

Significance of tenurial security to the indigenous community

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In the southern part of Bukidnon, particularly in *Barangay* Nabaliwa, Municipality of Pangantucan, hundreds of indigenous peoples and migrant settlers will receive Certificates of Customary Land Occupancy that leads to land conflict resolution, adds security to use and occupancy rights, and cultural land preservation.

“Land is the most important asset to us IPs. Most of us established homes in forest areas and we depend on the natural resources that surround us as these supply our daily needs. Hunting, gathering of forest products and establishment of small gardens are our type of livelihoods. We are interrelated with the land and all things that are found there. We consider our land as sacred as shown by our rituals that are connected to it. To lose our land means to lose everything – our identity, integrity, customs and traditions, rituals, and self-determination. That is why what is more significant to us IPs is the protection, sustainability, control, and responsible use of the natural resources rather than the direct ownership of the land itself. Yet to guarantee access to these resources, land ownership is a must,” stated 71-year old tribal woman-elder *Bae*¹ Saturnina M. Daculay.

Tenurial security is important to IPs to maintain self-governance. The tribal elders see to it that their descendants can till their land independently to ensure that everyone has their own agricultural farm and home lots so that families can build their communities without worrying about securing their landholdings. Tenurial security leads to stabilization of social and good relationships among members of the community.

“When land is secured and if there is peace and unity, preservation of cultural

beliefs and preservation of cultural land is strengthened,” *Bae Daculay* added.

Cultural beliefs and practices such as rituals, community sharing, and even conflict resolutions are tied to land, and encapsulated in the essence of land as viewed by the IPs. Their indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices (IKSPs) will thus continue for generations if there is security over their land.

Nowadays, preservation of ancestral land is even more important to the indigenous peoples because of increasing population. Distribution of lands, even in small sizes, to family members is a challenge. But no matter how small, owning land guarantees a means for growing her or his own food, and selling the excess for income.

“Even though we only have cassava, sweet potato and corn planted in small-sized farms, we are content with it because we can peacefully earn a living. Being a recipient of agricultural assistance from the government agency is less important to us IPs even though we need it,” *Bae Daculay* lamented.

The project “Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines” gave them access to land use and established a conflict resolution mechanism through installation of accurate landmark boundaries and the provision of Certificates of Customary Land Occupancy.

¹ Female tribal leader



Land rights are often a vital element for cultural communities to balance their capabilities and assets and determine their resulting plans to cope with their daily production and food security requirements.

Knowing the respective land boundaries of every household contributes to the mitigation of future conflicts. Through the training courses offered by the project, such as the Landscape Governance, the community learned that belongingness is an important part of a greater landscape.

Land is not just a source of economic production but is also a basis of social relationships and cultural values. It is a source of prestige and often power. Social relationships are important assets in ensuring sustainability of livelihoods of the cultural community.

Land tenure is important in cultural communities in terms of food security, conflict resolution, and poverty alleviation. This initiative introduced plans and strategies to help in building assets and promote self-reliance to cultural communities. The project increased the community's awareness to protect and enhance their natural resource base. ■