

Indigenous Peoples Program

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The Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) is a southern Philippines-based homegrown think tank at the forefront of capacity building, research, forums, training and technical assistance for advancing public policy for peace, security and good governance in the region. IAG's work for the past two decades has contributed in defining needed measures toward human security and meaningful self-governance in the Bangsamoro region.

IAG has engaged with regional and national executive authorities and policymakers, Moro revolutionary fronts, local government units, security sector and key leaders and thinkers toward building consensus on political, economic, and security issues. IAG maintains sensitivity to the complexities and peculiarities of local settings, earning the trust and respect of a broad range of stakeholders.

IAG is committed to the development of public policies that promote and protect the rights and welfare of vulnerable groups such as women, children and the Indigenous Peoples especially in an environment of conflict and violence. Autonomy and good governance as paths for peace in the southern Philippines must be responsive to the needs and protection of vulnerable groups most affected by instability and insecurity.

IAG implemented the EU-funded IPDEV, a three-year Indigenous Peoples baseline and advocacy project (2012-2015), that built a strong foundation for its policy development work moving forward. IAG was the first to come up with a comprehensive profile of IP communities in the mainland ARMM, which is very essential to inform its work toward the protection and promotion of the rights of Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples. IAG worked with four tribes: the Teduray, the Lambangian, the Dulangan Manobo and the Higaonon, and focused on capacity building for the empowerment and strengthening of IP self-governance as well as advocacy for socio-legal and administrative reforms in the ARMM.

IAG completed the gathering of cultural information and baseline data and the generation of cultural maps that built the foundation for the successful formulation of the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP), that have been approved and adopted by three of the tribes, a milestone for the Indigenous Peoples.

IAG advocates for greater participation of IPs in decision making and improved access to basic social services of IP children. It built on the IPDEV baseline and conducted in 2015 a participatory research involving local government units and civil society organizations that

looked into the situation of children in indigenous cultural communities in mainland ARMM and their access to basic social services. From the findings, the study concluded that the IPs in mainland ARMM continue to suffer from deprivation of basic needs and are the most marginalized among the poor sectors of the society. The implementation of IPRA in ARMM, the establishment of NCIP and other relevant institutions to protect and promote the well-being of the IPs and to provide financial and technical support remain an urgent call to ensure that the rights of the IP children are protected for their self-preservation and identity.

From 2017 to 2018, IAG worked on mainstreaming the issues of IP children and youth in Indigenous Peoples Structure and in the planning and budgeting processes of local government in five municipalities in Maguindanao. Through capacity building activities and because of their common issues, the IP youth strengthened their advocacy for IP rights.

In July 2019, IAG facilitated a constitutional assessment workshop, bringing together a network of IP leaders to deepen their understanding of how the current legal framework promotes substantive equality and dignity of indigenous peoples in the Bangsamoro and Mindanao.

Building on the findings of the assessment, IAG undertook a roundtable discussion series in the latter half of 2019 to provide IP leaders a platform for discussing how to move forward IP issues in the Bangsamoro Parliament.

IAG is committed to further analysis of IP issues and the development of policies to advance IP rights during the critical period of transition in the Bangsamoro (2019-2022) and beyond.