

Policy Analysis and Formulation: An Overview

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Introduction

This learning material is written specifically for community groups who may wish to conduct an effective analysis of specific public policies and actions that currently or potentially affect their lives, communities, and livelihoods. It provides some tools and tips for addressing complex public policy problems.

There are many examples of public policy problems. Many of these problems are complex. For example:

- What is the best location for building a public school in a baragay?
- What types of forest products should be banned from harvesting?
- A private company is offering to take a 50-year lease on tribal lands lease while offering monetary payments and jobs to the community. Should the community veto the plan?
- The LGU has proposed a P50 million road extension project that will pass through the community. Should the community support this plan?

These problems should be answered: that is, decisions should be made **by the community**. Even if their decision is to do nothing, the policies will still have consequences for the local citizens.

How will decision-makers make their decisions? On the basis of what information will they act? To whom will they listen: lobbyists, constituents, policy advisers, or affected communities?

What is Public Policy?

Public policy might take the form of law, or regulation, or the set of all the laws and regulations that govern a particular issue or problem.

More broadly, we might say that public policy is simply what government (any public official who influences or determines public policy, including school officials, barangay council members, local governments, etc.) does or does not do about a problem that comes before them for consideration and possible action.

Specifically, public policy has a number of key attributes:

- made in response to some sort of issue or problem that requires attention;
- what the government chooses to do (actual) or not to do (implied) about a particular issue or problem;
- made on behalf of the "public;"
- oriented toward a goal or desired state, such as the solution of a problem;
- ultimately made by governments, even if the ideas come from outside government or through the interaction of government and the public; and,
- Policymaking is part of an ongoing process that does not always have a clear beginning or end, since decisions about who will benefit from policies and who will bear any burden resulting from the policy are continually reassessed, revisited, and revised.

Public policy is considered strong when it solves problems efficiently and effectively, serves and supports governmental institutions and policies, and encourages active citizenship.

On the other hand, public policy is considered to be weak or poor if it does not address the felt needs of the community, creates new problems or conflict, and does not encourage active people's participation and citizenship.

Why the need for policy analysis and formulation?

What is policy analysis? It is a process of "determining which of various alternative policies will most achieve a given set of goals in light of the relations between the policies and the goals."

From a community perspective, we engage in policy analysis for several reasons:

- To assess the actual and potential impact of a public policy on our lives, and the welfare of others;
- To examine other alternative policies; and,
- To decide which policies would be best suited to, and responsive to our needs.

Public policies are often decided upon by public authorities and people in power. How they exercise that power has implications on our lives and the lives of poor people.

Policy processes are political. They can include or exclude the interests and perspectives of poor people. Therefore, changing or influencing policy is also a political process.

Sometimes, we also do policy analysis because we are looking for a change. We are not merely looking for incremental changes or "reforms" – but rather, more *structural*, *permanent* change: social change, not social progression; change, not just improvements. A government bureaucrat may prepare a feasibility study, looking at the costs and benefits involved with a policy change. For local communities, the kind of research and policy analysis we do goes further – we do not merely focus on how to improve the existing status, but rather how to shift from A to B. To illustrate, we may want to:

- Stop destructive policies (mining, logging, evictions);
- Introduce protective measures (FPIC, impact assessments);
- Introduce new policy for its direct effects;
- Reform existing policy (land and resource reforms);
- Transformative reforms (land and resource reforms governance reforms);
- Ensure the implementation of policies;
- Scale-up local action (community-based resource protection and management);
- Gain legitimacy (entitlements); and,
- Recognize rights (IP domains).

Six Steps in Policy Analysis

To ensure that a policy is fully analyzed, understood, and implemented effectively, it is necessary to conduct policy analysis.

Policy analysis itself is the breaking up of a policy problem into its component parts, understanding them, and developing ideas about what to do. Many activities beyond analysis are involved in the policy development process. and the term "policy analysis" may often be used when "policy planning" would be more appropriate.

A public policy may affect different sectors of a community in positive or negative ways. Therefore, policy analysis should involve different sectors of the community.

Public policy analysis consists of a six-step procedure. Each of these steps involves a series of questions you should ask.

I. Define the real problem or issue

To begin the process of policy analysis, it is important to define what the problem is in the first place. You need to determine what the goal is for that specific policy. Ask yourself, why is this policy in place? What are we trying to do? Once you have a specific goal or a small set of goals clearly outlined, you can then move onto the next step.

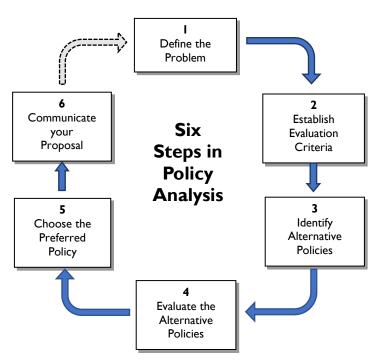


Figure 1. Six steps in policy analysis

If you misdiagnose the problem, the policy solution is likely to fail.

¹(Nagel (Ed.), 1990).

The common difficulty we have here is that public policies often have multiple and competing objectives, and the objectives are often poorly defined. For example, DENR's forest policies may seek to conserve forest resources, yet DENR offices continue to issue forest licenses and concessions at the same time. Thus, we must learn to analyze what the real problem is, and learn to focus quickly, or our valuable time will be wasted.

2. Establish the evaluation criteria

The next step is to clarify your community's goals for that particular policy. You can begin to establish some evaluation criteria. For example, what are our criteria for evaluating forest regulations? Aside from forest conservation, should not we also be looking at community livelihoods and basic community services, such as education and health? In other words, how will you knowif a particular policy is successful or not in helping you to achieve your goal?

Your evaluation criteria should be *clear*; it should be *important*; and it should be something that *can be measured*, rather than remain indefinable. For example, "access to education" can be measured by the physical distance of the school, how much time it takes the children to get to school, what kind of risks children face when they travel to school, and whether families can afford the costs of education.

Criteria are used to measure the outcomes and impacts of each alternative policy. Bardach (2012) describes them as the "mental standards for evaluating the results of action." The criteria should be measurable and quantifiable. There are several *criteria* commonly utilized in policy analysis, and these include:

- Efficacy: Will the policy be able to produce the desired effect for the community?
- Cost: How much will it cost? Who will pay the cost?
- Equity: Will the policy benefit the community especially the poorer sectors? Or will it benefit only a few?
- Administrative feasibility: Can the policy be implemented?
- Unintended consequences: Does the policy have unintended consequences and risks?
- Sustainability: Can the policy be sustained? Or is it likely to be another ningas kugon?
- Political feasibility: Is the policy politically acceptable? Or does it create conflicts that cannot immediately be resolved?

The criteria will enable you to evaluate each alternative across the same metrics in order to ultimately determine the best policy option. Therefore, criteria should be chosen based on outcomes and impacts that the community would like to see from a policy option.

3. Identify alternative policies

With the above evaluation criteria, you can begin brainstorming. You can begin with the current policy, and start to think of alternatives. You will now have clear goals and criteria in mind, and this should help you to think of worthwhile alternatives.

You may brainstorm and have a list of, say, 2 to 10 alternatives.

The point is to think outside the box, and perhaps the old policy has been useful in the past and has now become outdated due to external factors such as technological advances, an increase in population, or a change in the behaviors of people.

Alternatives should be ways to address or eliminate the policy problem. In constructing alternatives, one can utilize several techniques: (1) copy an existing policy without modification; (2) copy an existing policy and modify it to fit your needs; (3) build a policy utilizing generic tools; and, (4) build a policy from scratch with creativity and brainstorming.

Alternatives should be tightly linked to your problem definition, specific enough to be actionable, relevant to your community resources, and materially different from one another. You should try to include at least three alternatives, and at least one of these should be a "do-nothing" option.

4. Evaluate the alternatives

This is where your evaluation criteria come in handy. You will need to measure each policy up against the evaluation criteria in order to determine which one will be best for each of your goals. It is important to remain unbiased and logical, rather than let your emotion decide for you.

The evaluation stage takes an in-depth look into what can be learned from the process as a whole, whether the original problem has been solved, and if not, what is recommended as an alternative course of action.

5. Decide which policy is best

Choose a policy alternative based on your analysis and your evaluation criteria. If you have a quantitative measure, you will of course be using numbers. However, a qualitative measure should by no means be less precise. Be prepared to display your results in a graph or a pros and cons format (see figure 2).

6. Communicate your proposal

If your chosen policy is something that is within your community's power and capacity to undertake, then you can proceed to implement your community decision. However, in many cases, the decision-makers of the public policy (e.g. LGUs, school officials) lie *outside* the community itself. In such cases, it is important for the community to communicate your proposed policy.

What is important is that you have advocacy and are able to present sound evidence.

It is important to be able to clearly tell the story. You should be able to present your proposal accurately and effectively.

Sometimes it is better to be brief and concise, rather spend too much time on details. You should consider two types of listeners: (I) those that will spend 3 minutes, and (2) those that will spend 30 minutes. Your analysis should provide enough information to satisfy both types of listeners and enable them to understand your process and ultimate recommendation.

Notes on follow-up work

Finally, policy work does not end when the policy has been written. Policy analysis entails ensuring its implementation! Once you have chosen your new policy, you need to make sure it is not only put into place, but that it is monitored over the course of time.

Hence, monitoring the implementation of policies is critical. Your analyses should be backed up by solid evidence, gathered through research. Table I provides some questions in designing research that will inform our advocacy. Remember that policy analysis is not a mere "add-on" after research. Again, we do policy analysis in the hope that we can ultimately effect meaningful, structural change.

PROs 🗸	CONs
I.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Figure 2. Identifying pros and cons of a proposed policy.

Here are some sample questions to ask in each stage of policy analysis:

Table I. Some key questions to ask in policy analysis

Steps	Questions to ask		
Define the problem or issue	What exactly is the problem?What problem does the existing policy seek to address?		
	 What else do I need to know to fully understand the policy and how it is implemented? 		
	 Does the policy address the problem? Or does the policy bring about new problems? 		
	 Is there a problem with the policy itself? Or does the problem lie in how the policy is enforced or implemented? 		
	 How does the policy impact on people? How does the policy affect different groups of people? 		
Establish the evaluation	On what basis or criteria shall we base our decisions?		
criteria	What factors will be important to consider when we evaluate our choices and alternatives?		
	Which of these (list of) factors is most important for us?		

Determine	 Are there other existing options or solutions 		
alternative	to the problem?		
policies	What are the possible solutions to the problem?		
	Who can best provide us information on this policy area?		
Evaluate the alternatives	 What are the pros and cons of each possible solution? 		
	 Is there evidence or experience that shows which alternative policy is likely to be successful? 		
Decide which policy is best	Who will decide the appropriate solution for advocacy?		
	Which recommended policy will best deliver on the criteria?		
Communicate your proposal	Are the problems and proposals well- understood by others in our community?		
	 To whom should we address our policy proposal? Who will have the decision-making authority on the policy? 		
	Who will provide support and advice to that decision-making person or authority?		
	 What must be included in our advocacy plan? Legislative change 		
	, ·		
	⇒ Legislative change⇒ Policy, procedure change		

Practical tools for policy analysis

There is a range of methods and tools that can help us analyze policies and policy processes (See Table 2).

Table 2. Methods and tools for analyzing policy and policy processes

What to analyze	Tools and methods
Policy processes and actors	Stakeholder analysis , stakeholder mapping (Figure 4), key informant interviews
Livelihood strategies	Semi-structured interviews, preference rankings, problem tree analysis
Social relationships	Power analysis, social maps, institutional analysis
Policy priorities	Visioning, force-field analysis, SWOT analysis
Policy context	Timeline review (review of how policies have evolved)
Policy statements	Document analysis, gap analysis
Institutions and organizations	Institutional analysis, social maps, power analysis, network mapping

These are tools that can help us analyze what the problems are, what needs to be done, and what is the proper match between the problem and a proper solution. However, one must note that social issues are complex, and that policy issues are usually multifaceted and require multiple, not single, analytical approaches.

For this article, a brief introduction to stakeholder analysis and SWOT analysis is presented.

Tool #1: Stakeholder analysis²

Stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying individuals or groups that affect or likely to be affected by a policy or proposed action. It sorts them according to their capacity to influence the action, or the impact that the action will have on them.

Stakeholder analysis is a tool that can help us understand how people affect policies and institutions, and how policies and institutions affect people. It identifies who benefits, and who suffers from the consequences of an action or policy. It highlights the challenges that need to be faced to change behavior, develop capacities, and tackle inequalities.

Stakeholder analysis can also be done as part of multi-stakeholder processes in a community, including dialogue and negotiations. It involves the following major steps:

- Clearly state the issue, concern, or proposal;
- Identify the stakeholders;
- Analyze their roles, relative power, and capacity to participate;
- Map-out the stakeholders according to their interests and level of power or influence on the issue; and,
- Assign actions to take for each set of stakeholders.

State the core problem, issue, concern, or proposal

Clearly state what the core problem, issue, concern, or proposal is. Remember that stakeholder analysis is contextual and will depend on the specific issue you select. State your issue or proposal in concrete terms, in a phrase or a sentence.

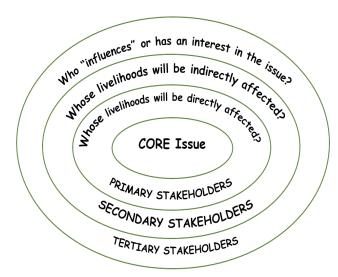
Identify the stakeholders

Once you have identified the core problem, you can identify the stakeholders. Stakeholders are the actors — individuals, groups, or institutions — that have an interest in the issue. Depending on the degree to which they are affected, they may be classified as primary, secondary, or tertiary stakeholders. (Note that tertiary stakeholders are usually groups or institutions.)

Stakeholders can be the beneficiaries, victims, financiers, or instigators. Stakeholders can be at the local community, district, national, or international level.

²Edited from Tony Quizon, "Stakeholder Analysis in Policy" (2014). **Enhancing Land Reform Monitoring Effectiveness: A Tool Kit for CSOs.** Quezon City: ANGOC and Land Watch Asia, pp. 59-69.

The figure below shows some guide questions for identifying primary, secondary, and tertiary stakeholders:



EXAMPLE				
Issue: "Reform of forest policies to allow the harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)"				
Primary stakeholders	IPs, farmers, water users, forest communities, honey gatherers			
Secondary stakeholders	Traders, farm laborers, transportation drivers,			
Tertiary stakeholders	Universities, research institutes, Church, NGOs, local politicians			

Figure 3. Key Questions in identifying primary, secondary, and tertiary stakeholders

Analyze their roles, interests, power, and capacity

After identifying all the stakeholders, analyze each one in terms of their rights, rewards and benefits, responsibilities, and relationships – or "the 4 Rs." This will help you to bring focus to important factors – such as how stakeholders are affected, to the various roles that they play.

- Rights: What are their rights?
- Rewards and benefits: Who pays the costs? Who benefits?
- Responsibility: What is their role or responsibility with regard to the issue?
- Relationships: How are they related to the issue? How close or how far are they from the issue?

Map out stakeholders in a matrix

The next step is to map out all the stakeholders in a 2x2 matrix (2 rows by 2 columns) according to:

- Their level of interest on the issue (High or Low)
- Their degree of power or influence over the issue (Weak or Strong)

Stakeholders can be assigned to one of four quadrants, as follows:

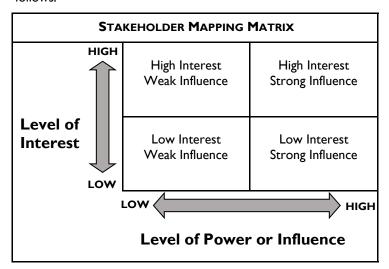


Figure 4. Stakeholder Analysis Mapping Matrix

Assign actions for each square in the quadrant

Now that you have mapped out stakeholders and assigned them into one of four squares in the 2x2 matrix, you can determine what actions or responses to do for each set of combinations of interest and power or influence. Gardner (1986) prescribes certain corresponding actions for each quadrant as follows:

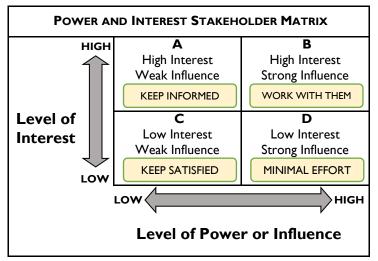


Figure 5. Actions in relation to power and interest

Those in Quadrant A have high interest, but a weak influence. Some examples could be voters or concerned citizens who might be interested in your issue but have a weak influence over the issue. Thus, it will help if you keep them informed, especially if you are conducting a public campaign or advocacy on the issue.

Those in Quadrant B have high interest and a strong influence on the issue. These are the key players whom you should try to influence, and therefore you must focus your efforts and attention on them. Some examples of them might be political, Church, and civic leaders, relevant agencies of government, or strong peoples' organizations.

Those in Quadrant C have *low interest* but have a *strong influence* on the issue. They may include, for example, the Provincial Governor or local business groups. Sometimes, the best approach is just to keep them satisfied, perhaps by also keeping them informed. Bringing your issues to them might not be feasible at this time, as they could potentially create more problems if they are not really interested in your issues.

Those in Quadrant D have low interest and low influence on the issue. These include those who are "walang pakialam" or ordinary people who might not care about the issue. It might be advisable to keep your efforts with them to a minimum.

Summary

Stakeholder analysis helps us understand the needs and interests of each stakeholder, both inside and outside our organization or community. It helps us understand the power or influence that each stakeholder has that can facilitate or impede the achievement of a policy or program's objective. In relation to policy analysis, *stakeholder analysis* is most useful *after* you have already decided on which policy to pursue, and aim to have the policy enacted and implemented in action.

Tool #2: SWOT analysis

SWOT is an acronym that stands for "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats." The SWOT analysis provides a good framework for reviewing a strategy, policy or proposal, or any other idea.

SWOT analysis came from the research conducted at Stanford Research Institute from 1960 to 1970. It started as a planning tool used by businesses and corporations. Today, it is a tool widely used also for the analysis of public policies.

Completing a SWOT analysis is simple, and is a good subject for workshop sessions. SWOT analysis also works well in brainstorming meetings.

A SWOT analysis is a subjective assessment of data which is organized by the SWOT format into a logical order that helps in understanding, presentation, discussion, and decision-making.

Step 1: State clearly the proposed policy, program, or idea

First, you should specify which entity is conducting the SWOT Analysis. Whom do you represent, and on whose behalf are you conducting SWOT – i.e., a farmers' organization/cooperative? An indigenous community? A group of households? Or a barangay council?

Second, it is important to clearly identify the specific subject of your SWOT analysis, because a SWOT Analysis is a perspective of one thing, be it a new policy, a project, a proposition, an idea, or option, etc. Some examples are:

- A proposed location for building a new public school in a barangay
- A new policy that bans the harvesting of certain types of forest products in the community
- A private company's offer to take a 50-year lease on tribal lands lease while offering monetary payments and jobs to the community
- A proposed P50-million road extension project that will pass through the community

Each of these decisions, proposals, or ideas will affect the community in some way and will have consequences for the local people even if they do nothing about these.

Step 2: Prepare a grid or template

The SWOT analysis template is normally presented as a grid, comprising four sections, one for each of the SWOT headings: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

For SWOT analysis, a 2x2 matrix table may be produced, according to two pairs of dimensions.

Stakeholder Analysis Matrix			
"STATEMENT OF THE PROPOSED POLICY, PROGRAM OR IDEA"			
	Positive 🗸	Negative X	
Internal (present)	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	
External (future)	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS	

Figure 6. SWOT Analysis Matrix

Strengths and Weaknesses are regarded distinctly as internal factors, whereas Opportunities and Threats are regarded distinctly as external factors.

Here is the explanation in more detail:

Strengths and Weaknesses S + W	The internal environment is the situation inside the organization or community	For example: factors relating to membership, local resources, assets, profitability, performance, quality, skills, social relations, attitudes, services, reputation, processes, infrastructure, products, etc.	These factors tend to be in the present
Opportunities and Threats O + T	The external environment is the situation outside the organization or community	For example: factors relating to markets, sectors, migration, weather & seasonal changes, competition, economics, politics, society, culture, technology, environmental, media, law, government, Church, institutions, etc.	These factors tend to be in the future

Figure 7. The internal and external factors in SWOT Analysis.

Step 3: Discuss and brainstorm your SWOT

Next, brainstorm on the question: "What are your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats — in relation to the proposed policy, program, or idea?" Write your analysis in short phrases, not just single words — so that the message is clear.

For example, there is a proposed P50-million road extension project that will pass through your community, which could bring in new businesses, but will also bring in new settlers, and will change your local ways of life. In such a situation, here are some examples of the types of questions you might ask in a SWOT analysis:

Internal Analysis

Strengths:

- Identify the skills and capabilities that you have.
- What can you do particularly well, relative to others?
- What do analysts/outsiders consider to be your strengths?
- What resources do you have?
- What related experiences do you have (e.g. community mobilization)?
- Do you have a good reputation?
- Do you have good external linkages?
- Do you have a broad and active membership or constituency? How many people do you reach?
- Do you have a strong morale, commitment, and leadership?
- What powers do you have over the proposed policy, program, or idea?

Weaknesses:

- What do you do poorly? Do you lack competitive strength?
- What generates the most dissatisfaction and complaints about your work?
- What processes and activities can you improve?
- Are there gaps in terms of your skills and capabilities?
- What are your vulnerabilities?

External Analysis

Opportunities:

- Where can you apply your strengths?
- How are your constituency and their needs changing?
- Is there available technology (e.g. communications) that can improve your work?
- Are there new markets for your strengths?
- Are there new ways of producing your products?
- Are there public policies that could work in your favor?
- Are there programs, agencies, or linkages that could assist your community or group?

Threats:

- Is a new competition coming? Will new businesses take away jobs and assets away from your community?
- Is new technology making your products obsolete?
- In what way will the changes threaten the traditional ways of life of the community?
- Are the proposed changes likely to create conflict in the community?
- Will there be new restrictions, under new changes in
- Will it bring adverse environmental impacts?
- Will the changes make you more vulnerable to weather disturbances?

Again, when applying SWOT analysis, be sure to describe the subject (or purpose or question) for the SWOT Analysis clearly so you remain focused on the central issue. This is especially crucial when other people are involved in the process. People must be able to understand properly the purpose of the SWOT assessment and the implications arising.

Step 4: Discuss your options and courses of action

A SWOT analysis can produce issues which very readily translate into certain categories of action. A SWOT analysis can essentially tell you what is good and bad about your organization or community, and about a particular proposition, program, or idea.

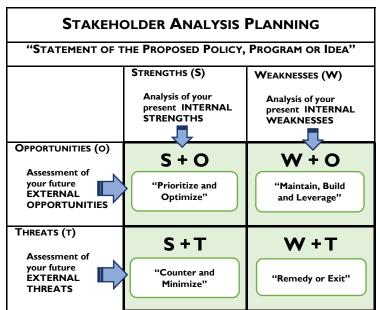


Figure 8. Strategic actions for SWOT

A full and complete SWOT analysis involves making an overlay on the relationship between the different points of analysis in Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. For instance, if your organization is currently engaged in producing organic vegetables (strength), and a new road project is likely to bring in more business and customers (opportunity), then you should strategically focus on ways to improve your business.

However, if your organization does not have the skills to run an enterprise (weakness), perhaps you could conduct trainings in enterprise development in order to take advantage of the new business opportunities that the road project might bring.

The discussion on how to translate SWOT analysis into strategic courses of action will require skilled facilitation and actual practice. The important thing is to keep an objective and open mind, in order to really see and appreciate what your options are, when your community or group is faced with a new proposition, policy, project, or idea.

Summary

Due to its relative simplicity, SWOT analysis is a very accessible tool. It does not require any special materials or equipment, except for the active participation of people and the presence of a skilled facilitator.

The significance of SWOT analysis is that it provides a good way for communities and groups to examine both positive and negative attributes of a proposition, policy, or idea within a single analysis. It enables the group or community to identify internal and external factors that will affect its future performance and actions.

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The views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect those of VOICE, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OXFAM Novib, and Hivos.

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The Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) a regional association of national and regional networks of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Asia actively engaged in promoting food sovereignty, land rights and agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance, and rural development. ANGOC member networks and partners work in 10 Asian countries together with some 3,000 CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). ANGOC actively engages in joint field programs and policy discussions with national governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and international financial institutions (IGOs).

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The formation of Bulduran Para sa Pangangalaga ng Kalikasan ng Pilipinas (BUKLURAN, Inc.) or the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Community Conserved Territories and Areas Consortium (Philippine ICCA Consortium) is a nationwide network of community membershp-based indigenous peoples of organizations (IPCs) of all ethnographic types. It is premised on bringing together indigenous peoples who assert and utilize traditional governance to protect community-conserved areas. Common to its members is the shared view that indigenous peoples' survival depends on the protection of valuable knowledge systems and the ancestral lands on which we thrive and persist. Our community-conserved areas can become the ultimate driving force in the conservation of biodiversity when our rights to our land and resources are respected and recognized.

Our main purpose is to carry out and realize the full recognition and respect for the rights, governance and self-management of our ancestral lands.

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PAFID Philippine Association for Intercultural Development, Inc. (PAFID) is a social development organization which has been assisting Philippine indigenous communities to secure or recover traditional lands and waters since 1967. It forms institutional partnerships with indigenous communities to secure legal ownership over ancestral domains and to shape government policy over indigenous peoples' susues. PAFID works exclusively with the indigenous peoples' sector, specifically upon written or signed requests for assistance from indigenous communities or their representatives. PAFID envisions indigenous communities as responsible stewards of their resources.

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