



Phil. IPs amidst Covid-19 pandemic:

From north to south Indigenous Peoples are battling against discrimination, militarization and worsening human rights situation

Executive Summary:

Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines approximately comprise 15 million of the country's 108 million population. Indigenous peoples are composed of more than 100 groups and are located in 50 of the country's 78 provinces. They inhabit more than five million hectares of ancestral lands of the country's total landmass of 30 million hectares.

Months into the crisis brought about by Covid-19 pandemic, the situation of the Indigenous Peoples, from north to south is slowly coming to light with the reports coming from different indigenous organizations and communities. As the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was declared nationwide, the 15 million Indigenous Peoples (IPs), in the country are facing particularly challenging times and are suffering disproportionately during the country-wide militaristic lockdown and measures enforced by state authorities.

Since most indigenous communities are made up of subsistence farmers, and augment this by selling crops and harvests in the local markets, the unilateral restrictions imposed in public spaces mean that many families are unable to meet their daily nutrition and in many cases resulted to food insecurity and hunger. The Ayta, Dumagat and Lumad among other indigenous people in the country, have already reported severe food shortages and a chronic lack of access to basic goods.

When natural or man-made emergencies occur, IPs and other minority groups are often excluded from humanitarian interventions. The current health crisis is no different. Being in remote and isolated areas, IPs largely remained out of the coverage of emergency reliefs. Public health services and infrastructures including free mass testing are lacking or far from the communities. In areas where Covid-19 cases were detected, such as in Mindoro, Pampanga and Benguet, limited testing and contact tracing were done. This makes the IPs more vulnerable to the spread of Covid-19 disease.

Furthermore, the government have taken unfair advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic to advance militarist policies and related actions that are harmful to the people and to IPs. The Covid-19 crisis is unfairly used to intensify counter-insurgency programs by the fascist National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) and implementation of the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP).

Likewise, government and private business interests have seized the opportunities provided by health crisis situations to further encroach on the lands and territories of IPs. The joint proposal of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). To undertake the 'Plant, Plant, Plant' program is maliciously using the crisis to land grab remaining ancestral lands of the Lumad in Mindanao, while operations of destructive and exploitative projects continue unabatedly amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

These realities on the ground are consequences of the utter of the national government to draw up a prompt and comprehensive plan to manage the health crisis and impact on the socio-economic well-being of the people. The situation of the IPs worsened because there was no comprehensive plan to address the health crisis and the consequent economic crisis and the long standing institutionalized discrimination and disregard for their rights and welfare. The cases reported as part of the State enforcement of restrictive measures created an atmosphere of increased State-sponsored oppression of indigenous communities in this time of covid-19, further eroding IPs' rights to self determination.

During this current health crisis, human rights which includes IPs' collective rights, must not be overlooked, especially when IPs are at a great economic and social disadvantage as a result of longstanding systematic discrimination by State institutions.

Under the so-called 'New Normal' more repressive measures is expected to be enforced by the State. These further threaten the IPs' customary way of living and struggles to defend their land, resources and life. The government's recommendation to continue its 'Build, Build, Build' program as a solution to the country's economic losses caused by the pandemic means the resumption of the operation of many exploitative and destructive projects in indigenous territories such as mining, dams and large-scale mono-crop plantations. Militarization of indigenous communities, implementation of the E-CLIP and further attacks under the lead of the NTF-ELCAC will continue and intensify. All of these are the threats and challenges faced by the IPs in time of the Covid-19 crises.

Key Issues Faced by IPs

Across the country, Indigenous Peoples are not only exposed to the spread of the Covid-19 virus within their territories, but also suffer from: government neglect in terms of humanitarian and medical services, health disparities, abuses due to lockdowns and confinement measures supposedly to prevent the covid-19 virus and the impact of the continued implementation of the fascist E.O. 70, or the National Task force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).

1. Government neglect in terms of delivering services due to the longstanding systematic discrimination by the government and its institutions. Being in remote areas, the IPs are largely remained out of the coverage of relief and other humanitarian help. The Covid-19 pandemic is no different. The State has a responsibility to ensure equal access to public services to all their citizens and free from discrimination.

The restrictions to their movements due to community lockdowns resulted to food insecurity and hunger in many indigenous communities. Since most IPs are subsistence farmers, they were barred from going to their *kaingin* (swidden) farms to gather food. They also supplement their living by selling their crops and harvests in the local markets but the unilateral restrictions imposed in public spaces, and the limited or no transportation to carry their crops to the market denied many families to meet their daily food and nutrition needs. Their vulnerability even got worse when members of their family working in factories, construction sites, service and utility sectors such as tricycle drivers and restaurant workers, lost their jobs and returned home to their communities. This has not only impacted tribe's daily economic lives but also increased the possibility of getting infected from the corona virus.

Economic and cultural way of life affected

The government did not provide adequate assistance for the basic necessities of the IPs during the lockdown who were forced to stay at homes and unable to do their usual economic activity. More so, it was doubly difficult for indigenous communities throughout the country because the months of March, April and May are considered as lean months in their annual economic cycle. This is the period when they have to go to the forests to gather non-timber forest products and food. This is also the time to prepare their *kaingin* in time for the planting season in June. In Nueva Ecija, in mid-March, a group of Igorot doing their customary *bayanihan* (community cooperation), to prepare their *kaingin* were locked down in another barangay in Laur, without food provisions.

While an Ayta community in Mayantoc, Tarlac were deprived of their extra source of livelihood. The community's charcoal pit was disallowed and destroyed by staff of Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). 'Charcoal-making' which is usually a family-based traditional economic activity to augment family income. The community explained that their small-scale charcoal production was only provisional for the duration of the quarantine since they have not received food aid from the government. The DENR also destroyed the improvised water well, the community's source of water that is vital for drinking and maintaining preventive sanitation.



Community's charcoal pit and water system destroyed by the DENR personnel, depriving the Aytas of their source of income and their right to water and sanitation

Dumagat's *talikod-mundo*, a makeshift shack for shelter constructed along the seaside or riversides for fishing.



For Dumagat people, the months of March and April is culturally the time where they temporarily transfer and live in their *talikod-mundo*, a makeshift shack for shelter constructed along the seaside or riversides for fishing. During this period, most villagers rely on catching small fishes and gathering *sihi* (seashell) for food. In Barangay Magsikap, General Nakar, Quezon a group of Dumagat were heavily affected by the lockdown when they were stranded in their temporary seaside communities and their rice supply and food ran out. Dumagat communities faced a similar plight in Barangay Lubayat, Real, Quezon.

Food insecurity and hunger

Long before the Covid-19 pandemic, IPs already suffer from government neglect in terms of social and economic services. Three months under the pandemic, being in remote and isolated areas, IPs largely remained out of the coverage of emergency reliefs. In many cases reported relief aid is inadequate that resulted to food insecurity and hunger in many indigenous communities. The militaristic response to Covid-19 further exacerbated the plight of the IPs as the lockdown was akin to hamleting of entire indigenous communities. The Dumagat, Ayta and Lumad among other IPs in the country, have already reported severe food shortages and a chronic lack of access to basic goods due to confinement measures of the Covid-19 crisis.



Eldery Dumagat woman during the Lingkod Katribu relief mission in Tanay, Rizal (Photo-Lingkod Katribu)

In the Sierra Madre region, restrictions on peoples mobility were reported. In the Remontado village of Sitio Nayon, Cayabu, in Barangay Sta. Ines, Tanay, Rizal and the adjacent Sitio Tala in Mamuyao village, Quezon province, villagers were barred by the state security forces from going to forest areas to gather *ubag* (wild root crop) and wild honey. Harvested fruits from their backyard gardens like star apples, guavas, papayas, bananas and santol was left to rot because they cannot leave their community and sell the fruits in the market.

Meanwhile, in Sitio Paglitao, Antipolo, Rizal, life became harder than usual. Because of the lockdown they were not allowed to plant, harvest or sell their crops from their farmlots. Many of them now only eat once a day as they could no longer go to their farmlots. According to Leticia Doroteo, 50 years old, when they get more or less two kilos of rice they add *camote* (sweet potatoes) when they cook rice to extend their rice supply for days. Sitio Paglitao nests on top of a mountain located at the tri-boundary of Rizal, Quezon and Bulacan provinces.

To reach the barangay center in Calawis, the Dumagats have to ride a horse and cross two rivers from the mountainous part of Antipolo. It took Doroteo around 3 hours on a horse ride and walking to get the little meager government support. The elderly and persons with disabilities (PWDs) also had to travel several hours. Such was the case of Rosendo Lopez, 73-year old. Lopez had to walk long hours with his grandson because he is visually impaired and has difficulty in walking.

Anxiety looms over our Ayta brethren in Pampanga province, as they face the risk of being exposed to Covid-19 when three Ayta communities in Floridablanca town is placed under ECQ, after 2 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were documented. At the same time, their movement is restricted due to lockdown as going to hill farms to gather root crops and *mamuso* (gather wild banana blossom) became more difficult.

The Ayta Abelling (Ayta sub-tribe) in Mayantoc, Tarlac were also stopped from doing 'charcoal-making' which is usually a family-based economic activity to augment family income. Since the Ayta were confined to their community, they thought doing charcoal-making will help earn and help them overcome hunger during the lockdown. The affected 27 Ayta families in the village lamented "*mamamatay kami sa gutom, hindi sa Covid-19*" (we will die of hunger, not with Covid-19).



Displaced Lumad children from Lumad Bakwit School in UP Diliman face new challenges due to the coronavirus outbreak. (Photos from Save Our Schools Network)

Discrimination against displaced Lumad and workers

For the 100 displaced Lumad children and teachers of the Bakwit School/Save Our Schools in University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman, Quezon City, their major concern is how to source food during the lockdown and replenish their limited resources. The suspension of public transportation and the restriction of travel of private vehicles have made it difficult for usual donors of Bakwit School to reach out and help. They also had difficulty in buying groceries needed for a hundred people because the Department of Trade and Industry imposed a limit on the purchase of selected grocery items to avoid hoarding during the lockdown. The Lumad Bakwit School also faced the need to ensure the health and well-being of all teachers and students as they shared one living space.

The UMA, a union of agricultural workers reported the situation of at least 10 T'boli Lumad from South Cotabato who were employed as contractual workers in different areas in Luzon. At the start of lockdown, they lost their jobs and experienced government discrimination in the delivery of emergency aid.

In Barangay Pinagsama, Taguig City, Jelyn Tunggay Dala (29 years old), Noimi Timil (20 years old), Brenda Agao (29 years old), Jojie Quileta Balaba, Orly Balaba Oclarit, Kenneth Gamus Formentera lost their employments in a Korean restaurant in Taguig. Now two months without income, all six who stayed in one boarding house were asked to leave the place because they have not paid the two months boarding house fee. Because they are not officially registered residents of the Barangay, they were excluded from receiving relief goods and were not included as beneficiaries of Social Amelioration Program of the DSWD.

Jenerose Dugang (25 years old) and Richard Hubahib (26 years old) who worked in a restaurant in Barangay Maluwid, Victoria, Tarlac, had to assert their rights to receive food relief. In April, they were given food aid just enough for a month.

Cousins Rasty Ming, 37 years old, worked at an electronics shop in Naic, Cavite and Dominador Ming, 34 years old, who worked as security guard in Binang, Laguna, both lost their jobs and are trying to cope with the hardships due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

SAP, causing more distress

To address the emergency situation, the government implemented the Social Amelioration Package (SAP) as part of its response in the backdrop of Covid-19 crisis and lockdown. According to the Joint Memorandum on the SAP, the aim of government is to "mitigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 health crisis and the Enhanced Community Quarantine guidelines." Several government agencies were tasked to implement the SAP, with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at the head. The SAP targeted to support 18 million Filipinos as most affected by COVID-19 crisis including IPs. The target beneficiaries of SAP are to receive cash and in-kind assistance amounting to P5,000-8,000 per month for two months. The SAP will not be on top of other existing social programs. So for instance, what the beneficiaries received from the DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), will form part of the P5,000-8,000, that will be augmented through other programs under the SAP.

However, the vague, general, and fragmented information provided by the government on who can avail of the SAP assistance caused confusion and distress among citizens including the IPs. The confusion arose from unclear guidelines regarding: the quota system for beneficiaries, technicalities on membership to other programs like 4Ps and other requirements such as proof of identity as indigenous person, certification of indigency and lack of identification cards. A bigger concern was whether information about the SAP reached the isolated communities of indigenous peoples.

As an example - in Antipolo, the DSWD identified 407 family beneficiaries in Barangay Calawis, that is home to around 365 families, but of there were only around 200 families covered under the Social Amelioration Program. Of this figure, a few Dumagats are members of the 4Ps program and others are beneficiaries of the modified cash transfer, or the long-standing conditional cash transfer (CCT) program of DSWD. The unclear information on SAP mechanics caused confusion among the Dumagats who expected to receive cash subsidy from the government. And for some beneficiaries of SAP, the delay and slow processing of cash aid due to technicalities such as incorrect information that beneficiaries wrote down in their forms caused more distress.

Availing of SAP relief also involved hours of walking for IPs coming from far communities, and long waiting in congested areas under the heat of the sun. But still, many IPs are not being counted as eligible for cash or even for relief assistance. In addition, the SAP discriminated and excluded the displaced indigenous peoples in evacuation centers such as in the case of Lumad in Davao City and other areas in Mindanao. Their status as *bakwits* (internally displaced persons) was used to prevent them from receiving government support. At the same time the T'boli who are not officially registered residents of the respective Barangay where they live were excluded from receiving relief aids and SAP relief aid from the DSWD.

2. Health disparities during national health emergency

endanger the well-being of indigenous communities and become more susceptible to infectious diseases. The IPs face enormous threats from the Covid-19 disease as they have comparatively poor access to national health care systems, lack of access to adequate medical and health services or infrastructures in their communities, poor sanitary conditions in far-flung territories, and lack access to food, basic nutrition and clean water. Being in remote and isolated areas there is also the greater lack or limited access to information on the virus and how to prevent the disease. Indigenous women, youth and elderly are more likely to experience health impacts and distress during this emergency health crisis.

During this national health emergency, the long standing discrimination and disregard to indigenous peoples were again highlighted with regard to the health response on Covid-19. In areas where Covid-19 clients were detected like in Mindoro, Pampanga and Benguet, limited testing and contact tracing were done. Instead of giving priority to the health situation of these communities, the militarist lockdown was implemented as solution to the spread of the corona virus. Clearly the Duterte government, after imposing a more than two month lockdown has not made a comprehensive national health plan more so an appropriate program for indigenous peoples on how to address this health crisis that is worsened by government's historical discrimination and neglect.



Due to government's historical discrimination and neglect there has no appropriate program for IPs on how to address this health crisis

Media reported symptomatic cases of a Mangyan child in Mindoro, two Ayta in Pampanga and at least one OFW (Overseas Filipino Worker) in Benguet who just returned home to the country. While there are no confirmed Covid-19 cases in other indigenous communities, a concrete plan and measures must be taken by the government to ensure and contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus. According to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) statement, indigenous groups expressed that they continue to experience discrimination in accessing healthcare services. Most of the clinics and hospitals are also far from their communities.

But as long as indigenous territories are subject to increased encroachment by destructive projects of multinational companies that cause water pollution, land degradation, destruction of environment and biodiversity, and the emigration of lowland settlers, the IPs faced an increased risk of being infected by the Covid-19 disease. In areas where there are mining operations, dam constructions and large-scale commercial plantations, displacement and problems of food and water insecurity are sighted as the leading social determinants of health disparities. Adding up to IPs' threat and risk from the Covid-19 disease is the continued militarization in various forms that include actual military operations, encampment or military basing in indigenous communities and routine military patrolling in IP territories.

3) Abuses as the government have taken unfair advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic

to advance policies and related actions that are harmful to the people and to indigenous peoples. The systematic and government-sponsored militarist lockdown and heightened counter-insurgency campaign during the Covid-19 pandemic is a telltale sign of Duterte's de facto martial law in the country. Likewise, the government have seized the opportunities provided by health crisis situations to propose anti-people economic policies and programs.

Lockdown, Bayanihan Act and 'shoot to kill order'

The military lockdown that started on March 16, is the largest population control measure in the country's history and the longest lockdown ever imposed worldwide to contain the pandemic. The Philippines is ranked as having among the militarist and authoritarian responses to Covid-19 crisis, with 177,540 accosted for "quarantine violations" including 52,535 detained as of May 21, 2020. The United Nations has raised concern over the Philippines' "highly militarized" response to contain the corona virus.

Immediately after declaring the lockdown on March 16, on 24 March 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte signed into law Republic Act No. 11469, otherwise known as the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act (**Bayanihan Act**), which authorizes the President to exercise certain powers, for a limited time and subject to certain conditions, to implement the policies pursuant to the declaration of a state of national emergency over the entire Philippines due to the Corona virus 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. The President also issued Republic Act No 11332, as guidelines of the ongoing Enhanced Community Quarantine, which is used for those violating the law. The Bayanihan Act also contained provisions that facilitated further violations of civil, political and socio-economic rights of the people.

Opting for a militarist approach to the pandemic, President Rodrigo Duterte publicly announced a "shoot to kill" order for cops and soldiers to shoot dead the 'troublemakers' amid the lockdown. This is the President's reaction to the protest of some residents in Quezon City who were merely asking for food assistance. The "shoot to kill" order is a vague policy that allows law enforcers to commit mass murder against civilians. Even labels like "communist", "organizer", "unnecessarily organize the masses" are subject to different interpretations. It allows the police and military to just shoot and kill anybody that they judge to be "communist".

Immediately as a response to Duterte's order, in April 2, 2020, Director Police Brigadier General R'win Pagkalina- wan of the Cordillera region issued an order to police snipers to shoot "communist organizers who "unnecessarily organize the masses at this time", putting the lives of the Cordilleran especially activists and humanitarian workers in danger.

'Shoot to kill order' of Director Police Brigadier General R'win Pagkalina- wan of the Cordillera region



NTF-ELCAC and E-CLIP counter-insurgency programs

During the period of the lockdown, there was no let up in the further implementation of Executive Order (EO) No. 70 that institutionalized the Whole Of Nation approach and created the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The EO 70 is a dangerous policy because it targets legitimate people's organizations and activists. Government agencies and local government officials are used in implementing this policy. EO 70 allows the further militarization of communities and to silence legal dissent of activists including land rights and indigenous human rights defenders. In May 30, two days before the lifting of the ECQ (and transitioning to the GCQ on June 1, 2020), the government and the NTF-ELCAC released a more comprehensive document on implementation of its program under the 'New Normal'. The succeeding section on human rights violations below exemplify the fascist attacks borne out of EO 70 and implemented NTF-ELCAC.

Along with EO 70 and the NTF-ELCAC, the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) was fully activated and implemented in various regions including Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon and in Mindanao. President Duterte himself, openly encourage the commission of war crimes by offering up to Php2 million bounty for every suspected New People's Army (NPA) leader reported or killed. In Northern Luzon, Governor Mamba of Cagayan Valley gave full support to President Duterte's P2 Million reward. Barangay officials were either threatened or bribed to report to the PNP and the AFP, members of peoples organizations entering their barangays. Photos of barangay visitors were discreetly taken and submitted as "report".

The promise of bounty pushed Local Government Units (LGUs) and the armed forces to weaponized food emergency aids to stage mass surrenders of "alleged NPA members" like in the case of the Dumagat in Umiray in Central Luzon.

Anti-people laws and programs

Meanwhile, like a thief in the night, lawmakers at the House of Representatives (HOR) have worked overtime on May 29, 2020 to fast track the approval of the [Anti-Terrorism Bill](#). The bill will criminalize even legitimate exercises of free speech, freedom of expression, the right of peaceful assembly, and freedom of association which will most likely escalate further the violations to civil, political and socio-economic rights of Filipinos especially against suspected communists terrorist groups or CTGs and individuals targeted by the government.

As a solution to economic loss due to the pandemic, the government is pushing for a stimulus package that gives priority support for big corporate business through the various bills being deliberated in Congress. One such bill, Senate Bill No. 1474 provides Php400 billion in loans; and Php 650 billion for an enhanced infrastructure spending through its Build, Build, Build program. Among the priority projects in ancestral territories are the Kaliwa Dam and the New Clark City. The government is set to look and push more projects eyeing IPs' ancestral lands to boost its 'Build, Build, Build' program.

The government also seized the opportunities provided by health crisis situations to propose anti-people economic policies and programs. The joint proposal of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). To undertake the 'Plant, Plant, Plant' program is maliciously using the crisis to land grab remaining ancestral lands of the Lumad in Mindanao.

4. Worsening human rights situation

From North to South, as though militarist approach to address the Covid-19 crisis was not harsh enough, Indigenous Peoples (IPs) faced discrimination and escalated militarization with implementation of counter-insurgency program led by the ELCAC and the armed forces and E-CLIP that resulted to human rights violations and attacks directed at IPs fighting for their democratic rights and collective rights. These human rights violation and attacks have become more brutal occurring at a time when the IPs and human rights defenders actions are severely constrained by the lockdown.

Generally, the lockdown and ECQ measures trampled the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples – clearly disregarded their economic, social and cultural rights – and grossly violated their civil and political rights.

Arbitrary arrests and detention of indigenous leaders, members of indigenous organizations and communities even easier due to the militarized situation.

Dispersal of anti-mining protesters that led to arrest of Rolando Pulido



On April 6, 2020, around 100 policemen in full battle gear violently dispersed the barricade set-up by Tuwali-fugao in Barangay Didipio, Nueva Vizcaya to stop the continued operation of OceanaGold mining. The incident led to the arrest of Rolando Pulido, chairperson of indigenous organization DESAMA. Mr. Pulido was charged with violation of RA 11332 or the guidelines of the Enhanced Community Quarantine and, resistance and disobedience to a person in authority also under RA 11332. At least three women indigenous barricaders were injured in the violent dispersal by the PNP.

Manobo Gloria Tomalon, a staunch anti-mining advocate was arrested by the PNP



In Caraga region, Manobo Gloria Tomalon, a staunch anti-mining advocate was arrested on March 19 by the Philippine National Police (PNP) on charges of serious illegal detention and kidnapping. Another Manobo, Eric Enriquez, a resident of Km. 16 was arrested by PNP-Lianga personnel in the morning of May 19. The incident happened when 40 military and PNP troops in full battle gear arrived in the Lumad communities in Km. 16 and Han-ayan in Barangay Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur. The troops were looking for leaders of the Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod (MAPASU), a Lumad organization in the area.

Meanwhile in Bukidnon in Northern Mindanao, about a hundred Lumad and peasants were arrested by elements of the 88th IB PA on May 18 after a military operation and rounding up of residents of Sitio Balaas and Sitio Airburn in Barangay Mabuhay, and Sitio Nabangkal, Barangay Magkalungay in San Fernando, Bukidnon. The arrested Lumad and peasants are now detained at the 88th IB headquarters in Maramag, Bukidnon. All were accused of being members of the New Peoples Army (NPA).

Forced and fake surrenders of ‘alleged NPA members’ were reported as the intensified implementation of the E-CLIP resur-faced in various regions.

In Brgy. Umiray, Dingalan, Aurora on April 15, the 91st Infantry “Sinagtala” Battalion announced the alleged “surrender” of 26 indigenous peoples from the Dumagat tribe during an activity intended for the distribution of emergency relief packs. Under the ECQ, indigenous communities were prohibited to go to their farms in the mountains, and are thus starving. The 91st IB took advantage of the ECQ and the beleaguered Dumagat community and weaponized emergency relief mission intended for food aid as part of their counter-insurgency measures. This is not the first time such deception was perpetrated by the AFP. According to the Philippine News Agency, the ceremony was even attended by Dingalan Mayor Shierwin Taay and Barangay Chair Juanito R. Borreo, both in charge of aid distribution as part of the state’s Covid-19 response.



State armed personnel took advantage of the ECQ and the beleaguered Dumagat community and weaponized emergency relief mission intended for food aid as part of their counter-insurgency measures

In Mindanao, on March 15 two members of the Lumad organization Tinananon Kulamanon Lumadnong Panaghiusa (TIKULPA) in North Cotabato, were branded as ‘rebel surrenders’ after they forcibly video recorded and photographed by military men posing as DSWD officials. Also in North Cotabato, on March 29, four family members of a former Salugpongan teacher was forcibly taken by local paramilitary group Bagani Forces. On April 1, seventeen Manobos from Sitio Nasilaban, Barangay Palma Gil, Talaingod, Davao del Norte, became victims of forced and fake surrenders after soldiers encamped in the community. Later, on April 18, another nine Manobos from Sitio Laslasakan were brought to Barangay Palma Gil and labeled as ‘rebel surrenders’.

Airstrikes and bombings as military combat operations continue in Mindanao even under ongoing Covid-19 quarantine.

On May 12, around 3:00 in the morning, in Barangay Diatagon, Surigao del Sur, two fighter planes were seen flying around the Manobo ancestral territories. One of the plane dropped four bombs in the area. At the same time, military ground troops fired their cannon five times in the same direction. Residents are still finding ways to look into the extent of damages caused by the bombing and indiscriminate firing.

Earlier on May 5, there were reports of army choppers bombing a forest cover in Sitio Balukangon, Brgy. Pange, Siayan, Zamboanga del Sur. A large area of Subanen ancestral land was burned affecting their means of livelihood and survival during the covid-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, on May 14, more than 700 residents were forced to evacuate their homes in Barangay Sinanglanan in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, due to intensified military operations, which includes airstrikes. It was also reported that prior to the pandemic, a military airstrikes in Sitio Gabunan, Barangay Dumalaguing, Impasug-ong, also in Bukidnon happened last February 18 with some netizens uploading videos of the airstrikes.

Red-tagging vilification and harassment of activists, organizations and indigenous communities, led by the NTF-ELCAC systematically continue with full funding support from the Central government. The Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), called out the government on the renewed red-tagging of its members especially of Windel Bolinget, CPA Chairperson who have been experiencing series of red-tagging, political vilification, cursing him dead, and threats posted on Facebook and other social media platforms by the Philippine National Police Regional Office of the Cordillera Region, different battalions and units under the 5th and 7th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and other accounts believe to be created by the military, police and local LGUs. CPA Secretary General Bestang Sarah Dekdeken is also vilified on social media.

The systematic online-delivered threats escalated after Bolinget’s criticizing the armed forces of the phils. (AFP) last April 12 for deploying two helicopters dropping propaganda leaflets in Sagada mountain province communities where they conducted donation drives. The threat was extended to their family members. Bolinget youngest child, a minor was not spared from the wave of alarming attacks as his fb account was taken down after being reported. Meanwhile the family of Santos Mero, CPA vice-chairperson for internal affairs, was subjected to threats when FB user commented that they will maul and stab his nieces and nephews

Sample poster: Systematic online-delivered threats and harassment on CPA leaders and family members. (Photo from CPA fb page)



Indigenous organization Punganay, its regional coordinator and organizers were systematically vilified and red-tagged by public officials and the military. On May 13, in a meeting called by Barangay Officials of San Mariano, Lal-lo, Cagayan province, the Punganay, its regional coordinator Marifel Macalandia and staffs were openly accused as part of the New Peoples Army (NPA). Following the incident, on May 16, 2020, Punganay’s staff were not allowed to enter the village proper of Mammit village for relief aid mission for the indigenous residents of the village. They were directed instead to hand over their assistance at the checkpoint manned by elements of the PNP and AFP. Then on May 21, flyers with names and photos of organizers from Punganay and other sectoral organizations in the region were found scattered outside of Punganay’s office. Rolls of flyers were also thrown inside the compound where the office is located. Written in the flyers are statements claiming they are leaders and recruiters of the CPP-NPA in Region II and are terrorists. The same kind of flyers were also scattered in 3 other barangays in the municipality of Baggao, in Cagayan province.

Residents of Dumagat villages in Sto Nino, Cayabu, and Sta. Inez, Tanay, Rizal received a letter from 80th IB Philippine Army and the ELCAC for a mass meeting on May 29. Attached to the letter was a list of the names of members of indigenous organizations who are alleged members and supporters of NPA. According to the Dumagat Sierra Madre (DSM-Rizal), during the meeting held in Barangay Sto Nino which took for almost a whole day, they were repeatedly asked if they are members and supporters of NPA.

In Sto Nino, Bamban, Tarlac, on April 18, Ayta tribal chieftains were obviously discriminated by Barangay officials who unusually asked them to wear their loin cloth during a meeting held at the Barangay covered court. The meeting was to inform them about the ECQ implementation and measures to control spread of Corona virus in Central Luzon. However, the Barangay officials also took the opportunity to malign Peoples' organizations providing services during the pandemic. They were also told not to engage and be deceived by such organizations which the barangay officials "alleged" as CPP-NPA-NDF terrorists.



Discrimination: Barangay officials who unusually asked the Aytas to wear their loin cloth during a briefing on ECQ (Photo from fb page of PNP region III)

The government is spending huge sum of money just to spread leaflets warning the people not to receive relief goods and donations from groups that they alleged to be members of the CPP-NPA. Similar to the incident in Sagada, on May 8, two military helicopters were seen flying above Ayta communities in San Felipe in Zambales, airdropping flyers that contain malicious defamation and red-tagging of individuals, legally providing emergency relief assistance to various sectors and communities in Central Luzon. In Surigao del Sur, on May 16, a military chopper was also sighted to airdropping fliers around the community and at the vicinity of the ALCADDEV school. The fliers contain "magbalik loob na sa gubyerno para di kayo mahawa sa Covid-19", (return back to the government so that you will not acquire Covid-19).



Military helicopters airdropping propaganda materials in Sagada, Mt. Province. (Photo- Cordillera Peoples Alliance)

Indigenous women were not spared from the attacks.

The Bai indigenous women network (BAI), reported that in Cagayan Valley members of the Mammit Women's Association, in San Mariano, Lal-lo, Cagayan Valley were intimidated and threatened by Barangay Officers. On May 13, two Kalinga women that included Virginia Eddamag, president of the Mammit Women's Association and three other Agta-Aggay women of Golden Valley village in San Mariano, Lal-lo municipality were summoned to the Barangay Hall. The Officials were angered by Punganay's facebook posts of the Agta-Aggays telling their situation during the lockdown and asking for assistance. The barangay captain claimed that the posts are offensive to the officials of Barangay San Mariano and to the whole of Lal-lo municipality because they are portrayed as not providing relief to their residents. The Officer also threatened the women if they continue to work with the organization Punganay. He also threatened to petition for the Kalingas to be forced out from the village as they are just migrants of the place.

Furthermore, on May 19, 2020, an infographic poster came out on facebook, showing the Agtas who claimed that were harassed by the NPA and that Punganay is manipulated them in order to get donations for the NPAs. The military edited and altered the original poster of Punganay and used this to discredit the organization and vilify its leaders and staff.

A woman Igorot leader of the Timpuyog Katutubo, a provincial organization of Igorot, Dumagat, Ayta and Bugkalot indigenous groups in Nueva Ecija, was held for three hours and questioned at the checkpoint in Barangay Pinaltukan, Palawan City. The Igorot woman, who is also a member of BAI's council of indigenous women leaders, accompanied by some members of the community intended to bring food provisions to 10 people who were stranded in their swidden farms (kaingin) due to lockdown in the nearby Sitio Minalkot, in Laur town. According to the woman leader, even with a travel pass issued by their Barangay Captain, they were still held by the military from the checkpoint. However, after 3 hours of negotiation and explaining their purpose the military allowed them to pass the checkpoint.

In Zambales, six personnel of the 24th IB and another six from the PNP SAF, went to harass and intimidate Lolita Legaspi, an Ayta woman leader of the Kaganawan Ayta Zambales (KAZ). The military and the police were looking for and showed a photo of an alleged NPA leader. The photo was the child of Legaspi. The family told the military and the police that their child was working and is not a member of the NPA.

Series of attacks on Lumad schools were reported to continue amidst Covid-19. The NTF-ELCAC is responsible for the series of human rights violations. As part of its Whole of Nation approach, it is very ironic that government agencies like the DSWD and local government officials who are supposed to provide relief and support to the Lumad on how to combat Covid-19 are used in implementing the ELCAC.

Very alarming is the systematic attack on the Community Technological College in Southern Mindanao (CTCSM). Prior to the pandemic the CTCSM has been seriously attacked and even escalated as the covid-19 was used to plot the shut-down of the school. On May 21, 2020 the Department of Education Region XI issued the closure order of CTCSM. Initially gathered information and events that led to the DepEd's closure order are listed: On March 15, parents, students, and former students of CTCSM were rounded up by soldiers from the 71st Infantry Battalion. At least three students and two parents were forced to record videos, claiming teachers taught them how to handle firearms and other lies. The videos were later posted on social media. Then on March 31, three soldiers in full battle gear also from the 71st Infantry Battalion entered the school's farm without permission. And on May 16, a team of armed military, police, members of paramilitary group and representatives of the provincial government, forcefully entered and rummaged the dorms of the CTCSM school. The 35 students and teachers were forced to leave the campus and brought to Maco engineering office at municipal compound to be 'mass-tested', despite having zero reported cases in the school.



Attack on the Community Technological College in Southern Mindanao (CTCSM), escalated as the covid-19 was used to plot the shut-down of the school. (Photo from SOS Network)

The Save Our Schools Network also reported series of **threat, harassment and intimidation** attacks on Lumad schools in the provinces of North Cotabato, Davao del Norte and Surigao del Sur, which are hosts to Lumad schools. These provinces also host the last remaining forests in Mindanao being eyed by the government for gold, copper and nickel exploitation by multinational companies and corporations. Government economic planners also see these areas potential for large-scale mono-crop plantations for profit.

On May 6, Riza (not her real name) a 15 years old Lumad student, after being fetched by her parents and representatives of DSWD, her picture posted in FB page of the "Smashers" Battalion of the 39th IB PA that claimed Riza as a "child at risk" and was rescued by the 39th IB together with the DSWD and the Police. It was later learned, the 39th Infantry Battalion posted her picture on Facebook without her knowledge. However, contrary to the military claim of a 'supposed rescue', Riza was actually formally turned over by MISFI teachers to her parents with the presence of the DSWD on May 6. There was no presence of soldiers and policemen. The process of turnover was photo documented by MISFI Academy.

On May 10, in Barangay Caridad, Tulunan, North Cotabato, three individuals who presented themselves as part of the 39th IB's NTF-ELCAC together with Barangay Officials rounded up ten Lumad students of MISFI Academy. A certain Bryan who introduced himself as member of NTF-ELCAC told the students that he had a list of their names and addresses. The 10 children endured 2 hours of interrogation and a 'test' on Philippine history inside the Barangay Day Care Center. They were warned they might be invited again with other students after photos and videos of them were taken.



NTF-ELCAC team during the May 10 rounding up of MISFI academy students (Photo-SOS Network)

On May 10, 2020, three individuals claiming to be part of NTF-ELCAC along with barangay officials rounded-up ten (10) lumad students of MISFI academy. The said individuals interrogated, threatened and took photos and videos of the said students (mostly minor) inside a daycare center in Barangay Caridad, Tulunan, North Cotabato.

On May 19, around 40 military and PNP troops in full battle gear, arrived in the Lumad communities of Km. 16 and Han-ayan in Brgy. Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur. Several proceeded to enter the school grounds of the Han-ayan Learning Center run by the Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao del Sur (TRIFPSS) and the Alternative Learning Center for Agriculture and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV) and took pictures and videos. A number of soldiers positioned themselves in the waiting shed located at the entrance of the Lumad school.



Miliarization continues in Diatagon, Surigao del Sur (Photo-SOS Network)

Vilification and harassment of humanitarian efforts to fill the government's negligence in providing support to remote indigenous communities were also monitored.

The 'Serve the Peoples Brigade', organized by Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), is unjustly red-tagged and vilified. Since March 20, the CPA has been doing its share by distributing food relief, sanitation kits, vitamins and personal protective equipment as it has been doing over the past decades during times of disasters and emergency situations. Following this incident, numerous Facebook accounts and pages attacked the Cordillera Peoples Alliance and its leaders by threatening, harassing, and tagging them as terrorists, communists and supporters of the New People's Army.



The 'Serve the Peoples Brigade', organized by Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), is unjustly red-tagged and vilified. (Photo-CPA)

Similar to the red-tagging of Punganay's humanitarian efforts, the Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center, Inc. (CWEARC) who is one of the responders for humanitarian relief to communities affected by the government's enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) was also red tagged by the PNP through its Facebook pages "Pnp Rmfb Wolverines" and "Kapulisan ng Kalinga". On March 31, 2020, both pages posted a publication material red tagging CWEARC. Also the PNP reportedly grabbed CWEARC's #TieARedRibbon poster and accused the campaign as a deceptive strategy of organizations affiliated with terrorist groups to ask for donations that they claim will not reach the frontliners.



Lingkod Katribu Covid-19 Response in a Dumagat community in Tanay, Rizal (Photo- Lingkod Katribu)

And on May 22, the 10-man team of Lingkod Katribu Covid-19 response were held for almost 3 hours at a military checkpoint manned by elements from the 80th IB PA in Tanay, Rizal despite permits granted by the Tanay municipality for Lingkod Katribu's relief mission for the Dumagat victims of Covid-19 lockdown. The military officer took the team leader for a ride in a motorbike supposedly to look for cellular signal so that they can verify the permits. The military officer claimed it was not coordinated with them. The Officer brought the Lingkod Katribu's team leader to a place near the military detachment far from the community and visibility of the team.

Key Challenges

Months into the national health crisis brought about by Covid-19, the real situation in the country is slowly coming to light. Up to now, the Duterte government has not crafted a comprehensive plan to effectively address and manage the national health crisis. Instead, it continues to pursue its militarist solution to the problem that caused more distress and rights abuses to the Filipino people.

Indigenous Peoples are faced with challenging times in this national health crisis. Government efforts to for economic relief and aid are very limited and inadequate. The IPs' situation is worst due to the longstanding institutionalized discrimination and historical neglect in terms of social and economic services from the government and its institutions. A comprehensive health and economic plan especially relevant and appropriate for the IP remains to be a big challenge.

On government measures to combat the Corona-19 crisis

Because IPs are disproportionately vulnerable to the pandemic, the government must have a clear and comprehensive plan for the Filipino people and one that is applicable to support the IPs in dealing with Covid-19 problem. It has the responsibility to ensure IPs have equal access to public health services, including access to medical infrastructures and mass testing free from discrimination. Adequate information on how to prevent the spread of the corona virus must be provided to the communities instead of the militarist solution that the government is currently employing.

IPs are at a great economic disadvantage because of the systematic marginalization and discrimination by the government. The current health crisis and the government's inadequacy in providing economic relief have further pushed the IPs into the margins. Being in isolated and remote areas, many IPs have been neglected in terms of food relief distribution. Reported relief aid is inadequate and very limited and has resulted to food insecurity and hunger in many IP communities in the country. The government still has no concrete plan on how to bridge the gap to address economic impact of the crisis especially for the IPs.

On government plan to solve the economic impact caused by the crisis

The joint proposal of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to convert portions of ancestral territories in Lumad areas in Mindanao for commercial agriculture under the 'Plant, Plant, Plant' program will not solve the problem. It will only lead to further land grabbing of ancestral lands. The two agencies are maliciously conniving to push President Duterte's economic plan during this time of crisis when people are under imposed militarist quarantine measures. It is important to note, this is President Duterte's economic plan since he assumed office in 2016.

To address the economic impact of the crisis, the government proposed to continue and prioritize its 'Build, Build, Build' program despite the ongoing health crisis. According to government's economic planners, projects under the 'Build, Build, Build' program is the key to recover economic losses caused by the crisis. The government is set to maintain its flagship projects and even push more projects to boost its 'Build, Build, Build' program.

Among the priority projects in ancestral territories are the Kaliwa Dam inside Dumagat territories in the Sierra Madre and the New Clark City in Ayta ancestral lands in Tarlac and Pampanga provinces. Pursuing these projects will not only trample on the Dumagat and Ayta's rights to ancestral lands and self determination but will also have a great impact on their economic life and livelihood. This will also increase their vulnerability risk to Covid-19 virus.

The government is also set to implement various scheme of community quarantine measures under the governments 'New Normal' life to accommodate request of big business sectors to operate in the middle of the crisis. This will include operations of exploitative projects in ancestral territories such as mining, dams, large-scale mono-crop plantations and others. These adds to the threats and challenges faced by IPs and will contribute to the further marginalization and greater health risk especially in times of Covid-19 crises.

On Peoples rights and human rights

Human rights and IP's collective rights must not be overlooked particularly during current health crisis. The government must consult IP leaders and community members in good faith regarding any interventions and decisions that impact their communities and lives. This is precisely why the right to consultation and the right to participation are the two fundamental pillars of international standards for the rights of IPs as highlighted by the UNDRIP. Governments are held to international law regarding any intervention and decision-making that may impact indigenous territories. The necessity of genuine dialogue does not change with the current crisis.

Challenge for IP organizations and communities

Under the 'New Normal' life, we expect a more fascist Duterte regime. The government will enforce more militarist measures and repressive actions to suppress the people calling for a comprehensive plan to address people's health and well-being amid the Covid-19 pandemic, for their democratic rights to be respected, and for IP collective rights for ancestral land and self-determination to be upheld.

Just recently, a more undemocratic and brutal Anti-Terrorism Bill was given priority, railroaded and approved by the Philippine Congress. This has evoked broad reaction and mass actions from various sectors in the country. The new law if signed by President Duterte will only legalize the martial rule, repression, impunity and against legitimate dissent. Attacks targeting indigenous peoples, communities and human rights defenders will escalate

As IP organizations and communities, we are constrained to go out and do our normal work of public advocacy, mass campaigns and mobilizations because of the quarantine and lockdown. But we cannot just lock our doors to and quarantine our collective and human rights. Amidst the covid-19 crisis, IPs should persevere in their struggle to defend their rights to land, life and resources.

The key challenge is to explore other ways and means to continue our advocacy while working at home or in communities. To make our campaigns as effective before the crisis we must:

- Maximize the spirit of 'social solidarity of the people' especially during this pandemic crisis affecting the whole world. Our primary task is to unite and be in solidarity with the struggles of other people, organizations and communities for their rights and welfare. In this way IP voices are amplified in the local, national and international arenas, and ensure public awareness and support to our issues and concerns.
- Persevere in monitoring and documenting cases of human rights violations. This work is very important because information is the core of our public advocacy.
- Efficiently and effectively use social media and other online platforms. However, our actions should go beyond posting and reposting on Face Book and twitter. The key is to undertake a systematic and well planned social media campaign to project our calls and demands.
- Embark on high profile lobbying. Well documented cases and reports can be submitted to national human rights bodies such as the Commission on Human Rights, Philippine Congress' Committees on Human Rights and Indigenous and Cultural Communities, and to international bodies such as the United Nations. We can also disseminate these information to the media' social media platforms and the general public.

Conclusions

As the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was declared nationwide, the 15 million Indigenous Peoples (IPs), in the country face particularly challenging times and suffered disproportionately during the country-wide militarist lockdown and measures enforced by the Duterte government.

Up to now, the Duterte government has not formulated a comprehensive plan to effectively address the national health crisis and more so it has no particular plan and program to support the IPs in dealing with Covid-19 and addressing the impact of the health crisis on their economic, social and cultural life. The inutility of the Duterte administration reveals not only its incompetence but the total disregard and insincerity for the peoples rights and welfare. Instead it resorts to a militarist approach and repression to deal with pandemic and fails to provide real health solution to emergency health crisis.

Long before the Covid-19 crisis, IPs already suffer from the government's neglect in terms of deliveries of social and economic services. Being in isolated and remote areas, the IPs were neglected in terms of food relief distribution. Reported relief aid was grossly inadequate and resulted to food insecurity and hunger in many IP communities. There was lack of immediate medical measures to support IP communities to deal with the Covid-19 such as access to public health services and medical infrastructures including mass testing. There was also lack of adequate information on how to prevent and manage the corona virus. IPs remain threatened and still face a high risk of spread of Covid-19 in their communities.

Under the 'New Normal', the Duterte regime is expected to enforce a more repressive measures. The recently approved Anti-Terror Bill if signed into law will legalize martial law, repression and impunity already faced by the IPs and the Filipino people. The state's counter-insurgency program will heighten the attacks on IPs and militarization of their communities under the lead of the NTF-ELCAC and state security forces. The government's recommendation to continue its 'Build, Build, Build' projects, the back to operation of many exploitative and destructive projects in indigenous territories such as mining, dams and large-scale mono-crop plantations will escalate the encroachment into ancestral territories and further displacement of IPs.

These constitutes the threats and challenges on the life of IPs. But the bigger challenge is how the IPs will take stock of the situation, build on the unity of the communities and organizations, establish solidarity with other oppressed sectors, and firmly assert and struggle for the rights to their ancestral land and self-determination.

The Indigenous Peoples must hold firmly on their legitimate human rights and collective rights especially in times like the current health crisis. Indigenous peoples must persevere to defend their rights to land,resources and life.

Continuing Calls and Demands

The Indigenous Peoples joins the rest of Filipino people in demanding that the Philippine government be held accountable for its negligence in providing adequate COVID-19 response and opportunistically using the crisis to strengthen its authoritarian rule that had resulted to gross violation of social, economic and cultural rights of Indigenous Peoples and worse attacks on their civil and political liberties. Specifically, we call on the Philippine government to immediately implement the following urgently needed measures to effectively resolve the humanitarian crisis:

Immediate health response:

1. Equal access of Indigenous Peoples to public health services and access to medical infrastructures without neglect and free from discrimination;
 - Free targeted mass testing, aggressive contact tracing, isolation and quarantining;
 - Set-up isolation and quarantine facilities within or near indigenous communities;
2. Construction of adequately equipped treatment facilities across the country, taking in consideration specific context of indigenous peoples;
3. Provide support funding for the mass production of testing equipment, PPEs to lessen dependence to imports;

Socio-economic measures:

1. Continue the provision of emergency relief packages, cash transfers and other financial assistance to displaced and marginalized sectors, including the indigenous peoples sector, taking into account special needs of indigenous women, children, elderly and PWDs;
2. Provide adequate economic support relevant to indigenous peoples socio-economic and cultural way of life and not state-imposed projects that will further lead to land grabbing of ancestral territories,
3. Stop destructive large-scale mining and corporate plantation projects including unnecessary large-scale infrastructure projects including large dams

4. Stop the Build, Build, Build infrastructure program affecting Indigenous Peoples such as the China-funded Kaliwa dam and the New Clark City (NCC), affecting Aytan people in Tarlac province, and re-channel funding for public health infrastructure and education;

5. Anti-people policies such as the Mining Act of 1995, Rice Liberalization Law, Foreign Investments Liberalization Act, among others, should be rescinded

For inclusive and effective governance:

1. Laws that infringe on the Filipino people's civil, political and socio-economic liberties should be rescinded such as the Bayanihan Act, the E.O. 70, NTF-ELCAC and the E-CLIP;

2. Government should focus on implementing people-centered economic policies instead of adding to the host of laws and statutes that impinge on human rights such as the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

For the UN bodies

Indigenous Peoples also urgently propose to the Office of High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), to continue its investigation on the Philippine human rights situation and to include the recent and worsened situation caused by the militarist Covid-19 response of the Duterte government. And for the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the SDGs to provide strong mechanisms to hold governments accountable for their actions especially at this time of pandemic. The Philippines and the rest of the world are in the middle of the worst economic and public health crisis in generations. This is a time for united action and not for marginalization.

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Phil. IPs amidst Covid-19 pandemic:

**From north to south Indigenous Peoples
are battling against
discrimination, militarization and worsening
human rights situation**

By: Rei A. Paulin, KATRIBU Coordinator



The KATRIBU, Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas, is the national alliance of regional and provincial indigenous peoples organizations representing various indigenous communities in the whole Philippines.

KATRIBU has strived to work for the attainment of genuine ancestral land rights and self determination for the Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines

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