

Biodiversity Conservation Practices Among Indigenous Peoples in Caraga Region, Mindanao, Philippines

Authors : Milagros S. Salibad and Levita B. Grana

Abstract : The presence and role of Indigenous Peoples residing in key biodiversity, protected, and watershed areas within the ancestral domain in the Caraga Region hold immense significance. This study aimed to determine the level of biodiversity conservation practices among the Mamanwas, Manobos, and Higaonons, and identify facilitating or hindering factors. Employing a mixed-method research design, 421 respondents participated through a researcher-made questionnaire. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, researcher field notes, community immersions, and secondary sources were done. The three groups have demonstrated a high level of biodiversity conservation practices manifesting their commitment to conserving their natural resources and ecosystems. Evidently, selecting and cutting only mature trees for shelter and tribal usage, and preservation of large trees that harbor ancestors' spirits and worship through rituals (Mambabaja). Each group exhibited unique environmental practices shaped by their distinct cultures, traditions, customary knowledge, and access to information. The Mamanwa practiced traditional hunting and gathering by using traps while Manobo practiced shifting cultivation to maintain soil fertility and biodiversity, and Higaonon managed forest resources through traditional forest management (establishment of sacred forests and conservation areas). Various facilitating and hindering factors influenced their conservation efforts. Their traditional knowledge and practices, partnership and collaboration, legal recognition and support, access to information, and biodiversity monitoring system facilitate practices. Insufficient government assistance, political and social issues, scarce financial support, inadequate policy enforcement, lack of livelihood opportunities, and land use conflicts hinder them. Monitoring the sustainability of IPs' local biodiversity conservation practices is essential as they contribute to conservation endeavors.

Keywords : biodiversity, conservation, indigenous peoples, traditional knowledge

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