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The state of Philippine biodiversity: Changing mindscapes amidst the crisis

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The Philippines is one of the most biologically rich countries in the world and recognized as such as an exclusive member of the 17 megadiversity countries. Nearly half of Philippine biodiversity is found nowhere else in the world, thus it forms part of global living heritage. However, it is also one of the most threatened as it has lost more than 75% of its original habitat and recognized as such by being an exclusive member of the 25 global biodiversity hotspots. The Philippines is predicted to be among the first countries in the world to suffer a total environmental collapse (when the environment stops to provide the services it normally provides) and species extinction spasm (when large groups of species go extinct at the same time). Amidst this crisis that threatens the existence of Filipinos as a people, very few Filipinos are even aware of this threat, neither are they moved to take action. This is so because the crisis is overshadowed by other political, economic, military and social crises that beset the country. People's mindset is focused on tackling the other crises first before attending to biodiversity crisis. Unless this "business as usual" mindset is changed immediately, the crisis will reach a point of no return when nothing that we will do will prevent us to suffer the fate of extinction as a people.

Participatory biodiversity assessment in Malindang Range, Philippines

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The Terrestrial Ecosystem Master Project (TEMP) as part of the Philippine-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme (BRP), in close relation with the socio-economic-cultural and aquatic ecosystem research projects, aims to generate a more comprehensive information and knowledge of the diversity of flora, fauna and soil ecology across the landscape of Malindang Range. Several flora and fauna were recorded from the initial sampling conducted in both forest and agroecosystems. Participatory inventory and assessment revealed 593 species of plants with 22% endemism. Of these species, 10 are endangered, two rare, and 258 are of economic importance. Sixty-one varieties of agricultural crops were also recorded. Moreover, vertebrate faunal survey recorded a total of 138 species including 16 anurans, four skinks, five snakes, 88 birds, 12 volant and 13 non-volant mammals. A 53% endemism was recorded with 16 species as rare and endangered. On the other hand, invertebrate survey showed 183 insects, five spiders, and one crustacean species. Of these, nine species of butterfly are endangered and endemic, and five rare. High species richness was recorded in the forest ecosystem with 27 species while only one in the agroecosystem. Recommendations for sustainable monitoring, conservation, management and utilization of these critical bioresources will be developed.

Participatory biodiversity inventory and assessment of Lake Duminagat, Mt. Malindang Natural Park

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Lake Duminagat is a crater lake located in Mt. Malindang Natural Park, which is one of the Protected Areas in the Philippines. Two communities are adjacent to it, both included in the municipality of Don Victoriano, which is wholly circumscribed by the Park. The Park represents the flora and fauna of the Zamboanga biogeographic zone. Lake Duminagat holds a central place in the spiritual life of the Subanon people, who look on the lake as sacred and a source of healing water. The Subanon is the indigenous people group who have lived in parts of the Zamboanga Peninsula, starting from pre-Hispanic times, one group of which have lived in the Mt. Malindang area. Although the Subanon have had their own traditional customs and practices, they have become more or less enculturated by the influence of Bisayan and western cultures, brought about by Bisayan settlers/businessmen and mass media. As part of the Philippine-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme (BRP) for Development: Focus on Mt. Malindang and Environs, this project utilized the participatory approach to involve the local community as local researchers or local partners. It studied the morpho-physicochemical and biodiversity characteristics of the lake and its perimeter. Involvement in this research gave the local researchers and the community an awareness of the natural and social factors that affect the Lake Duminagat ecosystem. It is hoped that results of this research will be used to empower the local communities to come up with a strategy of conserving and sustainably utilizing the lake's biodiversity to open up various livelihood possibilities.

Participatory biodiversity assessment in the coastal areas of Northern Mt. Malindang

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The coastal communities in the project area of Northern Mt. Malindang in Misamis Occidental depend mainly on fishing for livelihood. Their high dependence on the coastal resources for food and income may have greatly contributed to resource depletion and habitat degradation. The problems on resource depletion and habitat degradation have to be addressed to sustain their livelihood and the resource-base. Management interventions have to be well planned to provide long-term economic benefits for the coastal communities. Doing so requires baseline information, which could be derived through resource assessment. This project assessed some coastal barangays to determine the status of the coastal and marine biological resources in the area. Data were gathered and a study on Institutional Agreement was conducted to investigate the history of the establishment and current management scheme for the Baliangao Protected Landscape and Seascape. The researchers did not do the assessment process alone. Developing the capability and empowering the local community by making them research partners was an innovative feature of the project. The involvement and participation of representatives from various sectors such as the local government units (LGUs), nongovernment organizations (NGOs), government agencies (GAs), and people's organizations (POs) in community validation and consultation process highlight the participatory nature of this project.

Resource utilization patterns in the terrestrial ecosystem in Mt. Malindang and its environs

Alita T. Roxas and Leontine Visser

Environmental degradation in the Mt. Malindang environs has been mainly due to anthropogenic factors. The pressure of meeting subsistence needs has forced the people in the surrounding communities to impinge on the environment. This has serious implications for long-term sustainability of the environment and also of livelihood activities. The continued degradation of the natural habitat adversely affects the culture of the people in the communities. Given this, it is largely insufficient to study only the biophysical and chemical dimensions of the environmental problem and biodiversity loss; a good grounding of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the problem must also be obtained. Central to this goal is to recognize the connection between biodiversity and cultural diversity. There is also a need to acknowledge the urgency to integrate issues of resource utilization over time, access to and control over resources, indigenous knowledge system (IKS) and opportunities for it to form synergy with modern technology for resource management and conservation, as well as the appropriateness and effectiveness of environmental policies in the local and national levels. These issues are addressed in the study. Particular reference is given to livelihood security and environmental sustainability and the influence of social differentiation, specifically, ethnicity, culture, class, and gender.

Impact of selected policies on the biodiversity management and conservation in Mt. Malindang and its environs

Aurelia Luzviminda V. Gomez

The intent of environmental policies is logically the proper management and conservation of natural resources, without jeopardizing the livelihood of those who are dependent on these resources. Thus, effective implementation of such policies should lead to the conservation of the natural resources, while maintaining sustainable livelihood for the people. As part of the Biodiversity Research Programme (BRP) Master Project, this study focuses on analyzing the impact of the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, and the Fisheries Code (RA 8550) on the management and conservation of Mt. Malindang and its environs. The initial results from three barangays of the municipality of Don Victoriano, closest Mt. Malindang Natural Park, cover only the NIPAS and IPRA. Initial findings show that majority of the barangay residents were not aware of either NIPAS or IPRA, despite claims by some staff of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) that they had repeatedly conducted community assemblies to educate the residents about the NIPAS. In the case of IPRA, it appeared that no information campaign had been done in the area, which is heavily inhabited by indigenous people. Generally, the prohibited acts stipulated in the NIPAS, particularly on cutting of trees and the use of power saw. What is alarming is that they also admitted to committing those prohibited acts. Another reason for concern is the presence of only 19 forest rangers to monitor the 34,464-hectare protected area.

The demand-driven research process: Lessons learned from the Joint Philippine-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme (BRP) for Development in Mindanao

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The Philippine-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme (BRP) for Development in Mindanao is a demand-driven, collaborative research programme initiated by the Dutch Government. The BRP was designed to develop innovative North-South research partnerships based on national research priorities.

Among the innovations of the BRP are the following: (a) a participatory and consultative nature that promotes multi-stakeholder participation involving not only the scientific research community, but also most importantly local communities and stakeholders, including local governments and non-government organizations; (b) location-derived and development-oriented; (c) systems-oriented and interdisciplinary bringing together the natural and socio-economic/cultural components and their interactions; and (d) uses an integrated ecosystems or landscape approach to research. BRP was designed to contribute to conservation, management and sustainable use of biological resources, build and strengthen national capacity for biodiversity research, and promote North-south research cooperation on equal footing.

An overview of the experiences of the Programme and major lessons learned in terms of developing demand-driven research cooperation in the last four years will be given.

Will the twain ever meet?": A Methodological dialogue for South-North partnership in research and development

Levita A. Duhaylungsod

For several decades, a great deal of effort has gone into strategic approaches to South-North partnership in enhancing human and institutional capacity for development of the Southern countries. Underlying many of this cooperation is the emphasis on innovative methodologies that promote participation particularly of Southern partners. There is also recognition that to be truly participatory and collaborative, South-North partnership should be strongly anchored on an awareness of the social context in which the development partnership is located.

One area of such partnerships is capacity enhancement on research where Southern and Northern scientists collaborate for knowledge production and endeavors to produce researches with development agenda. This partnership dialogue is a challenging social process because the wealth of South-North partnership experiences has been mainly development projects in nature. The premise of research for development is an innovation that resulted in the search for evolving science-based and interdisciplinary approaches that similarly take into account developing community-based researchers within the context of cultural and institutional complexities. The paper focuses on a methodological development that particularly addresses the concern for systematically assessing the capacity development efforts being promoted in a South-North partnership. Largely drawn from a process and experiential learning from the Biodiversity Research Programme in the Philippines, the paper proposes a methodological framework and argues that such framework can have a wider application in the field of participatory research with multi-stakeholder involvement across cultures and environment.