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POVERTY ASSESSMENT

Mindanao Region

GENERAL POVERTY SITUATION

Most of the indigenous peoples in the Philippines are in Mindanao, where 23% of the country's population reside.⁷⁹ The island's contribution to total poverty in the country is approximately 31%. Information from various studies reinforces the general assessment about the poverty situation in the island. The provinces where poverty is deepest⁸⁰ and most severe contain populations of indigenous peoples. Western Mindanao, which was ranked second nationwide in terms of rural poverty incidence,⁸¹ forms part of NCIP's Northwestern Mindanao ethnographic area. In 1995, the population of the region was about 1.1 million, of which roughly 46% were indigenous peoples.

Preliminary results of the 2000 Family Income and Expenditure Survey show that poverty incidence in Mindanao is higher than the national average of 40%, ranging from 46% in Southern Mindanao to 74% in the ARMM. Poverty incidence was worse in 2000 than in 1997.

According to a recent ADB study based on income measures,⁸² the regions with the highest poverty incidence are in Mindanao: Caraga (55%) and the ARMM (57%). Poverty, as revealed in the ADB study, continues to be a rural phenomenon with rural areas contributing 74.1% to total poverty. Western Mindanao ranks second highest in terms of rural poverty incidence. Urban poverty is most severe in Caraga (43%) and the ARMM (51%).

To understand the full dimension of the phenomenon, the ADB study looked into poverty depth and the poverty gap⁸³ nationwide. In Mindanao, the poverty gap and severity were most severe in Caraga, with five other Mindanao regions (Western Mindanao,

ARMM, Northern and Central Mindanao, and Southern Mindanao) also above the national averages.

The 1997 UNDP Philippine Human Development Index Report⁸⁴ estimated Human Development Index (HDI) values in Mindanao ranging from 0.41 in the ARMM to 0.62 in Southern Mindanao, all lower than the national average of 0.66. There were however, differences among provinces even within the same region, depending on the type of indicator used. In Southern Mindanao, for instance, Davao del Norte had a functional literacy rate of 85%, while in Davao del Sur it was 69%. All provinces in the ARMM registered very low HDI values. Western Mindanao and the ARMM registered extremely low values in access to safe water, toilet facilities, electricity supply, and health care services.

Potable water is scarce in most of Mindanao, with only 51% of the population in Agusan del Sur and 87% in Agusan del Norte having access to this important commodity. The proportion of families in the provinces of Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, and Davao del Norte that live in makeshift housing is greater than the national average.

The Social Weather Stations conducted two surveys on self-rated poverty and self-rated food poverty (March and July 2001). In Mindanao, the incidence of self-rated poverty as perceived by residents was 64% in March and 70% in July. Both figures are higher than the national averages of 59% in March and 66% in July. Self-rated food poverty was also higher in Mindanao than the national average in both surveys.

With reference to public services, as noted in the HDI for the area, Mindanao continues to be poor. A recent World Bank study⁸⁵ reported the following.

- In health services, 11% of respondents (the highest among the "other island regions") said that the lack

of government facilities forced them to use private clinics/hospitals.

- In education, 41% of school-age children do not attend school (compared with the 11% in the NCR, 14% in the Visayas, and 33% in Luzon), citing economic reasons and poor performance.
- With regard to water supply, most households rely on private wells and rainwater collectors. Only 23% avail of level III sources (considered to be the best water sources).

To aggravate the situation, armed conflict prevails in Mindanao, resulting in the dislocation of more than half a million families to date in Central and Western Mindanao as well as the ARMM. Although the incidence of conflict seems to be isolated and span only a limited time, the impact and reach are felt even in relatively peaceful parts of the island. Business and investments continue to slow down. As stated by Secretary Deles, "The current conflict has been identified as having contributed to the sluggish stock market, falling peso, and weak investor and tourist confidence. And for those in war-torn areas, very few economic activities exist and few of them may prosper, because of the constant occurrence of armed conflict."

THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Walay pobre sa una, aduna la'y mga kakulangon. Dili pobre karon, aduna la'y pagkalisodlisod. Nagkalisodlisod kay gilisodlisod. ("In the past, no one was poor. There were only a few unmet needs. Neither are we poor now. We experience some degree of hardship. We live in difficult circumstances brought about by outside forces.")

The quotation above aptly summarizes the perception of Mindanao indigenous peoples' representatives regarding their being labeled poor. At the same time, it acknowledges that with the continuing situation, they will soon be poor.

The indigenous peoples have generic terms that approximate the term *poor*. Some examples identified by specific groups are: B'laan—*tao telando*; Mamanua—*adyu-adyu*; Ubo Manobo—*kaayayuwán, makairo-iro, wara-wara, kahirapon, kaaya-aya-an*; Teduray—*miskinan, enda enda*; Bagobo Tagabawa—*kandaan*; Mandaya—*al'lang*; and T'boli—*el-el*. There is further need, however, to subject these terminologies to more validation in terms of their levels of meanings.

Generally, the term *poor* is considered not to apply to Lumads, but to the *langyaw* (outsider). Viewed as a discriminatory construct, it implies sloth and the ignorance of and use of weapons by outsiders to gain control of resources and lands of the former. The indigenous peoples assert that they are not poor, but are living in difficult circumstances brought about specifically by loss of land and access to resources. They can only rise from this condition if they are able to gain control of their territories again.

Poverty indicators used by outsiders refer mainly to material aspects such as money, house, adequate clothes, and transportation; other aspects include the inability to seek medical attention from hospitals, absence of formal schooling, and the characteristic of being lazy.

When asked whom they consider poor, Lumads refer to squatters who have no land; the Bajao, who are the most oppressed group; streetchildren; prostitutes; underpaid workers; evacuees; and marginalized farmers and fishers. The characteristics of such people are the same as in the outsiders' definition: no property, dirty-looking, clothed in rags, rundown or broken house, children unable to go to school, and having debts to pay.

TERMINOLOGY AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Lumad indicators cover a broad range and mix of indicators, one of which shares the outsiders' perspective of lack or absence of material belongings. Other issues considered important by indigenous peoples for improving quality of life are: powerlessness and dependency, ignorance of indigenous knowledge systems, loss of affinity with ancestral domains, and failure to belong.

Powerlessness and Dependency

Slavery (Manguangan—*allang*; Mansaka—*gupisan*; Subanen—*ghulipon*) is considered a state of poverty. Individuals or families have to be provided everything. Consequently, the slave can be stepped on and taken anywhere, can be subjected to eviction anytime, and cannot make any independent decision. The individual may even need to be provided a wife by the “master.”

Other individuals considered poor are those who are dependent on others. They are unable to earn a living, can eat only if employed, are unable to pay debts, and have to live with others because they have no house. Some of them survive mainly on wild plants and animals as well as root crops. They are timid and need to be protected (Ata Manobo—*ubong-ubong*). If they commit an offense, they are bailed out by others or by the Datu.

Ignorance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Poverty is also manifest in the loss of belief in and practice of the indigenous culture. Some possess limited knowledge while others stop learning and fail to cultivate indigenous knowledge systems (Manobo—*parabian-gantangan*). A distinction is also made between those who are poor in terms of indigenous knowledge and those who have such knowledge but fail to recognize and promote it.

Lack of Material Property

As in the outsiders’ definition of poor, Lumads acknowledge that they may lack certain materials such as mats, animals, cooking pots, housing, food, and clothes (Ata Manobo—*ayuayu*; Mansaka—*gupisan/allang*; Subanen—*dairun*). However, some Lumads insist that this may only be a temporary state due to factors such as migration to another localities and seasonality, e.g., before harvest (Subanen—*miskinan*; Manobo—*mangkaayo-ayo*). The Higaonon mention the *tingauhol* or seasonal hunger. During this period, they are forced to subsist on root crops and eat twice a day only.

Loss of Affinity with Ancestral Domain

Another indication of a state of poverty among the indigenous peoples is loss of concern for the ancestral land and domain. The Higaonon, for example, lament the fact that in the 1970s some of their community members lost land to migrants for a minimal amount or for goods of little value such as cloth, sardines, and alcoholic beverages.

Failure to Belong

Poverty is also not being of royal lineage (Manobo—*raig-raig*) or even being an outsider or not of the group (Manobo—*saruwa*). The poverty stigma also holds true for one who is banished by the group for unacceptable behavior (Subanen—*ginibas*; Manobo—*agka-urepon*).

THE ISSUE OF EXISTENCE OR NONEXISTENCE OF POVERTY

It is acknowledged that poverty as defined by Lumads does exist in every ethnic group. However, it is also reiterated that they have resources that the outsiders covet. Foremost, they respect richness in character (Manobo—*bungkatol ha bulawan*).

The Talaandig say there are no rich, so there are no poor. People raise crops sufficient for all, even enabling the community members to hold rituals. The resources are redistributed equitably by the local leaders (*timuay* or Datu) or there is a system of food sharing (Higaonon—*ilahan, pangalawat*).

According to those in Northwestern Mindanao, Lumads cannot be poor if the following are present.

- forests for all their food and health needs;
- peace;
- the indigenous characteristic of helping one another in times of need;
- knowledge about the forest in lieu of formal schooling; and

- indigenous systems and means to help them choose their own lifestyle.

Again, the conditions cited hinge on their access to resources such as land and forest, their cultural integrity, and the relationships fostered within and outside their communities.

NEW ISSUES AFFECTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In the past, Lumad communities encountered difficulties from a limited number of sources, mainly from nature in the form of storms and the destruction of crops by pests. The peace situation has been so unstable that there is sometimes a need for evacuation of communities.

Now these communities have to contend with the entry of migrants from lowlands; the influence of religion, churches, and schools; and the use of technology by outsiders (e.g., in commercial farming). Other pressures include disruptive development projects such as dams, irrigation projects, integrated forest management and community-based forest management activities, contract reforestation projects, logging, mining, energy projects, and school reservations. In effect, there has been a lack of management and control of the territories occupied by indigenous peoples.

To aggravate the situation, Lumads contend with lack of knowledge in resource management because the indigenous knowledge systems and practices have been forgotten; and because of a lack of current technical knowledge to develop existing natural resources, lack of money, and inability to cope with the development standards set by outsiders.

DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

Consistent with indigenous peoples' perception of the life they want to live are such aspirations as the full implementation of the IPRA, education, livelihood programs and financial assistance, self-governance,

respect for their people and their culture, organization for protection, improved infrastructure, and participation in the development process.

Full Implementation of the Indigenous People Rights Act

Closely linked with the development of ancestral domains, the indigenous peoples seek the recognition of their rights to their domains, the right to develop the lands as they see fit, and to regain territories lost either through sale at a low price or acquisition through government agreements.

Education

Indigenous peoples see the importance of sending their children to school even if costs are beyond what they can afford. Thus, families do not hesitate to sell a piece of land or an heirloom to meet school expenses. They also forgo spending for agricultural production. As in the Cordillera, those interviewed explained that a college degree for their children is their passport out of farming. Among the Higaonon, some have abandoned the traditional practice of arranged and child marriage in support of their goal for their children to complete high school or college education. Scholarships are welcome, although there is a clamor for more rigid screening to ensure that those selected really belong to indigenous communities.

The indigenous peoples, however, are also wary of negative influences of education in terms of the changes in values of their children. The loss of indigenous knowledge in return for lowland aspirations is a dilemma for these indigenous peoples.

Livelihood Programs and Financial Assistance

Similar to the NEDA survey findings on Minimum Basic Needs, the present study found that Mindanaoan indigenous communities aspire to have more income to provide for basic household needs like food, clothing, education, and medical services. Like their Cordilleran

counterparts, the most common livelihood activities are pig raising, fruit tree cultivation, vegetable production, handicrafts, and dressmaking.

Self-governance

Indigenous communities seek to manage their domains based on their own systems and methods. There are moves to assess the effect of outside influences on their culture and to reject what is incompatible and harmful to the local traditions and values. Moreover, those influences considered enriching could be modified and integrated into the culture and society.

There is a strong reaction to the entry of development projects without the benefit of sufficient community-wide consultation. Furthermore, if and when participation does occur, agreements are sometimes not respected or followed through. Also required is the implementation of free and prior informed consent in development matters.

Respect for the Indigenous Peoples and their Culture

In their everyday interaction with outsiders, the Lumads have to contend with the low regard of the former for the latter. There is an absence or a lack sensitivity and respect for indigenous knowledge systems and practices. In this regard, the indigenous peoples want cultural revival and the promotion of their local systems to raise an awareness among outsiders of the richness of their traditions and to imprint indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices into the consciousness of succeeding generations.

Organization for Protection

The protection of the forests, lands, and people from outsiders is viewed as critical by the indigenous peoples of Mindanao. Given the pressures (e.g., political, financial, and developmental) impinging on their rights, there is a need to strengthen their traditional organizations and other groupings within the communities. The process would include the rethinking

and revival of the concept of leadership such as the *Datu* and the *timuqy*. The responsibilities and accountabilities, clear structures and functions, and the issue of transparency should be taken into consideration by both new and traditional organizations.

Improved Infrastructure

Indigenous communities see better access roads and bridges as motivators for increased productivity. However, they are also wary of the possible negative impacts in terms of the entry of individuals or groups with interests in their lands and resources.

In addition to roads, these peoples want to set up “tribal halls” (or centers where they can meet regularly), school buildings, water systems, and health centers. For infrastructure projects, they reiterate that their needs and not those articulated by external agencies (even those with genuine concern) should be given priority.

Participation in the Development Process

Increasingly, people from the communities want more meaningful participation in the development process. NGOs and government organizations working directly at the grassroots level have realized that the participation of community stakeholders in the conceptualization, planning, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation of projects is key to the success of the projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF MINDANAO

Several recommendations were put forward by the indigenous peoples of Mindanao with reference to the type of development efforts in which they will engage, whether processes, policy decisions, or projects.

Some issues that need to be addressed by the NCIP deal with specific cases. These are the Central Mindanao University land claims and dismantling of the indigenous peoples’ *tulugan* (the structure where

the communities meet), problems with community-based forestry management (CBFM), and the need for a dialogue with the Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) regarding indigenous peoples (e.g., the Teduray) within the ARMM.

The most frequently recurring issues raised during consultations with indigenous peoples refer to their lands. This may take on the form of landgrabbing by powerful politicians and business persons, entry of CBFM, tourism, plantations, projects such as dams, and individual claims by nonindigenous persons.

The requests, addressed to ADB are as follows.

- Translation of the Policy on Indigenous Peoples into local languages (e.g., Visayan) to be used as a reference in discussing the parameters of engagement with ADB.
- Support in the processing of CADTs with NGO assistance; the latter need to be acceptable to the communities assisted.
- Assessment and nonfunding of projects which, based on experience, are not supportive of indigenous peoples' rights; some of these are CBFM, mining, integrated forest management, power plants and other energy projects, dams, major infrastructure, and fisheries/aquatic resource management projects.
- Participation of the indigenous peoples in the review of proposals for projects affecting their communities. Funding should not be provided without their FPIC.
- Creation by ADB of an ad hoc independent investigation team (with an indigenous peoples' representative) to review, monitor, and evaluate ongoing projects within their domains.
- If possible, channeling of projects straight to the indigenous peoples' communities.
- Continuous consultations with indigenous peoples.

Considering the current conflicting policies impacting on indigenous peoples, ADB should apply

stronger conditions before the approval of projects affecting them.

CASE STUDY 1: THE HIGAONON COMMUNITY IN BUKIDNON

General Demographic and Socioeconomic Situation

Access and population

Accessible mainly by the *habal habal* (motorized bike that accommodates at least four individuals including the driver) from the highway, the Higaonon share their 6 villages (5 of which are within the 9,000 hectare CADCs) with 10% Visayan migrants.⁸⁶ There are 88 households (1995⁸⁷) of indigenous peoples and *kalibog* (persons of mixed ethnicity) in the community.

Land cultivation and access

The Higaonon traditionally practice shifting cultivation, hunting, and gathering of forest products. They raise upland rice, root crops, sugarcane, and (in the 1970s) coffee and different types of vegetables. Recently, they have started to practice settled agriculture, using high-yielding varieties of rice and corn.

Since the prohibition of swidden farming (PD 705), the residents' movement over their traditional territory has lessened. Although the awarding of the CADC has given them some sense of security of tenure over their land, they profess confusion about the requirements of the municipal government regarding the paying of community taxes and municipal assessments conducted annually. They expect that ownership over their territory will be fully recognized and respected through the issuance of the CADT.

Since the Higaonon have been slowly converting from swidden farming to lowland agriculture, construction of rice paddies is perceived to be a symbol of promise of food security and better life because it will enable them to plant and harvest thrice yearly. It is also construed as a strategy for forest conservation since they would no longer clear some portions of the forests. The shift in agricultural production has been strongly influenced by the government's forest policies, the entry

of migrants, the Municipal Agricultural Office, and the Catholic Church-based NGO Father Vincent Cullen Tulugan Learning Development Center (FVCTLDC).

The last mentioned group has provided various forms of assistance to encourage the shift to lowland agriculture. However, support for inorganic inputs was later stopped because of the perceived detrimental effects on health and environment.

Employment and incomes

Cash is generated from the sales of excess agricultural produce as well as raw and processed abaca hemp (woven cloth, *hinabol*) and rattan (backpack, *kamuyot*). For these products, rates are dictated by entrepreneurs who transport and sell products in the town centers. Some NGOs have been providing support to construct a building for weaving looms and a market outlet for products of Higaonon women. From their initial income, the women were able to set up a cooperative store at the center of their village.

Another livelihood opportunity is employment as government officials, soldiers, and Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit members. Some residents leave the community seasonally to seek work as farm laborers and domestic helpers. The average income from farm labor is P70–80 per day for adults and P50 for children for 8 hours of work.

Cash is used for basic household needs such as rice, salt, sardines, kerosene, candles, matches, and soap.

Education facilities

Educational facilities consist of two public elementary schools, one in the town proper and another in one of the villages.

Secondary education has to be pursued outside the area. The FVCTLDC runs a literacy school in one of the villages. It offers a special curriculum including subjects on Higaonon culture. However, the institution still needs to be accredited by the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports; thus, students must undergo placement examinations to qualify in the regular school program.

Parents opt for their local language or Visayan for instructional purposes since these are easily understood. However, this does not diminish their

openness to learn the national languages, Tagalog and English, because these are viewed necessary in communicating with outsiders.

Health

To respond to the health needs of the community, a health center in the town proper has one midwife offering mainly family planning services. The FVCTLDC also runs a health clinic with a registered nurse. There are plans of building a minihospital within the town by the ADB-funded Bukidnon Integrated Area Development Project.

Not all villages possess a water system; the government has installed intake boxes that are not yet operational. Consistent with their objectives, the FVCTLDC helped build a water system in one of the villages.

Through the inputs of the FVCTLDC among women, health and sanitation in two villages has improved, as indicated by zero infant mortality in 2000 and the prevention of epidemics. The Center encourages the use of traditional and indigenous medicine and these are prescribed rather than “western” medicine. The Higaonon still avail of the services of the indigenous medical practitioner after consultation at the health centers.

Political institutions

The Higaonon continue to practice, recognize, and respect the traditional Datu leadership system. Although some of their members have been elected to various government posts, traditional leaders claim harmonious relationships with the latter.

Recognized in the area are two main Datus and others who comprise the Council of Elders. The Datus have specialized skills recognized and respected by the community. Collectively, they take charge of ceremonial functions, conflict resolution, and healing functions. In effect, they make the major decisions concerning the community.

Recently, tensions and undue competition emerged among Datus from different sectors because they believe that some leaders have greater access than others to government and NGO projects. Village leaders and members perceived to have more access to NGO projects are not regularly invited to government-initiated

meetings, consultations, and planning activities, and their areas have been less prioritized for development projects and delivery of basic services.

Conflicts within the ancestral domain are resolved by Datus while issues affecting areas beyond the ancestral domain are jointly resolved by the Datu and the village captain.

Beyond the community, all the Datus in the area are linked to a traditionally recognized and informal organization of leaders from different Higaonon territories in Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, and Agusan del Sur. They assemble from time to time in a ritual called *dumalungdong* to discuss their customary laws, belief systems, and pressing problems.

Concept of Poverty among the Higaonon

Terminology and definitions

When asked for local terms for *poor*, the response would be Visayan terms *kabos* and/or *makaluluy-on*, although the latter is more linked to being in a pitiful condition. The term can be equated with the absence or lack of money while its opposite, *sapian* (Visayan for rich) connotes the ability to purchase material things such as houses, farm animals, and vehicles. These terms were not within their consciousness until the entry of outsiders.

Thus, they perceive themselves to be poor only because others say they are poor. One informant refused to be referred to as pitiful because she still has food on the table and does not have to resort to begging.

The nearest terms akin to poverty are *agkapulog*, *tingauhol*, and *kalugan*. Residents experience the first only because they do not have money to buy certain things they need, but this condition does not necessarily indicate that food is scarce. The second term refers to seasonal hunger. Although food is limited during this period, the situation is temporary and can be mitigated. The third term means a person in a state of difficulty: while walking through a steep and narrow terrain, when food is scarce, when a conflict is unresolved, or when violence is experienced.

Poverty promoting factors

The Higaonon perceive themselves to be in difficult circumstances caused mainly by outside factors. According to ethnographic literature, they were traditionally coastal dwellers enjoying the resources both of the sea and the forests. However, they were subsequently pushed into the interior areas and had to depend solely on the forest for subsistence and household, health, and ceremonial needs.

The interior areas where they settled were then encroached upon by migrants in the 1970s. A number of Higaonon lost tracts of land to outsiders for cash or for cheap goods.

The situation was aggravated by government policies on land tenure and resource use, greatly limiting access to forest zones. Then logging activities by the Nasipit and Agusan logging companies from 1980 to the early 1990s affected the economic, social, and political aspects of the community.

With the depletion of forests, the more immediate impact was the decrease of meat supply (deer, wild pig, monkey, chicken, frogs, birds, and fish). In addition, sources of honey became difficult to find. The *manuk gasanun* (wild chicken) for traditional healing practices became scarce.

Logging also greatly altered the cycle of traditional farming systems. Due to more intensive use of the land, farm productivity lessened. The problem was aggravated by a build-up of pests and disease. As a result, the harvests have not been sufficient to sustain the Higaonon communities between croppings.

As the supply of traditional food dwindled over the years, seasonal hunger became more prolonged. Consumption patterns also changed: residents learned to eat canned foods and instant noodles. These are nutritionally inferior to their traditional diet of vegetation and animals from rivers and forests.

Needs and Aspirations

The Higaonon needs and aspirations include infrastructure, production, social services, and the conservation and promotion of indigenous systems and governance.

- Infrastructure and facilities: better roads and transportation systems, electricity, and a vehicle for the community.
- Production and related facilities: construction of more rice paddies; production of more root crops, corn, abaca, sugarcane, and coffee; setting up a rice and corn mill; construction of productive fishponds; identification of markets for farm produce.
- Social services and support systems: support for education, fair and just gender distribution of labor, and strengthening of the cooperative system.
- Indigenous systems: preservation of indigenous beliefs and value systems (especially values of helping, caring, understanding, and respecting one another); continued performance of traditional rites and rituals (guidebook on rites and rituals); and exclusion of new religions into the area.
- Governance: continued strengthening of traditional political organization and structures; recognition of the youth as community leaders, both in the traditional and state mandated systems; and learning new knowledge and skills to help strengthen community organization.

Currently, the Higaonon community is optimistic that with the financial and technical help of the FVCTLDC and its network of NGOs and other support groups, the identified needs will eventually be met.

CASE STUDY 2: THE ATA-MANOBO COMMUNITY IN DAVAO

General Demographic and Socioeconomic Description

Characteristics and location

This group is one of three Ata Manobo “subgroups.” Its territories, part of which is in a CADDC area, stretch from Davao City to Bukidnon. This may be due to the fact that some members are still nomads who move around specific domains.⁸⁸

The town proper is accessible by public vehicles, mainly motorized bikes, *habal-habal*. The latter serve as the only means of transportation to reach the interior communities. However, within some villages, horses are used to transport people and goods.

The area is known to be rich in minerals such as chromite, gold, silver, and coal.

Water still has to be fetched from its source (e.g., springs); there are plans for spring development leading to a water supply system. According to a respondent, electricity is enjoyed only by the former mayor (a Datu) and his family from a generator at the municipal hall.

Production and other subsistence/ livelihood practices

The Ata Manobo are swidden farmers in areas called *lugar na hagpo*. The products of this group are root crops such as sweet potato, cassava, and taro. Also grown are corn, banana, coffee, and abaca. Currently, an added product is upland rice. Problems faced by the farmers include rats that feed on the harvest and lack of capital or financing for farm inputs.

There is a traditional cooperative labor exchange in which families provide assistance to one another.

Women weave cloth (*hinabol*) and mats as well as baskets and containers from bamboo and rattan. Some men are blacksmiths and make their own farm implements. Some still hunt using a bow and arrow. Others raise animals such as chickens, pigs, and horses.

The income of the Ata Manobo is hard to estimate because of irregular marketing schedules and volume of products. The most common item used to generate cash is wild abaca transported to the market in bundled strings. Corn is likewise sold through entrepreneurs who serve as credit sources.

Employment is in the form of farm labor in the village or migration of children to other places to work as house helpers. For the former, about P3,000 is generated per harvest while house helpers are paid P400 per month.

Education

During 1977–1984, the Presidential Assistance for National Minorities provided schools for elementary education and scholarships. Currently, access to education has become a problem. Usually the family

borrowers to finance the education of the children using the harvest as collateral.

Parents want their children to be taught according to the language of the lowlanders although a curriculum for Lumads has been developed. Teachers are composed of both Lumads and Visayans.

The Davao Medical School Foundation, an NGO, has provided scholarships for midwifery. A day care center is also present but the structure has not been used due to the limited number of users.

Health situation

The Municipal Health Center has a nurse, midwives, and village health workers. The staff seldom visit the interior areas to deliver health services. Women healers (*oyami*) provide childbirth assistance and treatment of diseases, while family planning is conducted through the use of indigenous herbal contraceptives.

Other indigenous practices

Very few Ata Manobo reject their traditional religious beliefs. Some, however, have become Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, and Baptists. But it is said that they eventually return to their traditional practices.

Although indigenous peoples are subsistence based, they also access credit from individuals. Loans must be paid or shame will befall the Datu. The people do not want their Datu to be dishonored, so they pay their debts.

The Ata Manobo are said to share property. Even a radio may be passed from house to house in the spirit of sharing.

Assistance provided to the community

The community has a CADC and the contract for the formulation of the Ancestral Domain Management Plan was awarded to Multi-Equipment and Technical Services, Inc., a private corporation affiliated with the Marsman Company. The budget was generated from the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF III). This source also provided for the labor of residents in four related activities: brushing, staking, hole digging, and hauling of seedlings. Conflict erupted in 1999 because residents who provided

labor were not paid, according to one of the Datus, and there were apparently irregularities in contracts.

In addition, a former government program, the *Lingap para sa Mahirap*, targeted 19 families as the "poorest of the poor." A cooperative, a sari-sari store, and a loan from the Davao Tree Farmers' Cooperative were planned but had to be shelved because of the limited skills level of residents in financial management.

Other government entities that have provided assistance to the group are the Department of Agriculture (which provided 12,000 coconut seedlings since 1995) and NCIP. The latter conducted leadership training and assisted in negotiations between the Datus and a logging company.

The Davao Medical School Foundation, an NGO engaged in health, education, and livelihood assistance provided community workers to work in the villages. They implemented such projects as education assistance funded by Save the Children Japan, and goat raising. The 6 goats distributed to different households have bred and now number 26.

The Nestlé Company provided farmers with training on coffee planting. The villagers, although interested, failed to use the free seedlings because of problems regarding transport.

Conflict resolution and the Datu system of governance

The Datu is the center of governance and conflict resolution in the Ata Manobo communities. Common issues are murder, adultery, theft, and unpaid debts.

The Datu should have goodness and strength of character, be helpful to the community in development plans and services, generate respect and trust from the group, and look after the peace in the community. The Datu's power is inherited but there is also a selection process to identify an individual worthy of the position among offspring and close relatives. The Ba'e or wife of the Datu is also respected and has important leadership functions.

Peace and order situation

In 1972 the communities complained of abuse by the military; troops were subsequently withdrawn. A volunteer police force has since maintained peace and order.⁸⁹

As of April 2000, it was said that about 40% of the approximately 100,000 inhabitants of the area are affiliated with the New Peoples Army, an antigovernment military force. These people reside within the CADC.

Concept of Poverty among the Ata Manobo

Terminology and definitions

The term akin to *poor* among the Ata Manobo is *kaayo-ayo*, an individual described as possessing only a set of clothes and who has to live with others for his/her subsistence. In a worse condition would be the *kaubong-ubong*, one who is practically without any living area and who does not attend to his/her physical appearance (e.g., does not take a bath). Individuals are said to be in this state because they reside in the interior areas and do not participate in community activities.

The comfortable ones, on the other hand, are the *maupiyak*. They have sufficient food and domesticated animals. This perception of a level of comfort as stated by the Ata Manobo contrasts with outsiders' views of the wealthy (*adunahan*): possessing much money, concentrating on making a business prosper, and pursuing only his/her personal interest.

Poverty promoting factors

As recently as 1983, the forest in the area was still intact. The Datus interviewed said they were living in harmony with the forests, which produced all they needed. Then, a 25-year logging concession was granted to the Alcantara company. The company has been in the area for 15 years. There was a steady depletion of forest areas and loss of biodiversity. Wild animals vanished and farmlands were taken over by the logging operations.

Naupaw ang lasang tungod sa logging sa Alcantara. ("The forests turned bald due to the logging of the Alcantaras.")

Now, the people cannot clear the cogon grass areas. There is insufficient organic matter due to lack of forest litter. The cultivation of upland rice has become difficult because of the limited amount of planting materials and the soil has become too

compact, making even sweet potato cultivation difficult.

At first logging companies cut the trees, then they reforested the area with fast-growing trees and prohibited the Lumads from farming within these reforested areas.

These factors have resulted in food being the primary problem in the area, even if the Poverty Alleviation Fund gives food for work.

The logging company tried to help by implementing projects: a drier, a water system, and provision of seedlings. New methods and technologies, however, required the introduction of new methods that needed money to implement.

Changes were also noted by the Ata Manobo in their cultural practices. Previously, they could work together even without money through the *lusong* or cooperative work. Now there is the concept of hired labor. In addition, they now fail to initiate rituals before they open the land and they now use metal tools in clearing farmland.

The conditions are aggravated by the presence of lowland Christians who are said to oppress them by buying products cheaply and selling them at exorbitant prices. In addition, they have also brought in vices such as drunkenness and gambling.

Perceived solutions to problems

Basic to the development of the community is bringing back the forest. Only when the vegetation has been restored can the wild pigs, birds, and the other requirements for the survival of the Ata Manobo be provided. Other needs identified are the following.

- Infrastructure: roads, more permanent settlements, and a school building.
- Education: an agricultural high school and lessons in budgeting and management.
- Governance: creation of tribal villages (= *barangays*; proposal pending in Congress as of 2000).
- Cultural integrity: ongoing study of traditions so these can be practiced again.

- Livelihood: a 1,000 hectare dairy farm or ranch, cattle raising, abaca production, and a rice mill.

As envisioned by an Ata Manobo Datu, the goal is the return of self-sufficiency and self-reliance of the people
