formally recognizing indigenous peoples rights of ownership and possession of ancestral domains

TTCIA Chairman Rodolfo Aguilar told the participants to listen to each other and to reflect on local and national issues that will be shared by Resource Persons. He shared the history of struggle of Banuang Daan and Cabugao including preventing the auction of their caves in the '80s and obtaining a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) and later a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) in the '90s. He said Coron Island is the first in the world to be formally recognized as "ancestral lands and waters". He added that the assembly should reflect at the founding principles of the SARAGPUNTA Federation. He said there is a need to strengthen the federation. He ended by giving emphasis on the need for his fellows to secure the well-being of the next generation of Tagbanwas in order to spare them of hardships in the future.

3.5. In giving the **Indigenous Peoples National Situationer**_Mr. Giovanni Reyes, Secretary General of KASAPI, said the Philippines has a total land area of 33M hectares of which 7M hectares are ancestral domains owned and occupied by 12-14 million IPs from 110 tribes. He reported that the country's remaining forests are found mostly in indigenous peoples' territories. He added that these areas have become the object of large scale mining, logging and dams. He said that as of June 30, 2012, seven hundred seventy-one (771) large scale mining permits covering 602,630.32 hectares have been issued by government. In the Visayas Islands, Mr. Reyes said Tumandok IPs are threatened by the Jalaur Mega Dam. He said that three indigenous communities in possession of Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) in that part of the Philippines will be submerged. He disclosed that with an average of 17-19 typhoons that hit the country every year, the mega dam is prone to overflowing. When that happens, he said, overflowing will flood one city and nine municipalities downstream.

Impunity Against Indigenous Peoples

Resistance to development aggression have resulted in militarization of ancestral territories resulting in human rights violations. To date, 40 extrajudicial killings of indigenous leaders have been reported since the Aquino administration took over in 2010 - or one IP leader killed per month. This is on top of the 151 IP leaders killed under the Arroyo administration.

Indigenous customary law needs to be strengthened. Mr. Reyes featured the Tagbanwa traditional decision-making which was put to use last 09 March 2014 where the issue of leadership between two contending Tagbanwa parties in Coron island was settled amicably.

4

3.6 An **IP Local Situationer** was provided by Teresa dela Cruz, Secretary of the Maporac Aeta Organization by sharing the struggle of Abellen Aetas of Central Luzon. According to her, their ancestral land has a total of 5,250 hectares and that their CADC was the first to be approved in the Philippines on 08 March 1996. Until now, the local government unit (LGU) in their area does not recognize IPRA but they continue to fight for their rights with the support of PAFID and KASAPI.



Teresa de la Cruz:

“Our Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title In Maporac is not being respected. Mining threats still exist to this day. We added another Layer of protection by declaring our Indigenous community conserved areas (ICCAs). The struggle continues no matter how long it will take. This is a matter of course for all of us whether Aetas or Tagbanwas”

Some of the threats Aeta Abellens face include mining, illegal logging, and misrepresentation of their tribe by “Tribal Dealers”. In spite of these, the Abellen Aetas know that through their unity, they will eventually gain recognition of their rights. She added that with the assistance of KASAPI, Maporac successfully documented, mapped and made resource inventory of their

⁴ Mr. Reyes was requested by both camps of incumbent TTCIA Chairman Rodolfo Aguilar and Norlito Dong-it to facilitate a community dialogue on the latter’s February 10, 2014 ‘coup ‘d etat’. Sensing that this was a tactic of divide-and-rule being foisted by outsiders to the Tagbanwa community, and before the conflict further escalates, Mr. Reyes flew to Coron and promptly convened all the *Mamepets* (Tagbanwa council of elders) of Banwang Daan and Cabugao to seat as judges. He said the platform for the “hearing” should allow community members to participate as mass witnesses to make it free and transparent. After five hours of intense arguments, cross-examination and counter-arguments, the hearing ended with the Mamepets deciding against the “coup” staged by Norlito’s group by declaring the February 10, 2014 elections invalid and upheld May 10, 2014 as the regular TTCIA election. A validation meeting about the hearing was conducted later by the Regional Office, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) which affirmed the Mamepet decision. Drawing past lessons where a case was elevated to a formal Regional Hearing Process that took three years and at great financial costs to Tagbanwas, the March 9, 2014 ‘hearing’ was considered an exemplar of application of rules and laws that evolved from generations of practice by indigenous communities. The March 9 hearing prevented what could have been a trigger to start the process of handing over control of Coron Island in the hands of non-tagbanwas.

community-conserved areas (ICCAs). She said it took one year to do these after which they submitted the same to the United Nations Environment Program-World Conservation and Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC). She shared that this created another layer of protection for their community.

4 An OPEN FORUM followed.

R. Cabajar: About ICCA, what are the requirements such that non-IPs will not intrude into conserved areas?

G. Reyes: Evaluation reports show that there have been more destruction in areas declared by government as Protected Areas compared to areas protected by traditional governance systems of indigenous peoples. Most government-imposed Protected Areas including those overlapping with ancestral domains have suffered from biodiversity loss due to intrusion by non-IPs. As to ICCA requirements, the key here is existence of ancestral territory governed by traditional governance systems backed by indigenous knowledge. Of course, any map showing the extents and scope of ICCAs must reflect the knowledge and relationship of indigenous communities to their lands, the cultural values attached to these including sanctity of areas like sacred burial grounds and worship areas. In the identification, documentation, inventory and mapping of community-conserved areas, it is the IP members themselves through their representatives who take the lead. After thorough community validation, an ICCA Declaration is mounted precisely to serve notice to outsiders against intrusion. The documented ICCA is then submitted, if the community so desires through Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), to the UNEP-WCMC to sort of warn potential extractive investors against entering community-declared ICCAs. We've done this ICCA documentation with the Philippine Association for Inter-Cultural Development (PAFID) by establishing ICCA models including Maporac for Luzon. There are already community-declared ICCAs in Mindanao that PAFID has facilitated. Our international partners meanwhile help us in the advocacy of ICCAs.

R. Cabajar: The ICCA includes land and also marine areas?

G. Reyes: Yes, also marine areas. Isn't it that here in Coron, the *Panyaan*, which forms part of the ancestral waters is a ritual area? And the fact, too that you consider the

land useless without the sea is already a testament in itself that ICCA includes land and marine areas.

L. Alberto: *We thank the NGOs. Coron Island is the origin of all Tagbanwas. In Tara Island the tourists have started to come, but we do not like tourists. We are not telling Coron Island to reject tourism. But thanks for the NGOs giving help.*

G. Reyes Coron is already fast becoming “tourism paradise” if not already a colony of tourism. The reason for its beauty is precisely due to the traditional governance systems of Tagbanwas. Thus far, the beauty is still there and very much felt. But for how long? It will be entirely up to the Tagbanta community.

5 With the ICCA issue catching interest among participants, Mr. Reyes made a power point presentation. He said it is not coincidental that indigenous communities are found in areas where natural resources are still rich. Most of these conserved areas are considered sacred or dwelling places of the spirits of their ancestors and therefore should not be destroyed. He said that ICCAs are proofs of IPs’ advanced and scientific methods of conservation. Mr. Reyes said that this ***advance thinking of IPs has been recognized no less than by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) which reported that diverse knowledge systems including indigenous knowledge systems are equally valid as science and should be respected and promoted with its own integrity and value.***

6 The first day ended at 7.40pm. Some of the resource persons felt that the participants were experiencing information overload and thought of cutting the sessions without necessarily missing the topics of said sessions. To achieve this, the planning session that was supposed to be done through Workshop 2 shall focus instead on output #3 and will be delegated specifically to the Community-based Disaster Preparedness Program Committee that the assembly earlier agreed to form.

Day 3, April 6/ Sunday

IV. Sunrise Ritual, Recap ,Workshop Reporting

1. The second day started at 8:30 am with an **Sunrise Ritual** called ***Uliwansag***. This practice of the ritual is proof that the Tagbanwas are indigenous peoples. The Uliwansag is done as a respect for the spirits that take care of the area. In the Uliwansag performed that morning, the elders requested that the indigenous Tagbanwa not be

overpowered by “other people” or migrants. The dance that followed was to show thanksgiving to those that protect the area.

2. A **Participatory Recap of Day 1** followed the opening ritual. Volunteer participants described the previous day with their own observations:

- 2.1 We started the day with dancing of the Suring;
- 2.2 Two Tagbanwa elders spoke for the Opening Remarks and Inspirational Remarks;
- 2.3 The barangay captain of Cabugao welcomed the participants;
- 2.4 Mr. Giovanni Reyes gave a report on the national status of IPs;
- 2.5 We reminisced our long struggle in obtaining our CADT;
- 2.6 We heard the story of Teresa and the Abellen Aetas and how their situation is;
- 2.7 We heard stories about the effects of typhoon Yolanda in other areas;
- 2.8 A map was presented showing the domain of the Tagbanwas for us to show to the Vice Mayor of Coron. The said Vice-Mayor is leading a provincial-wide call to reject the IPRA law and prevent the formal recognition of IP lands because their recognition allegedly is a hindrance to investor confidence in Coron Island;
- 2.9 We were divided into 3 groups to write the results of Workshop #1;
- 2.10 IP customary laws developed internally in every tribe and existed earlier than the Spanish-imposed Regalian Doctrine adopted by the Americans and then the Philippine Republic which states: “all lands of the public domain and resources therein are owned by the State”. Such doctrine has been embedded from the 1935 Constitution up to the present 1987 Philippine Constitution. The doctrine makes us squatters in our own lands;
- 2.11 It was mentioned yesterday that we Tagbanwas should unite so as not to be overpowered by migrants.

3. **Group Reporting of Workshop 1**

Each group presented their outputs during plenary. A leader is assigned by members to do the presentation while members help in the question and answer portion. All reports are hand written in Manila paper(see px below).



Above, left, workshop presentors and their members show results of workshop 1 during the Plenary Session. Listening to the group reports, a Tagbanwa observed that *“the scale and extent of damage caused by typhoon Yolanda is far greater than we’ve thought...”*

Workshop 1 Report are summarized as follows:

1. Community-conserved areas are held as Sacred. They include generally the entire ancestral domains of the Calamian Group of Islands whether or not formally recognized by government or with or without certificates of ancestral domains claims (CADCs) and certificates of ancestral domain titles (CADTs). Areas are specifically mentioned as coastal areas, lakes, portions of the seas and mountains each with traditional local names (they decided not to divulge at least for now).

2. Threats to these are future calamities, lack of training on disaster response, entry of migrants who want Tagbanwa organizations disabled and destroyed – an easy way to dispossess Tagbanwas of their lands. Also imminent threat is the Coron Local Government Unit’s attempts at stopping IPRA implementation in Coron.

3. Extent of Damage caused by typhoon Yolanda

Infrastructure	totally destroyed	Partially destroyed
3.1 Houses	542	1,266
3.2 Schools	6	6
3.3 Health Centers	4	2
3.4 Motorized Boats	47	20
3.5 Paddle Boats	20	
3.6 Village Halls	3	
3.7 Village Tribunals	2	

3.8 Piers	2
3.9 Bridge	1
3.10 Waiting Shed	1
4.0 Community Stage	1

4. **Livelihood:** Mostly sea weed farms and fruit trees are totally destroyed including at least two (2) 50-seater capacity motorized boats being utilized for eco-tourism enterprise.

5. **Environment:** High vulnerability to disaster. Traditional possession must be strengthened due to continued non-recognition of ancestral domain ownership and landgrabbing and/or sale of Tagbanwa islands by migrants.

6. **SARAGPUNTA Federation:** Uncertainty of current leadership. No need to await the appointment of the current SARAGPUNTA chairperson as Indigenous People Mandatory Representative (IP Manrep) for the Coron Municipal Council. Appointment by the LGU of IPmanrep is unlikely without “trade-off”. While SARAGPUNTA has done positive work amongst members in terms of providing small-scale livelihood projects, it has failed to address the ancestral domain claims of its members leaving them vulnerable to landgrabbing. Saragpunta Elections will be held May 20, 2014 and a community-based disaster preparedness program to be installed immediately with KASAPI taking a direct hand during initial stages of program development.

Details of the workshop report are herein attached as Annex “B”.

Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representation in local government unit

The issue on IP Mandatory Representative stood out. The NCIP should have explained to Tagbanwas or to IP Manrep aspirants, the proper procedure in the appointment of a representative. Mr. Reyes explained that choosing starts in a manner traditionally practiced – from the sub-village (sitio) level, an IP representative is chosen. Chosen representatives from sub-village level will then meet to choose who among themselves will seat in the Baranggay Council (village council) The chosen people at barangay level will then meet to choose who will sit in the municipal council. The government should not meddle in the selection process and only needs to make a ceremonial acceptance of the representative chosen by IPs themselves.

Unfortunately, such procedure is unknown to IPManrep aspirants like the SARAGPUNTA chairperson.

On Community-based Disaster Preparedness Program

In anticipation of more calamities or disasters, a special committee called Community-based Disaster Preparedness Program was formed. The committee shall have no decision-making function. It will function within the Saragpunta structure where programs and projects are drawn and later submitted for the general assembly for decision-making .

Groups 1-3 all mentioned the intrusion of migrants as '**serious threat**'. These non-IPs want to lay their claim on the sacred areas as these are in their pristine beauty. There is a need to examine the migrant activities mentioned and address these as these have adverse effects on the sacred areas.

In many instances, the rights of IPs are not recognized and there is a need to push for these rights further.

The weakening or dissolution of IP organizations has become a strategy for investors so they can easily move into ancestral domains. Add this to the fact that many IPs still do not have papers to show government recognition of their domains.

Through Workshop #1, a federation-wide data has been consolidated, detailing the extent of damage in infrastructure, livelihood, and natural resources. We can make this known to relevant groups and agencies. We should also let them know our rights as IPs and ask that they support these rights.

When we do the planning in the next workshop, we can look at how to strengthen the Saragpunta Federation. There is also a need for this assembly to approve the special committee that will do the planning related to disaster preparedness. Then KASAPI will respond to these.

OPEN FORUM

R. Cabajar: Just to clarify on A. Carpiano's bet for the IP Mandatory Representative, Busuanga and Culion did not participate, according to the guidelines, only Coron.

G. Reyes: Selection should follow the indigenous system or procedures. In the selection process, the representative goes from the sitio level then, upon selection amongst sitio-level representatives, is elevated to the next level, and so on and so forth. The prescribed process also calls for a replacement of the vacancy each time one representative is elevated.

R. Aguilar: What Saragpunta did was gather 3 members from each of the 23 communities and the body endorsed a representative to the municipality after a votation.

R. Abella: The endorsement is backed by a resolution signed by all of Tagbanwa elders. But where is the Minutes to prove the nomination/endorsement? Therefore, this did not follow the correct procedure.

G. Reyes: The LGU, investors, and the others will say this did not follow the process.

Mr. Reyes also noted other points that should be considered in the planning, namely, the need for a disaster preparedness program, mapping of all sacred areas, and a training or IEC on relevant laws and treaties. To end the session and to prepare participants for the planning session Mr. Reyes made a brief presentation on the 2013 indigenous peoples agenda.

V. The 2013 Indigenous Peoples Agenda

Mr. Reyes said that the 2013 IP Agenda is an updated version of the 2010 IP Agenda. He said, during the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples last August 7, 2013, indigenous peoples organization from national and regional networks, organizations and institutions met, updated the agenda and submitted the same to the government and the newly elected Congress, the multilateral bodies based in the Philippines and the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014, which is a High-Level Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly.

Mr. Reyes sighted the following themes of the 2013 Philippine IP Agenda:

1. On Indigenous Peoples' Lands, Territories, Resources and Development Aggression

- Stop land grabbing of indigenous peoples' lands including new forms of landgrabbing, e.g., using priority and usufruct rights to commercialize indigenous lands;
- Respect customary laws on land use, including sacred sites, burial and hunting

grounds, and other culturally important places.

- Stop large-scale mining in indigenous territories. Respect local government resolutions and moratoriums on mining operations. Provide compensation for victims of environmental destruction from the operations of mining companies and funds for the rehabilitation of destroyed and polluted mining sites.
- Ensure the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in eco-tourism and other related projects and initiatives.
- Cease the construction of mega hydroelectric dams, large multipurpose dams and other large-scale energy projects in indigenous peoples' lands and waters.
- Recognize maps done by indigenous peoples and their support organizations through community participatory mapping processes in their territories.

2. On Human Rights, Militarization and Peace

- Stop the deceptive counter-insurgency Operation Plan Bayanihan and the militarization of indigenous peoples' communities. End impunity and bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights violations committed against indigenous peoples; and of the 35 (now 40) extrajudicial killings of indigenous peoples in the Aquino administration as of August 2013 and the 142 extra-judicial killings of indigenous peoples in the Arroyo administration.
- Respect Indigenous Women's rights. Bring to justice the perpetrators of rape and sexual assaults against indigenous women and girls. Monitor closely and stop violence against indigenous women and girls. Develop more gender and indigenous peoples-sensitive health and reproductive health services and programs in indigenous peoples' communities and provide free legal services to survivors of violence.

3. On the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Conflicting Laws

- Totally revamp the NCIP and make accountable those who have been proven to work against the rights and interests of indigenous peoples. Support a comprehensive independent initiative to review the overall implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). Raise the awareness of government employees to understand indigenous peoples' rights.

4. On Social Services, Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Preparedness and Response Measures

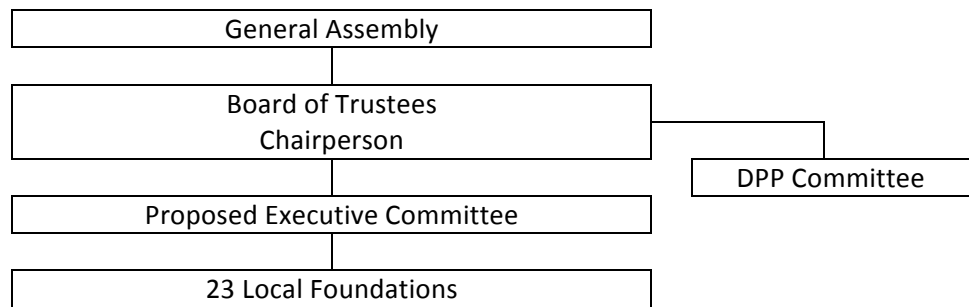
Support the operationalization of the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) conclusion, which recognizes that diverse knowledge systems, which include ***indigenous knowledge systems are equally valid as science and should be respected and promoted with its own integrity and value.***

Appropriate, timely and adequate relief and rehabilitation services to address natural disasters and impacts of the climate crisis such as droughts and floods. Ensure that indigenous peoples are included in relief and rehabilitation committees and bodies and in disaster preparedness bodies and programmes. Create special lines and desks for indigenous peoples during relief operations, especially where the populations are mixed. Make the access of indigenous peoples to such funds simpler and less bureaucratic.

VI. Planning & The Formation of Disaster Preparedness Program (DPP)

The discussion on Community-based Disaster Preparedness Program was facilitated by Ms. Josephine Dongail of the Philippine Platform on Indigenous Peoples Rights (PPIPR). It was clear that the Disaster Preparedness Program (DPP) will not be separate but will actually be attached to and integrated with SARAGPUNTAS. The organizational structure was drawn in order to facilitate discussion as to where the DPP is to be placed or attached. The DPP shall serve as the system or mechanism for Saragpunta to implement disaster-related activities. The program will go through a long process: develop the program itself, look for funding, etcetera. The Chairmen shall select the members of the committee. One activity of the program is the conduct of community-level training for disaster preparedness. KASAPI shall present the system developed when asking for assistance after disasters.

Everybody agreed that there is a need for a Disaster Preparedness Program. It would be difficult for KASAPI if all local foundations would be individually involved. Hence, it is best if the program will be administered through Saragpunta. A special committee was formed and will be the arm for the implementation of plans. Any decision-making will need to go through the Tagbanwa general assembly. The DPP Committee shall be attached to the Saragpunta Board of Trustees and KASAPI shall have 1 seat:



OPEN FORUM

R. Aguilar: The Board of Trustees has been in existence since the formation of Saragpunta. Where does the Executive Committee come from?

R. Dabuit: There is an existing issue regarding the organizational structure, as well as other pending issues. We want to call for a general assembly of Saragpunta after this. There is also a need for a resolution that will approve the proposed Executive Committee.

J. Quijano: The typhoon season is already near. We need to be prepared for it.

G. Reyes: Disaster Preparedness as a special project is too big for 1 Project Officer to handle. The committee we will form will not be final until approved by the General Assembly. One requirement is to establish the baseline data. Whatever is your organizational set-up, the DPP is separate because of the need to seek help during a disaster. For efficiency, the members should already be knowledgeable in planning so they can present to the general assembly soon.

R. Dabuit: We should make a cover letter addressed to the federation chairman and attach a resolution for him to call for an election by sending invitations to members. Board of Trustees present should be responsible to bring the issue to the federation chairman. We will support Alfreem as IP Mandatory Representative, do the elections, then form the DPP Committee.

- G. Reyes: Do we need to wait for Alfrem to sit as IP Mandatory Representative in the LGU before forming the DPP Committee?
- R. Aguilar: The elections should be our immediate concern because the problem of the next disaster is looming. Where will we channel the assistance during the next disaster? We should bring this matter to Alfrem and discuss.
- G. Reyes: The agenda of the DPP is one of our priority here. Shall we make a vote on the formation of the DPP Committee? Can we ask the representatives from each of the 23 foundation members to decide now and vote?

There were 77 leaders in favor of forming the Committee, and none objected. Through a motion made by Roy Dabuit, seconded by Roy Abella and Rodolfo Aguilar, a resolution was to be drafted regarding the matter of election in Saragpunta. A Drafting Committee composed of Roy Dabuit and Jimmy Quijano was formed to write an overall resolution that reflects the agreements and results of the 3-day discussions.

MEMBERS OF THE DPP COMMITTEE

TTCIA	Roy Abella
Borac	Adolfo Blanco
Turda	Mabili Pulilan
Malawig	Rodito Alberto
Tara	Limbunao Alberto
Calawit	Roy Dabuit
PASICMIDA	Ruben Cabajar
Biong	Gloria Salva
KASAPI	Giovanni Reyes

VII. Resolution Presentation, Plenary Approval, Closing and Next Steps.

The assembly was concluded by the signing of the resolution forming the Disaster Preparedness Program and the strengthening of SARAGPUNTA. Resolution is hereto attached as **Annex "C"** Following Plenary Approval, the closing was made through **sharing of impressions** by representatives from each area.

G. Salva of Biong We are very sure that in the mind of many we know we learned a lot. It is difficult for a Tagbanwa to leave his own domain and go someplace. When we go back to Biong, we have experiences to tell. We look forward to meeting again and learn more from each other.

R. Cabajar of Panlaitan We feel strong again in spite of the disaster we went through. We are confident because we have talked about our problems and discussed how we can solve them. All the Chairmen should continue and persevere to reach our goals. We should be patient and not lose hope.

L. Alberto of Tara Everyone made a big contribution by sacrificing and coming to this assembly. We were there when Saragpunta started and made history. We should bring back the vigor of the organization. We should continue to get to know the Tagbanwas more before making plans. We should not doubt to let our ancestors guide us. It is time for us to act again. The last 3 days have been happy. Rest assured that we will share with the others in Bulalacao all that we have learned.

A. Blanco of Borac Good evening. We will let our community members know what we have discussed here from beginning to end.

A. Mabini of Turda Thank you for the support. We would not have this gathering if not for KASAPI. For years we had no communication with Saragpunta because we did not like their rules. We were excluded in the survey of the CADT application because we did not like the project by Volens. It is good there were other NGOs that helped us. Nonetheless, we should strengthen Saragpunta now.

R. Dabuit of Calawit Bangon Tagbanwa! We should be thankful that Saragpunta will be strengthened again. This is the opportunity. Planning is important. We

have started making a plan. ***We should be ready for Yolanda's husband and son!***

R. Alberto of Malawig Thank you for the event. Here, we learned that there are hindrances to our culture. We should be thankful because we now know what to do.

J. Quijano of Buenavista 1993 saw the beginning of Saragpunta when we all literally boarded one boat and headed to one direction. We were then facing disasters but we were prepared. We were youths then and we saw the beginning. Now, we have the opportunity to have a voice and make a difference by taking actions at higher levels. The spirit of unity should always be within us.

R. Abella of B.Daan We saw the perseverance of the foundations and they continue until now. We should always recall our beginnings and continue to move forward. In situations like this, who else would respond but us – Tagbanwas!. We thank KASAPI for helping us with our problems. We strive together to realize our goals

S. Bering of Cabugao We are happy with the discussions and the guidelines that will respond to problems in the future. We should be thankful for the plan, though not yet here, that will serve not only us but the next generation of Tagbanwas.

R. Aguilar of Cabugao: We should strengthen the elders because they still uphold the customary law, which is important in our unity. Impatience will lead us nowhere. We are happy to go home and bear the news that something good will happen. We should continue to reach for our CADTs, keeping in mind that we will pass this on to the next generation. Imagine the future when have become leaders already. Are they serving us faithfully? Do we see divisions among them? Who will strengthen us now? We should unite ourselves.

Borac representative: We must have been forgotten because we are not in the map. We thank KASAPI because all of our problems will be responded to. Those in front and ahead in terms of organizing and those who have already obtained their titles and have done their planning, please look behind you, look at us who are way behind. Please help lift us up.

Closing remarks: G. Reyes.

Thank you to all that I have heard – perhaps, all that had just been said might be the answer to the question: *“paano natin maibalik ang alat ng asin?”* (How do we restore saltiness in salt?). First, let me state that the past three days affirmation of who we are. Our belongingness to our ancestral lands and waters is the same as that of other indigenous peoples in the country, the Asia region and the world. By sheer force of having sprung from our lands since time beyond recall, it is only a natural course that you as Calamian Tagbanwas have a history of defending the islands from unabated, wholesale destruction of marine resources and have fought against your disenfranchisement. You did so without the idea that these are universal rights guaranteed by the United Nations Charter, reiterated by ILO 169, reflected in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and recognized by the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA or RA 8371). These are the rights we reaffirmed the past three days including the right to freely determine and pursue our economic, social and cultural development.



“Without the land, people are lost. Without the people land is lost. To change this order would be to destroy our identity as indigenous peoples”

The reason we keep reiterating our universal rights is that no power on earth can deprive us of such rights. Our dignity and self-respect reach back into our deep-rooted historical ties with our ancestral homelands. Our ancestral lands and domains belong to our ancestors in whose likeness, the next generations continue and from whom the lands we possess at present will be passed. Home – as one of you emphasized is where Tagbanwas share compassion, tribal discipline and responsibility. Land - is our mother from which we are born and into which we die. Indeed, without our lands, the people are lost. Without the people, the land is lost. To impose changes on this ancient order would serve to destroy our dignity and identity as indigenous peoples.

A month ago, we foiled attempts to create divisiveness in the ranks of one of our member indigenous peoples organization – the Tagbanua Tribe of Coron Island Association – and thereby prevented what could have been an easy way to grab Coron Islands lakes, lagoons, beaches and mountains. You know very well when, how and the context in which the TTCIA’s

leadership was illegally taken-over by a ragtag band of misguided Tagbanwas under the direction of outside power players. Suffice to state that our customary law worked when we convened Tagbanwa *Mamepets*⁵ of Cabugao and Banuang Daan to sit as judges and listen to the arguments of both sides from the “desposed” leadership and the “coup plotters”. It was a hearing open for the community to hear, reflect and participate – in short a democratic process defined under customary law that decided a matter purely internal to the Tagbanwa community. After four hours, the matter was decided with neither shame or rancor to concerned parties but a dignified rethinking – to recall Tagbanwa history as a tribe, analyze the present, confront our problems, and share each other’s dreams and aspirations. Had this been brought to formal regional hearing process, it would have taken three years and at a cost dear to the community by all Tagbanwas as you very well experienced with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples⁶ from 2009 to 2011.

Many of us here mentioned the threats they face in their respective localities. We deem these threats as assaults to your rightful ownership and of your islands and its natural resources. It is therefore important that even as we plan, let us assert our rights to occupy, to develop and use our lands and resources in ways appropriate to us. Thank you and let us thank the spirits of our great ancestors for allowing us to set foot to where they have been before us. Mabuhay and God bless the indigenous peoples of the Philippines!

Next Steps:

1. Reorganize SARAGPUNTA and TTCIA with new set of leadership through back to back elections May 20, 2014 and May 10, 2014 respectively;
2. Inclusion of the Community Disaster Preparedness Program (CDPP) in Sagagpunta’s mission. Among others, the CDPP will be used as backdrop to begin the process of intensive participatory community planning;
3. Establishing regular bilateral and multilateral exchange of ideas and plans with other indigenous communities;
4. Through its mother organization KASAPI, reach out for assistance for documentation of ICCAs ;

The gathering ended at 10.00pm.

⁵ Mamepets are Tagbanwa traditional council members consisting of elders known for their wisdom, virtue and good citizenship.

⁶ An agency under the Office of the President. The timely intervention of KASAPI in 2010 prevented NCIP and the local government unit from stripping the TTCIA of its right to manage and develop its enterprise operations.