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Indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia, sharing knowledge, building capacity, fighting poverty, saving diversity

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

SHARING KNOWLEDGE - BUILDING CAPACITY - FIGHTING POVERTY - SAVING DIVERSITY

RNIP

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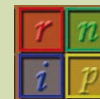
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**RNIP
Leiden / Cabagan
2007**

CONTENT

WHY THIS BOOKLET?

5

AN INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES,
POVERTY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

6

ABOUT RNIP

14

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN FIVE COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

22

THE RNIP TRUST FUND

34

SEVERAL RNIP TRUST FUND PROJECTS

40

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

62



WHY THIS BOOKLET?

In 2004 the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to fund a proposal submitted by Leiden University's Institute of Environmental Sciences. The proposal – submitted within the framework of the Ministry's thematic co-financing programme for Dutch institutions working in the field of development cooperation – was to establish a network in Southeast Asia for poverty alleviation among indigenous peoples.

The Regional Network for Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia (RNIP) was thus born in early 2005, with its office on the campus of Isabela State University in the Philippines, Leiden University's partner institution of almost twenty years.

This publication gives an overview of the background, activities and some of the projects implemented by the RNIP and its partners in the first three years of its existence. It has been prepared by the editors on the basis of documentation, presentations, project proposals and other internal documents submitted by partners within the RNIP. The texts in this booklet are abstracts without references; a more detailed publication will be available at a later stage.

We are grateful to the Directorate-General for International Cooperation for funding the activities of our network.

The editors

**AN INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP:
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, POVERTY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**



AN INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, POVERTY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

A growing awareness of and commitment to indigenous peoples' concerns has been evident within the international policy arena and among donor organisations over the past half-century. The term 'indigenous people' refers to some 300-500 million persons worldwide and encompasses a great variety of groups otherwise known as first nations, aboriginals, hill tribes, scheduled tribes, tribal, isolated, or autochthonous peoples, and ethnic, cultural or national minorities. Today's global indigenous peoples' movement champions their recognition as distinct peoples, respect for their lifestyles, and the enactment of specific rights for indigenous people within broader processes of socio-economic development and biodiversity conservation.

Tremendous human diversity is thus found in a category predicated upon sameness of experience. When 'indigenous people' came into being as a political category, all agreed that these people – in terms of social marginalisation, political exclusion, and poverty – were among the world's most disadvantaged. It was further agreed that their destitution was due to the assimilating processes of modernisation, development, civilisation and state-building. [Many post-colonial nation states sought to assimilate ethnic minorities as quickly as possible; some did so by force while others developed intensive civilization and development programmes which often had roots in the colonial era].



Although the contours of an indigenous peoples' movement were visible long before, it was only in the late 1960s that the movement entered the political limelight as it became popular within the affluent world to speak and act on behalf of voiceless 'others'. This had much to do with the international political climate of the post World War II era. Human rights were high on the agenda – and at least in some societies – claims to ethnic minority status could be turned to political advantage. While missionaries, foreign anthropologists and non-governmental organisations such as Survival International and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs had long been their spokespeople, indigenous peoples now became vocal and active within their own movement.

On the forefront of the indigenous peoples movement has been the International Labour Organization, which was, in 1957, the first international policy body to focus on indigenous rights. More than two decades later the World Bank issued its first policy document on indigenous peoples. This was followed in 1993 – the UN Year for Indigenous Peoples, which later became the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004) – by the UN Draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and provisions and policy guidelines issued by numerous countries. The World Wide Fund for Nature and the World Conservation Union followed suit in 1996, as did the European Union in 1998. Finally, in 1999, the Asian Development Bank issued its Policy on Indigenous Peoples, largely influenced by the policies of the World Bank. 13 September 2007 can be seen as a great day for the indigenous peoples movement because it was then that the General Assembly after more than two decades of negotiations between governments and indigenous peoples' representatives adopted the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The UN Declaration was adopted by a majority of 144 states in favour, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine). The Declaration establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of the world's indigenous peoples. The Declaration addresses both individual and collective rights; cultural rights and identity; rights to education, health, employment, language, and others. It outlaws discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them. It also ensures their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own priorities in economic, social and cultural development. The Declaration explicitly encourages harmonious and cooperative relations between states and indigenous peoples.



Indigeneity is today associated with poverty. Indeed, indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented among the world's poor. Multilateral donor institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank wishing to intervene where poverty is most serious often end up working in areas with indigenous habitation. The World Bank has gone so far as labelling indigenous people the 'poorest of the poor'. Indigenous communities, however, often assert that they are not poor, but live in difficult circumstances brought about by processes of development and modernisation that have deprived them of the land and natural resources that previously sustained their livelihoods.

Many indigenous people therefore do not speak of poverty (as if it were intrinsic to indigeneity), but of impoverishment (caused by forces outside their communities). Quantitative indicators – income, food, housing, clothing, modern appliances – do not suffice to measure poverty among indigenous peoples, for its socio-cultural dimensions include powerlessness and dependency, sometimes including slavery. Poverty can also manifest itself in loss of belief and demise of traditional cultural practices. What poverty among indigenous peoples most comes down to is the lack of recognition of customary rights over land and natural resources, the degradation of these lands and the depletion of natural resources by outsiders, displacement, the marginalisation of customary institutions, and lack of access to public facilities. Over time both indigenous peoples and concerned outsiders have come to favour the term 'impoverishment', which not only refers to the level of poverty among indigenous groups, but to their position within wider society in terms of lack of access to public goods, marginalisation and exclusion.





Most indigenous peoples live in biodiversity-rich areas of the world. The 'Biological 17' – Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Papua New Guinea, the United States of America and Venezuela – are home to more than two-thirds of the earth's biological resources, and are also the traditional territories of most of the world's indigenous peoples. In looking at indigenous peoples' global distribution, there is a marked correlation between areas of high biological and cultural diversity. This link is particularly significant in rainforest areas, such as those found along the Amazon, in Central America, Africa, and Southeast Asia (particularly the Philippines, New Guinea and Indonesia). It is now widely accepted that biological diversity cannot be conserved without cultural diversity, and that the long-term security of livelihoods depends on maintaining this intricate relationship. Over centuries, however, the relationship between indigenous peoples and their environment has been eroded due to dispossession or forced removal from traditional lands and sacred sites.

Land rights, land use and resource management remain critical issues for indigenous peoples around the world. But development projects, mining and forestry activities, and agricultural programmes continue to displace indigenous peoples. Environmental damage has been substantial: flora and fauna species have become extinct or endangered, unique ecosystems have been destroyed, and rivers and other water catchments have been heavily polluted. Commercial plant varieties have replaced the many locally adapted varieties used in traditional farming systems, leading to an increase in industrialized farming methods. In overall terms this has in many parts of the world led to severe impoverishment of indigenous communities, leading to the poorest of the poor living in potentially the richest areas of the globe.

The linkage between 'indigenism' and environmentalism is relatively recent. Whereas environmentalists in the past only talked about the preservation of precious flora and fauna, advocacy since the early 1980s has gone well beyond the traditional conservation agenda. Current environmentalism often takes into account the interests of (indigenous) peoples. This shift in consciousness can be traced to greater assertiveness on the part of developing countries, which began to exploit the tension between developmental and environmental goals to oppose the rich world's conservation agenda. The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in particular became an opportunity for developing countries to assert their sovereignty over their own development trajectories and natural resources. In their version of the story, poverty was the main reason behind pollution and environmental destruction, while development was the solution to environmental problems.

It took the conservation movement nearly a decade to formulate a response. Once it was acknowledged that the separation of environmental and developmental concerns was indeed unhelpful to tackle existing problems, the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 introduced the concept of 'sustainable development' – 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Sustainable development is about the participation of local people within combined conservation and development projects. It assumes greater participation by actors in developing countries – not only governments, but local scientists, conservationists and others promoting social change.

One of the most influential pieces of legislation that recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples towards the environment is the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD, negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, entered into force on 29 December 1993. Since then 187 countries have ratified the convention. The CBD promotes: 1) the conservation of biological diversity; 2) the sustainable use of its components; and 3) the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The convention works primarily through implementation of its principles and directives in national law, policy, research and management. The meetings of the Conference of Parties (COP) result in decisions that provide instructions and guidance for parties on implementing the convention in their national activities. So far, eight COPs have taken place.



The preamble of the CBD recognises the 'close and traditional dependence of indigenous and local communities [...] on biological resources and the desirability of sharing in the benefits derived from the use of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices.' Although the CBD acknowledges the role of indigenous and local communities in managing the environment and the importance of their traditional knowledge and practices, the exact definition of 'indigenous and local communities' remains contentious. But despite the lack of a definition, the CBD contains a number of provisions directly addressing indigenous and local communities, grouped together under the heading of 'Article 8(j) and Related Provisions'. The most important of these is Article 8(j) itself which states:



[Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate] subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices.

Note here that indigenous peoples' practices are respected within the CBD and that the international community has, by ratifying this convention, committed itself to protecting and strengthening the rights, knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities – but only to the extent that these practices contribute to the conservation of biological diversity. The approach is thus eco-centric rather than being centred around human rights, indigenous rights in particular.

As a result of powerful lobbying, indigenous representatives have been directly involved in the CBD process since COP-4 (1998). Their participation has mainly taken shape through the formation of an Open Ended Inter Sessional Working Group on Article 8(j), which takes place on an ad-hoc basis prior to each COP. The four working groups thus far have indeed strengthened the role of indigenous communities in the CBD process and enhanced their dialogue with governments. During COP-8 it was agreed that yet another working group will be held prior to COP-9.

Despite the increasing participation of indigenous groups in the CBD process, it is subject to continuous criticism from the indigenous peoples' movement. The weak implementation of the convention, despite its legally-binding status, worries many. Others fear that article 8(j)'s reference to 'traditional lifestyles' will be used by parties to reinforce isolationist or primitivist notions of changeless peoples. Indigenous groups have expressed concern that, unless interpreted positively, the convention could be used to their disadvantage.

Securing rights and access to natural resources (at least on paper) does not automatically mean indigenous communities are capable of managing these resources sustainably. Although it may be (as is often believed) that indigenous people's lifestyles are intrinsically sustainable, this is not necessarily the case. Modernisation has changed needs and expectations the world over, and the lifestyles of many indigenous groups have changed dramatically over the years. While many may have intimate knowledge of the environment in which they live, they may lack knowledge that pertains to the effective and sustainable management of these resources. Moreover, indigenous knowledge systems are often localised, based on the natural niche that a particular group occupies. Technical knowledge and knowledge of the broader context is often lacking. This is when indigenous people are in need of help.

The Regional Network for Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia (RNIP) tries to fill this need. RNIP is a network of local civil society organisations (CSOs) in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam working to alleviate poverty among indigenous peoples. RNIP considers the sustainable management of natural resources the key to poverty alleviation among indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia; it therefore sidesteps the (equally important) rights-based approach which inspires most similar networks in the region. The central goal of the RNIP programme is to develop renewed and practical attention to the sustainable use and management of natural resources; it pursues this through the provision of technical as well as financial support to CSOs striving to alleviate poverty among their constituencies through the sound and sustainable use of available natural resources. Enhancing the capacity of CSOs and facilitating the exchange of knowledge between them is thus an important part of RNIP's activities.





ABOUT RNIP

THE BROADER CONTEXT

The Regional Network for Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia (RNIP) is embedded within the framework of the Cagayan Valley Programme on Environment and Development (CVPED), an academic partnership between the College of Forestry and Environmental Management of Isabela State University in the Philippines and the Institute of Environmental Sciences (CML) of Leiden University in the Netherlands. CVPED is a long-term, interdisciplinary and intercultural research and education programme that aims to better understand the environmental problems of the Cagayan Valley in the northern Philippines. As RNIP covers five Southeast Asian countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam – its inclusion within CVPED has greatly broadened the latter's scope.

THE REGIONAL NETWORK FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (RNIP)

Launched in 2005, RNIP is a four-year programme implemented by CVPED and is part of a thematic co-financing programme funded by the Netherlands' Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS). RNIP considers the sustainable management of natural livelihood resources to be the key to alleviate poverty among indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia. Its objectives are pursued through the development and strengthening of a regional network of civil society organisations (CSOs).



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

RNIP aims to:

- Be an active regional network in Southeast Asia for knowledge exchange and capacity building.
- Strengthen local communities of indigenous peoples and enable CSOs to support cultural identity.
- Improve planning and management (sustainable use) of natural livelihood resources (ecosystem management).
- Provide additional cash and in-kind income to local indigenous communities through the more productive use of natural resources.
- Provide additional benefits to local indigenous communities through the improved management of natural resources, e.g. a clean water supply, improved soil fertility, protection against flooding and coastal abrasion, protection of species' breeding grounds.

ACTIVITIES

RNIP's core activities include:

- The establishment of a trust fund from which CSOs in the network can obtain funding for direct poverty reduction activities among indigenous peoples.
- The development and implementation of short training courses to build capacity among CSOs in the network and within indigenous communities.
- The active communication and exchange of knowledge from both within and outside the network.
- The promotion of an interdisciplinary, scientific approach to monitor and evaluate CSO activities.



ANNUAL INTER-VISION MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

Regular workshops and inter-vision meetings are conducted to monitor the progress of network partners funded through the RNIP Trust Fund. Over the last three years RNIP has organised three workshops and inter-vision meetings. The first workshop and inter-vision meeting – ‘Strengthening of a Regional Network for Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia’ – was held 18-22 April 2005 at the Environmental Information Center (EIC), Isabela State University, Isabela, Philippines. Papers were presented on various approaches to poverty alleviation among indigenous peoples, natural resources management by indigenous peoples, and the role of other networks in the region. The presentations became the basis for discussions and the development of future plans for the RNIP.

The second workshop – ‘Civil Society Organisations and Indigenous Peoples: Collaboration Towards Mutually Beneficial Partnership’ – was held 10-14 July 2006, again at the EIC at Isabela State University. Five papers were presented during the workshop, interspersed with project presentations by each of the participants, three workshop sessions and plenary meetings. A similar set-up was followed, with presentations by experts on recent political, economic, social and technological developments; biodiversity and agro-forestry; implementation of biodiversity conservation projects in indigenous areas; representation in policy and advocacy forums; benefit sharing and the accessing of funds for indigenous peoples’ projects. Follow-up discussions focused on commonalities and differences in the implementation of RNIP Trust Fund projects; finding solutions, remedies and common ground; and issues surrounding IP-CSO partnerships.

The third and the most recent workshop and inter-vision meeting was held 20-24 August 2007 at Ba Be National Park, Bac Kan province, Vietnam. It differed from previous meetings in that the presentations were basically case studies of RNIP projects. A country overview was presented for each of the five Southeast Asian countries where RNIP partners are active. Representatives of eleven projects supported through the RNIP Trust Fund then gave their presentations, which – enriched by participants’ professional expertise and implementation experience – became the starting point for the ensuing workshops. The workshops focused on implementation of RNIP Trust Fund projects; similarities and differences; the projects’ impact on people and the environment; and policy recommendations to optimise their impact.





TRAINING COURSES

Annual trainings have been held on various topics. The first was a basic training on participatory approaches and strategies for indigenous leaders and CSO partners held 7-11 November 2005 in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Two similar trainings on agro-forestry were held in 2006. The first, which took place 17-21 July 2006 at the Environmental Information Center of Isabela State University, was held in English for partners from the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The second training was held 3-8 November 2006 at the Petronas Game Village, Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia in Malay/Indonesian for participants from Indonesia and Malaysia.

The training for 2007, held in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines from 18-27 May 2007 was on three-dimensional community mapping and resource management planning. There were about twenty participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Some fifteen community members from the three villages covered by the 3D map also participated in the training.

The RNIP Programme Coordinating Unit and the Steering Committee

RNIP is manned by the programme coordinating unit based at the CVPED office at Isabela State University. The unit serves as the RNIP's secretariat and is responsible for daily matters and the programme's organisation. The RNIP steering committee meets once a year and gives recommendations on how to maximise the network's results.

The programme coordinating unit is composed of programme director Mr. Rolando Modina, assistant programme director Dr. Dante Aquino, and financial assistant Ms. Wilda Calapoto. The present members of the steering committee are Mr. Dave de Vera (PAFID, Philippines), Dam Trung Tuan (SPERI, Vietnam), Dr. Colin Nicholas (COAC, Malaysia), Emil Kleden (AMAN, Indonesia), Dr. Gerard Persoon (CML Leiden University, The Netherlands), and Dr. Romeo Quilang (ISU, Philippines). The programme is further supported by CVPED directors Drs. Jan van der Ploeg and Dr. Andres Masipiqueña in the Philippines, and by program leader Dr. Hans de longh, project leader Dr. Gerard Persoon, and assistant project leader Drs. Myrna Eindhoven in the Netherlands.

For more information on RNIP, visit www.rnip.org or www.cvped.org/rnip



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International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), Laguna, Philippines
International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) – Africa
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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN FIVE COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN INDONESIA

In August 2006 President Yudhoyono of Indonesia announced that indigenous peoples in his country had suffered from decades of development and loss of land. He stated that within a relatively short period a new law for indigenous peoples would be adopted. This came as a surprise to many people both within as well as outside Indonesia.

For a very long time Indonesia denied the existence of indigenous peoples on its territory, claiming instead that all Indonesians were indigenous. The international discourse on the rights of indigenous peoples was thus proclaimed irrelevant to the country. Indonesia's tribal populations were instead seen as 'isolated communities' in need of development and civilisation. Following independence, groups such as the Kubu, Baduy and Dayak became wards of the Department of Social Affairs.

The diversity among indigenous communities in Indonesia is enormous, from hunters and gatherers to sea nomads, shifting agriculturalists to members of coastal communities. 'Isolated communities' were primarily defined in terms of difference from mainstream Indonesian society in their modes of subsistence, housing, clothing, and animistic religion. While they were thought to number about 1.5 million people across the country, the number of ethnic groups classified as 'isolated' have varied over the years, ranging from 85 to 250 depending on the criteria used.

For a long time the Department of Social Affairs administered a uniform development programme for all 'isolated communities' in the country. Five-year development programmes in resettlement villages constituted the core of its efforts, with hundreds of such villages across the country.





After the end of the Suharto era in 1998 – and inspired by the global indigenous peoples’ movement – hundreds of indigenous representatives gathered in Jakarta to voice their concerns over loss of cultural identity and territory and their treatment by the government. Jointly they founded the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN). AMAN urged the government to review its policy towards indigenous peoples, show more respect towards their culture and way of life, respect their land rights and adhere to international conventions that grant rights to indigenous peoples.

At the local level, numerous organisations have been established among indigenous communities aiming to regain territorial rights, in some cases within protected areas. A certain revival of traditions is also noticeable among many groups. As a result of political decentralisation and greater regional autonomy, many ethnic groups within Indonesia are redefining their boundaries and reformulating their claims in the political arena, many of them under the banner of indigeneity.

The movement has already been successful to the extent that there is now more space for local communities to speak out on issues related to developments on their territories. The recent statement by Indonesia’s president clearly indicates a new approach.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN MALAYSIA

The position of indigenous peoples in Malaysia is closely related to the administrative structure of the country. Their position in the eleven states of peninsular Malaysia differs from what prevails in the two East Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah. The indigenous peoples – or Orang Asli – of peninsular Malaysia officially number about 150,000, and are thus only a tiny part (0.6%) of the total population. Culturally and linguistically they are divided, with 19 distinct ethnic groups including the Jakun, Temiar, Semai and Senoi.

In Sarawak indigenous groups – usually referred to as the Dayak or Orang Ulu – make up about half of the state's population. They include groups like the Kenyah, Kelabit and Penan. In Sabah, indigenous communities comprise more than 65% of the total population and include at least 39 different ethnic groups, including the Dusun, Bajau and Murut.

The lifestyle of Malaysia's indigenous peoples traditionally depended on the forests, the rivers and the sea. Most of them lived as shifting agriculturalists, while others practiced hunting and fishing in combination with agriculture. A number of groups, like the Penan and Semang, were exclusively hunter-gatherers. But over the years, indigenous peoples across the country lost land and resources to logging and large-scale plantations established by private and parastatal companies. Rubber and oil palm plantations in particular encroached upon their territory. As a result indigenous peoples are now among the poorest in Malaysia though the country as a whole has developed rapidly.

For a long time the Malaysian government's policy was based on a kind of gradual modernization model. Indigenous people were to be uplifted through development schemes which had integration into mainstream Malaysian society as their ultimate aim. A special office of the government – the Department of Orang Asli Affairs – was put in charge of implementing the programme, in which resettlement was central.



A new policy has more recently been formulated to provide the Orang Asli with better health care and educational facilities. Their lifestyles, in particular their agricultural practices, will be modernized while their culture and arts will be promoted as tourist attractions. Under the new policy Orang Asli are entitled to plots of land, though these are much smaller than what was previously considered theirs. In Sabah and Sarawak people used to hold official native customary rights (NCRs) but these have come under great pressure from rapidly expanding oil palm plantations.

Some Orang Asli organisations are really indigenous organisations while others are support organisations. PACOS is by far the most active and well-established organisation in Sabah, while BRIMAS holds a similar position in Sarawak. In addition to advocacy work, fund raising and capacity building, both work extensively with local communities. In peninsular Malaysia the Indigenous Peoples' Network coordinates the activities of a number of smaller organisations. In general, livelihood needs are given a higher priority than conservation or natural resource management issues. As loss of land undermines many other aspects of community life, insecurity over land is a basic issue for almost all groups. Most indigenous peoples' organisations stress that ensuring security of tenure over traditional land is crucial for their survival as communities with their own culture, religion and artistic traditions.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines has a relatively large indigenous population which inhabits all the major islands of the archipelago. Most of the roughly 12 million people considered indigenous live in the uplands or along select coastal areas. By all indices they belong to the poorest and most disadvantaged part of the population, with high rates of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty. Most of the 110 indigenous groups still practice shifting agriculture. Some groups like the Agta and the Tagbanwa still live mainly by hunting, gathering and fishing, while others like the Ifugao are well-known for their sedentary agricultural methods. The major threat to indigenous peoples over the last decades has come from land encroachment by migrant farmers and logging and mining companies.

The Philippines is the only Southeast Asian country that has passed an act that grants indigenous peoples land and other rights. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 provides them with the possibility of obtaining tenurial security over ancestral territory. Due to legal problems, it took several years for the act to enter into effect. It is now being implemented and ancestral domain claims are being changed into official title certificates.

The indigenous peoples' movement enjoys the support of a large number of organisations and institutions in Philippine society. Numerous non-governmental organisations, concerned academics, the church, and the public media have long supported their cause. Many organisations have been set up by indigenous peoples themselves, and over the years these have become increasingly vocal. But due to differences between indigenous communities – some are large and well-organized, others are small with their members scattered – it is not always easy to act in unison. There is also contention within communities over what future direction to take.

While indigenous people have always had a close relationship with the natural environment, many came to be seen as squatters on state forest land destroying original vegetation through shifting agriculture. They have lost land to logging and mining companies while migrants from overpopulated islands in search of arable land have moved into their ancestral domains. This has led to all kinds of conflicts with indigenous peoples usually on the losing end.



One of the rationales for adopting the IPRA was that indigenous people would be better managers of the environment than governmental officials. Management by the latter had led to large-scale loss of forest, depletion of wildlife and fish, and destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests. Indigenous people were thus invited to join the management boards of protected areas. Now, after a decade of involvement in managing protected areas, it is obvious that indigenous people are not by definition nature conservationists. They, too, have to make a living.

One of the lessons of the Philippines' experience is that while secure land tenure is necessary for effective resource management, it is not in itself sufficient. Employment opportunities, alternative livelihoods and freedom from encroachment and imposed development projects are just as important. Securing tenure is a complex process that infringes on the interests of other parties, including those of government agencies and the private sector. Nor is the determining of boundaries an easy task. What point in history should be taken for demarcating the ancestral domain? Philippine history has witnessed a great deal of population mobility, and it is not easy to undo this history. Common sense and the adjustment of formal policies to local conditions will most likely be the best way to generate just results.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN VIETNAM

Vietnam has a total population of almost 79 million, 85% of whom are lowland ethnic Vietnamese known as Kinh. The Kinh dominate the country's politics as well as economic and cultural affairs. Apart from the Kinh, there are 53 officially recognised ethnic minority groups that together number about ten million people. Ethnic minorities are defined as people with Vietnamese nationality who live in Vietnam but do not share 'Kinh' characteristics such as language, culture and identity.

Geographically, around 75% of all ethnic minorities live in 15 of Vietnam's 35 provinces and autonomously administered urban centres. Eleven of these provinces are situated in the northern uplands and another four in the central highlands or Tay Nguyen (see Table 1). Until recent decades, many of the ethnic minorities living in the central highlands lived in relative isolation with only limited interaction with lowlanders. In contrast, groups living in the northern mountainous areas have long had contact with Chinese and Vietnamese. Most ethnic minority citizens are poor subsistence farmers living in the most remote areas of the country. Despite numerous government efforts to develop the uplands, they suffer from disease, lack of clean water, low literacy and income.

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs has typified Vietnam's minority policy as a mixture of well-meant paternalism and ethnocentrism. Bad intentions are much less apparent than lack of knowledge about the ecological and socio-cultural realities that prevail in the highlands. The integration of ethnic minorities within mainstream Vietnamese society has always been the ultimate aim of government attempts at upland development. Besides large-scale (re)settlement programs, policies have also targeted infrastructure, education, health care – and perhaps most importantly in the context of this report – the introduction of forestry and commodity production as alternative means to generate income. The government has pursued these policies vigorously and has backed up its efforts by considerably increasing its allocations to upland and mountainous areas.

The main government body responsible for dealing with ethnic minorities in Vietnam is the Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas (CEMMA). Charged with improving conditions for more than ten million ethnic minority citizens, its primary role is to advise the government on policy. Unfortunately, CEMMA has been plagued by allegations of embezzlement and mismanagement since late 1998. The committee has also been accused of failing to involve ethnic minorities in its work.

Relatively few ethnic minorities hold key positions in the ministries and state agencies that implement national development policies. This means that individuals with personal knowledge of upland life have little say in key decision-making processes that concern upland development. Uplanders are also generally under-represented in the ranks of cadre responsible for implementing and managing development in the uplands. Their absence is particularly evident in the technical branches of the civil service – a reflection of their relative lack of access to advanced education. State farm and forest enterprises are also mostly headed by Kinh of lowland origin.

Civil society organisations do not officially exist in Vietnam as they are forbidden. There are, however, several organisations involved in improving the lives of Vietnam's ethnic minorities.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THAILAND

Thailand is home to a great variety of ethnic groups. Within the overall society of some 64 million, indigenous peoples officially number slightly over 860,000. Unofficial estimates, however, count over a million. The real number is still higher as this only includes people recognized by the Thai government as 'highlanders' or 'hill tribes' traditionally living in the mountainous north of the country. Other groups, such as the sea nomads of southern Thailand, are either dismissed as too small to be officially recognized or defined as 'immigrant populations'. Although these indigenous and tribal peoples – spread over more than 20 provinces, each with their distinct cultural values – make up a considerable part of the Thai population, they remain unacknowledged within Thai society.

Indigenous peoples in Thailand suffer severe discrimination. Not only are they seen as 'destroyers of the forests' and 'spreaders of narcotics' by many mainstream Thai, the government shows little interest in addressing the statelessness of many of these people. Thai NGOs claim more than half of the indigenous population holds no proof of citizenship. They are hence stateless. When applying for Thai citizenship many indigenous people meet with discrimination, their inability to speak Thai adding to their problems.

Government policies directly affect the lives and the cultural survival of Thailand's indigenous peoples. The residents of the highlands are generally believed to be unable to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner; their (legal) claims to the land and forests are denied regardless of how long they have been living there. Their territories have been exploited by both the state and private capitalists, causing conflict between local authorities and communities.



The sea-dwelling nomads dispersed over the many islands off Thailand's southern coasts have lost much of their land and marine areas to conservation efforts and tourism. The growing number of tourists and strict conservation measures – in which there is no place for indigenous and local knowledge – have deprived local communities of their natural resources.

Thai policies concerning citizenship are complex and closely related to issues of national security, deforestation and narcotics. Applying for Thai citizenship is a dreadful and time-consuming process. Due to various prejudices, Thailand's indigenous peoples are rarely granted full citizenship under the constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Lack of citizenship leads to a variety of problems: it directly affects their personal security and leads to the loss of other basic rights such as the right to make a living, the right to use the forest in a sustainable manner, the right to participate in development activities and the right to have access to government facilities and services.

There are many civil society organisations working on indigenous peoples' issues in Thailand. The Thai national network for indigenous peoples, the Assembly of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Thailand, is involved in advocacy both nationally and internationally. Various other organisations like the Karen Network for Culture and Environment (KNCE) and the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT) focus on certain geographical areas and specific groups within Thailand.





RNIP TRUST FUND

In addition to workshops and trainings on various aspects of poverty alleviation and sustainable resource management, the RNIP network administers its own trust fund. Organisations within the network are invited to submit proposals for small projects to be implemented by themselves. The RNIP Trust Fund supported a total of 30 such projects (ten annually) in the period 2005-2007. Proposed projects had to deal directly with poverty alleviation, natural resource management or community building within indigenous communities and were evaluated by the RNIP Trust Fund Committee with a minimum of formalities. Each partner could submit one proposal a year, with the possibility to submit a follow-up proposal the following year. This is why some organisations have been able to implement two or three projects. A selection of the 30 projects implemented thus far is presented in more detail on the following pages.





RNIP TRUST FUND MATRIX

PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT BENEFICIARIES	FIELD OF INTEREST	PROJECT PROPONENT	YEAR	DURATION
Ancestral Land Development through Vegetable Production (Phase I)	Talaandig in Bukidnon Province	Food security, agriculture, land security	Philippine Association for Intercultural Development Inc. (PAFID-Davao) PHILIPPINES	2005	12 months
Partnership Project for protection and Development of the Mamanwa People's Ancestral Land and Waters in Lake Mainit	Mamanwa in Agusan del Norte Province	Water, watershed protection, land protection	Philippine Association for Intercultural Development Inc. (PAFID-Davao) PHILIPPINES	2006	12 months
Ancestral Land Development through Vegetable Production (Phase II)	Talaandig in Bukidnon Province	Food security, agriculture, land security	Philippine Association for Intercultural Development Inc. (PAFID-Davao) PHILIPPINES	2007	12 months
Lupa Pusaka (Ancestral Domain) Agro Forestry, Watershed Development and the Construction of Irrigation/Water System	Subanen in Misamis Occidental province	Water, watershed protection, agroforestry	Pieksalabukan Ngak Subanen Gataw'g Ginsalugan (PINSUGG) PHILIPPINES	2005	12 months
Community Herbs Processing Project, Mountain Province	Kanka'naey in Mountain Province	Income generation, agroforestry, empowerment, women	Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education Foundation (Tebtebba) PHILIPPINES	2005	12 months
Lumad Women's Arts and Crafts	Lumad in Mindanao	Handicraft, women	Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education Foundation (Tebtebba) PHILIPPINES	2006	12 months
Indigenous Peoples Welfare and Forest Resource Management Project (Phase I)	Agta in Cagayan Valley Province	Food security, water, conservation, agriculture	Cagayan Valley Partners in People Development (CaVaPPeD) PHILIPPINES	2005	12 months
Indigenous Peoples Welfare and Forest Resource Management Project (Phase II)	Agta in Cagayan Valley Province	Food security, conservation, agriculture	Cagayan Valley Partners in People Development (CaVaPPeD) PHILIPPINES	2006	12 months
Indigenous Peoples Welfare and Forest Resource Management Project (Phase III)	Agta in Cagayan Valley Province	Food security, conservation, agriculture	Cagayan Valley Partners in People Development (CaVaPPeD) PHILIPPINES	2007	12 months
Agta Livelihood Project in Palanan, Isabela, Philippines	Agta in Isabela Province	Food security, agriculture	Christian Mission for the Unreached (CMU) PHILIPPINES	2005	10 months
Honey-bees breeding empowerment by Indigenous people around the damaged forest in Sei Merdeka-Samboja-Kutai Kartanegara-East Kalimantan, Indonesia.	Dayak East Kalimantan Province	Conservation, forest rehabilitation, empowerment	Padepokan Cantrik Nusantara (PCN) INDONESIA	2005	12 months

RNIP TRUST FUND MATRIX

Herbal Plant Cultivation and Herbal Medicine Manufacture in the Around of Protected Forest Garahan, Village: Sempolan, Sub-district: Silo, District: Jember, Province: East Java, Country: Indonesia.	Madurese in East Java Province	Herbal medicines, conservation	Padepokan Cantrik Nusantara (PCN) INDONESIA	2006	12 months
Elaborating Santaban Community Village Plan for Livelihood Improvement and Possible Assistance and Future Recognition of Sambas District Government.	Dayak in West Kalimantan Province	Empowerment, co-management, food security	Yayasan Madanika INDONESIA	2005	10 months
Sustainable Livelihoods and Improved Health for Farming Families in Desa Kalaki Kambe, West Sumba, NTT, Indonesia	Sumbanese in NTT Province	Food security, health, agriculture	Yayasan Harapan Sumba INDONESIA	2005	24 months
Capacity building and regaining confidence among the local community in the village of Berap through an intervention in the local cocoa market	Papuans in Papua	Empowerment, security, capacity building, income generation, agriculture	Yayasan Anak Dusun Papua [Yadupa] INDONESIA	2006	12 months
Protection of Ba Be Lake Natural Livelihood Resources: Increased Involvement of Tay women and fisherman in protecting livelihood resources, through the Ba Be Lake Management Cooperative.	Tay in Bac Kan Province	Food security, empowerment, capacity building, conservation, co-management	PCRf- Vietnam and Ba Be Lake Management Cooperative VIETNAM	2006	10 months
The First Weave – Orang Asli Women Self-Development Initiative, Malaysia	Mah Meri in Selangor Province	Handicraft, women, income generation,	Tompoq Topoh-Mah Meri Women's First Weave Group MALAYSIA	2005	12 months
Community initiative to conserve and manage their forest towards better community livelihood	Kadazun Dusun in Sabah State	Food security, conservation, agroforestry	Partners of Community Organisations [Haini Jarufah Tainsong] (PACOS Trust) MALAYSIA	2006	12 months
Community-based Indigenous Herbs and Traditional Medicines Conservation in Sarawak, Malaysia	Kenyah-Badeng in Sarawak State	Herbal medicine, health, conservation	Institute Pribumi Malaysia Sarawak (IPIMAS) MALAYSIA	2006	12 months
Livelihood improvement of upland farmers indigenous peoples in the province of Nueva Vizcaya	Iwak, Kalanguya and Ibaloi in Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya	Food security	Tribal Cooperation for Rural Development, Inc. (TRICORD) PHILIPPINES	2005	8 months
Karen People's Community Traditional Medicine Project, Thai-Burma border	Karen within the border area of Thailand and Burma	Herbal medicine, health, women	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN) THAILAND	2006	12 months
Increasing income and quality of life of the Lang Thuong indigenous people	Tay, Nung and Kinh in Lang Thuong village in Lang Son Province	Food security, income generation, animal husbandry, agriculture	Center for Sustainable Development in Mountain Areas (CSDM) VIETNAM	2006	12 months

RNIP TRUST FUND MATRIX

Eco Tourism Plan in Mayalibit Bay-Waigeo-Raja Ampat Islands-Papua Province (Building Resorts for Economic Improvement and Supporting conservation issues)	Papuans in Papua	Eco tourism, conservation, income generation	Yayasan Nazaret Papua (YNP) INDONESIA	2007	12 months
Potential Enhancement of Lisu Women Leaders for Economic and Herbal Security Development Project	Lisu and other indigenous groups in (1) Baan Sahakorn Nikhom Paeng Ha (Lisu Thong Khu), Tambon Pa Tum, Phrao District, Chiang Mai Province (2) Baan Doi Chang, Baan Doi Lan, Baan Huay Khrai, Tambon Wawee, Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province (3) Baan Huay San and Baan Mae Mon, Tambon Huay Chom Phu, Muang District, Chiang Rai Province	Empowerment, women, health, income generation	Lisu Network of Thailand (LNT) in coolaboration with Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT) THAILAND	2007	12 months
Livelihood Creation Resulting to the Protection of Ancestral Land	Ita in Sitio Maporac, Brgy. New San Juan, Cabangon, Zambales, Philippines	Food security, conservation	PREDA Foundation, Upper Kalaklan, Subic Bay, Olongapo City PHILIPPINES	2007	12 months
Technical and Institutional support of Rongkong's Indigenous communities in managing forest for Gum Copal (Agathis sp) Production and Marketing	Limbong, Luwa Utara, South Sulawesi, Indonesia	Empowerment, co-management, income generation,	SETARA Foundation (NTFP Indonesia program) collaboration with AMAN Sul-Sel (Indigenous people's Alliance of South Sulawesi) INDONESIA	2007	4 months
Increased sustainability of use and conservation of local natural dye plants by Dayak Weavers	Sixteen Dayak villages in Sintang District, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia	Empowerment, conservation, income generation	Jasa Menenum Mandiri Cooperative in collaboration with PRCF INDONESIA	2007	12 months
Improved Cook Stoves Promotion Programmes	Fourteen indigenous communities in Abra, Apit Tako, Mountain Province and Kalinga province, Philippines	Empowerment, conservation	Centre for development Programmes in the Cordillera (CDPC) PHILIPPINES	2007	12 months
Restoration and Protection of Agar Wood (Gaharu) at District of Assue in Mappi Regency, Papua Indonesia	Papuans in Papua	Conservation, income generation	Office for Justice and Peace of the Archdiocese of Merauke, Papua, Indonesia (SKP-KAM) INDONESIA	2007	6 months
Clean Water Project	Dayak in Rantau Layung, Battu Soppang sub-district, Paser district, East Kalimantan, Indonesia	Water, health, conservation	Persatuan Masyarakat Adat Paser (PeMA Paser) INDONESIA	2007	5 months



PROTECTING BA BE LAKE'S NATURAL RESOURCES: INCREASED INVOLVEMENT OF TAY WOMEN AND FISHERMEN

PEOPLE RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION VIETNAM (PRCF-VIETNAM)

Ba Be National Park (BBNP) in the Ba Be district of Bac Kan province in north Vietnam was originally established as a protected area in 1977. It was declared a national park by presidential decree in 1992 and an ASEAN Heritage Site in 2003. PRCF Vietnam's involvement in Ba Be National Park is part of a wider PRCF karst ecosystem conservation and development programme in northern Vietnam. In 2004 a cooperative of Tay indigenous people living in the park – the Ba Be Lake Management Cooperative (BBLMC) – was created to help promote the conservation and management of the lake's over-exploited resources.

The Tay lakeside communities have not been benefiting from developments in transportation and tourism on the lake. The Tay communities moreover have to compete for scarce resources with an ever-increasing numbers of immigrants. The RNIP-sponsored project supports the lakeside communities' long-felt need for a co-management plan to sustainably manage Ba Be Lake.

We decided that especially Tay women and fishermen should be empowered to play an active role in managing the lake's resources. Problems and possible solutions were discussed with Tay women and fishermen at several workshops, while possibilities for a self-help group with a small trust fund were investigated. During implementation it became clear that the BBLMC lacked implementing power. Our initial activities therefore had to focus on institutionally strengthening the BBLMC. Through training sessions on accounting and saving, financial management and project planning, local people involved in the BBLMC gained important skills.

While it is too early to assess the impact of the project, we see that the Tay lakeside communities are increasingly eager to manage the lake's resources while Tay women want to more actively participate in village development through self-help groups. A portion of boatmen's income is already being allocated to village development, lake management stakeholders are meeting to solve lake resource problems, and unsustainable fishing methods are on the decline due to local peer pressure.

Prospects for the future look positive. We realise the BBLMC must be further strengthened to be a successful community organisation and that future activities require close collaboration between lakeside households and national park authorities.



SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND IMPROVED HEALTH FOR FARMING FAMILIES IN DESA KALAKI KAMBE (WEST SUMBA, NTT, INDONESIA)

YAYASAN HARAPAN SUMBA

Yayasan Harapan Sumba (YHS) is a registered Indonesian charity dedicated to assisting the people of the eastern Indonesian island of Sumba to tackle the causes of their poverty. Our target population consists of 15,000 people living in 250 kampungs loosely gathered in five villages. They are subsistence farmers in a traditionally non-cash economy with little education.

In June 2006, RNIP granted funding to YHS to try to improve the prosperity and health of subsistence farmers in West Sumba. The project aims to increase villager's ability to identify, analyse, and overcome problems, and to empower women as equal members of society. It further tries to improve yields through better farming techniques including the use of organic fertilizer, more varied short, medium and long-term crops, and the introduction of a jointly-owned bedding nursery with vegetable, fruit tree and hardwood seedlings.

The project began by holding discussions with 95 farming families in five kampungs (this was extended to ten kampungs later in the rainy season). We discussed with both men and women the crops they are growing, their successes and failures, and what they saw as the reasons for the failures. Most families only had experience growing rice, corn, cassava, mung beans and peanuts, while almost none had grown vegetables though they knew of several varieties which would grow well on land such as theirs. We discussed at length the crops and trees they might grow.

In the kampungs where water does not pose major difficulties, farmers decided to grow tomatoes, peppers, long beans and aubergines, and where there is plenty of water, a leafy vegetable called kangkung. The farmers decided the most useful trees would be good varieties of mango, jackfruit, papaya, sandalwood and maliti, a fast-growing tree which is an excellent host for the kutu-lak beetle whose secretions can be harvested and used to make paint and varnish.

The three driest kampungs are far from water and rainfall is scarce. It is difficult for inhabitants to bring home enough water for drinking and cooking, let alone for watering plants. Thus only the hardest crops and trees can survive. While the farmers asked for help with young banana and pineapple plants and with peanuts for seed, they did not participate further in the farming program.

The project has now been through two rounds of kitchen gardens, the first round among groups in one small area, the second involving farmers from eight additional kampungs. In the first round some farmers did very well with their kitchen gardens and were able to eat plenty of vegetables at home and sell them locally. Some of their neighbours who did not initially want to be involved were inspired to start their own gardens, also with good results. But in other cases results were disappointing, especially among farmers who had to go more than a few hundred yards for water.

The second round started in the rainy season when water was plentiful. While all groups expressed interest in participating again, we decided to help only those who had worked well before. This time we included the kampungs where we run our health and animal programs, and worked much more closely with all groups to ensure effective care of the gardens. Each farmer who prepared a plot received seedlings in January. Since then we have visited each kampung regularly and results have improved. Farmers who did not understand how to take care of vegetables are, after frequent visits and encouragement, now seeing the results and benefits of their work. We will soon see whether they can sustain their efforts and enthusiasm into the dry season which is just starting.



PIDLISAN COMMUNITY HERBS PROCESSING PROJECT

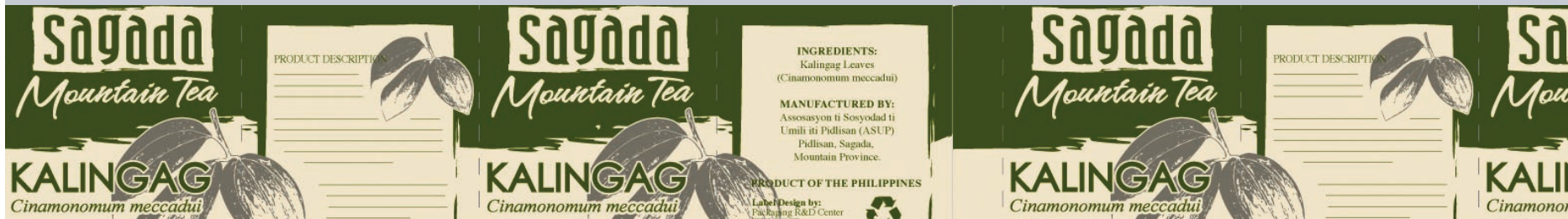
MONTAÑOSA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Montañosa Research and Development Center (MRDC) was established in 1978 in response to the aggression of state-sponsored development in the Cordillera and to search for mechanisms to promote people's involvement in the development process.

The Pidlisan community is located in northern Sagada, Mountain Province. It has a population of 1,833 persons distributed among 343 households. The Cordillera mountain range remains a sanctuary of highly diverse biological life and a watershed for the lowland plains of northern Luzon. However, the rate of forest denudation and biodiversity erosion is alarming; if left unchecked these will alter the balance of the ecosystem. The indigenous peoples – the original stewards of these mountains – have long been neglected by the state, which has forced them to exploit the natural bounties that were nurtured by their ancestors to survive. Pidlisan is no exception.

In focus group discussions conducted by the MRDC in the four villages of Pidlisan, the participants cited poverty, lack of livelihood, and the cash economy as the major reasons that drove them to illegal logging and medium-scale mining. They are aware that their actions contribute to environmental degradation, and if provided with diverse and sustainable sources of income, would abandon them altogether. The Pidlisan Community Herbal Tea Processing Project builds on this premise. It provides an alternative livelihood to vulnerable groups, particularly young mothers, through the processing of herbs and other plants traditionally used as drinks into 'tea', thus contributing to the conservation, protection and propagation of biological diversity and other natural resources.

The main implementer of the project is the Asosasyon Dagiti Sosyedad iti Pidlisan (ASUP). Since its formation in 1992, ASUP has been advocating sustainable agriculture and protection of the environment through traditional farming and indigenous resource management systems, respectively. A set of activities and expected outputs was drafted by ASUP and MRDC to systematize implementation and to serve as a basis for monitoring and evaluation. Tea processing is a new venture to be undertaken by ASUP and MRDC as partners. Initially they didn't know how to proceed and relied on technical information from the internet.



Members of MRDC staff who had completed the hands-on training shared their knowledge with a pool of ten young mothers through a similar training on February 27-28, 2007. A total of 223 packs of tea [with ten tea bags each] were produced and labelled for promotional marketing. The first 23 packs were sold during the International Workshop on Indigenous Indicators in Banaue, Ifugao on March 4-9, 2007, while 100 packs were sold to tourists in Sagada during the summer months of April and May. Another hundred packs were distributed to two outlets in Baguio City and Manila managed by NGO partners.

A workshop on bookkeeping was facilitated by MRDC to equip ASUP with skills to manage funds; the treasurer and auditor of ASUP participated to ensure transparency and to better understand the financial aspects of the project. The partners also prepared a catalogue including seven herbal tea plants that grow in the wild, along with a short history of the discovery of these herbs and their changing consumption patterns. Overall, the project has served as a juncture for the indigenous people of Pidlisan to review their history through indigenous concepts of resource management and utilisation.



MAH MERI WOMEN'S 'FIRST WEAVE' SELF-DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (PULAU CAREY, SELANGOR, MALAYSIA)

TOMPOQ TOPOH

This project is an effort by a recently established women's group to enhance the economic standing of its members while documenting their tangible and intangible culture. The core of the project consists of promoting pandanus weaving.

The women of the Mah Meri people on the island of Pulau Carey were marginalized as they lost their lands and livelihoods to encroaching oil palm plantations. The composition of the island's population changed rapidly as the island was connected by bridge and paved road; the Mah Meri people, a sub group of the Orang Asli, became a minority. Many former fishing folk and swidden agriculturalists became sedentary farmers or wage earners on plantations. The younger generation in particular seeks employment on the oil palm plantation that dominates the island's landscape.

While some Mah Meri men successfully became wood carvers – thereby reviving their tradition of wood carving – opportunities for women to acquire additional income by making use of their traditional culture has been limited. It was only a few years ago that an informal cooperative named Topoq Topoh was formed to help them undertake activities related to their traditional culture. The Centre for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC) assisted the women in forming Topoq Topoh. The members of the cooperative are now involved in cultural performances, including dancing and singing, and sensitisation tours among Mah Meri people.

The core of the project, pandanus weaving, provides women with additional income to supplement family earnings from agriculture and wage labour. To ensure sufficient weaving material, the women of the cooperative are replanting pandanus plants, whose traditional habitat largely disappeared due to land conversion. Small-scale replanting efforts began in 2004.

Traditional pandanus weaving has been promoted with the help of basic photo documentation provided by COAC. With the help of RNIP funding and some other small grants, a process of self-documentation and cultural promotion could begin. In addition to weaving and cultural performances, postcards were produced, followed in 2007 by the booklet *Chita Hae*. These products are marketed to tourists, expatriates in the capital, and students interested in Orang Asli culture.

One of the most important by-products of the project is the development of a sense of cultural pride among the women. In addition to the revival of Mah Meri weaving skills, the women have gained proficiency in the use of audio-visual equipment and project management skills such as reporting and book keeping.



RESTORATION AND PROTECTION OF AGARWOOD (GAHARU) IN ASSUE SUB-DISTRICT, PAPUA (INDONESIA)

OFFICE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MERAUKE (SKP-KAM)

The aim of this project is to cultivate agarwood – otherwise known as the ‘wood of the gods’ – to provide additional income for local farmers among the Awyu and Wiyaghar peoples and to reduce over-exploitation of wild agarwood.

The project supports the cultivation of agarwood by establishing aquilaria plantations. This tree species, when wounded, produces agarwood as a defense mechanism. The infected wood contains a kind of oil which is highly valued for the production of incense, and oil which is used for the production of perfumes and other products in the Middle East and East Asia. Until recently most of the agarwood was harvested from the wild but in many areas resources have been depleted. Aquilaria species have moreover been placed on the CITES Appendix II list of threatened species.

The project consists of three elements. First, plantations are established on land owned by local communities in Assue sub-district. Seeds are harvested from the wild and cared for in nurseries. Once sufficiently large, Aquilaria tree seedlings are integrated within the existing agroforestry practices of the local people, who are already growing annual and perennial food and tree crops like sago, rubber, fruit and cashew trees.

The second element of the project consists of training in the inoculation of trees. This is done in a variety of ways, including cutting the bark, drilling holes and infecting the tree with a particular fungus. This is a crucial process for which the project is making use of an expert from the University of Mataram on Lombok. This process is most effective once the trees have reached a diameter of no less than 10 cm.

The third part of the project consists of training in the harvesting of agarwood and the skillful cleaning of the infected wood. This process determines the quality of the agarwood and thereby the price that traders will be willing to pay for it. The project does not yet plan to establish a processing or distillation unit to extract the oil from the chips.

So far the project has been able to establish plantations among hundreds of farmers who have received training on the inoculation process and harvesting techniques. The project enjoys strong support from local communities as well as local government officials who consider agarwood cultivation a sustainable form of resource management that reduces the exploitation of wild agarwood.



FROM HUNTER-GATHERERS TO FARMERS: AGTA ADAPTATION FOR SURVIVAL (NORTHEAST LUZON, THE PHILIPPINES)

CAGAYAN VALLEY PARTNERS IN PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT (CAVAPPED)

This project aims to augment the income of the Agta people living in a number of municipalities in Cagayan Province by promoting sustainable agriculture. Decades of logging and encroachment by migrant farmers have reduced the forests and their hunting and gathering way of life. Small in number and with limited means to resist the outside world, many Agta have become daily labourers on migrants' farms. However, it is doubtful that this is a sufficient basis for the long-term well-being of their communities. The promotion of agriculture as a sustainable means to grow food – together with securing rights to the land – seems the only way forward.

The Agta are thus being trained to prepare land and to grow food, cash crops, and various annual and tree crops including fruit trees. The project provides them with draft water buffalos and tools such as ploughs, harrows, shovels, hoes and axes. Productive agro-forestry practices can also be adopted from some of the neighbouring farms. As hunters and gatherers, however, the Agta are not used to the kind of sedentary life that farmers usually lead, and regularly return to the forest to hunt, to collect rattan and wild honey, and to fish in the fast-flowing rivers. Due to this combination of livelihoods, their fields remain relatively small.





Agriculture is also important to support legal claims to the land. The Agta were forced to retreat into the forest once more powerful farmers began clearing land because their territorial rights as hunter-gatherers were unrecognized. By investing in the land through cultivation and the planting of trees, CAVAPPED can support their legal claims to territorial rights. This also helps the Agta to unite as a community.

The project also provides access to clean drinking water. Due to the lack of a reliable year-round source, a communal water system was established in each of the four project sites. These are shared with families from other communities, which also leads to increased interaction with other families.

Unfamiliar with intensive agriculture and the rhythms of ploughing, planting, weeding, growing seeds and watering, some Agta were slow adaptors in the initial phase of the project. Extreme weather conditions including typhoons also set back their agricultural activities. But after repeated trial and error and with the help of committed field workers, more and more Agta are coming to see that while farming may not be their first choice, it may be their best option given their vanishing forests and an outside world indifferent to their fate as hunter-gatherers. Many have proven their abilities and are experimenting with new farming methods, often making use of their extensive knowledge of plants, animals and ecological conditions gained during years of dwelling in the forest.

SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF DAYAK WEAVERS' DYE PLANTS (WEST KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA)

JASA MENENUM MANDIRI (JMM)

This project promotes the use and conservation of natural dye plants to revitalize traditional weaving among Dayak villagers in the sub-districts of Kelam Permai and Dedai in Sintang district, East Kalimantan. The project was designed after extensive discussion with weavers in the communities. The weavers, most of them women, were finding it increasingly difficult to colour their weaving with natural dyes, the availability of which had declined in recent years due to the conversion of forest gardens, often into oil palm plantations. Even small farmers have done away with their mixed forest gardens in favour of this cash crop.

The project thus focuses on enriching local forest gardens. About ten species that provide natural dye stuffs – a total of 15,000 seedlings – were planted in a newly established central nursery. These included mengkude, tarum padi and tarum jawa. The weavers' local cooperative played an important role in the selection of the plants. Two villages were selected to participate in the project, based on number of weavers, their location, and the eagerness of people to get involved. The cooperative also invited other women leaders to show how dyestuff plant sources from outside the locality could be used.

One of the project's goals is to document the plants and their use for dissemination and replication by other weavers and interested people. By promoting their use, the project hopes to contribute to the protection and conservation of these useful plants. The booklet, together with the acquired practical knowledge, will help enrich local forests with usable plant stocks and to maintain them for present and future generations of weavers.

Ikat weaving is a supplementary income-generating activity mainly for women, and the use of natural dyes will allow them to fetch higher prices. Planting in their own forest gardens will also save time as they will no longer have to search for these plants in the wild.

The local cooperative, JMM, founded in May 2000, is supported in its operations and community-based conservation efforts by the People, Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF) Indonesia, which provides the cooperative with a wide network of useful contacts and expertise.





KAREN PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PROJECT

THE KAREN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL ACTION NETWORK (KESAN)

This project aims to re-establish and support traditional herbal medicine in Karen state to improve primary healthcare in vulnerable communities and to promote the sustainable use of Karen state's natural resources by local people. Due to the prevailing political unrest and lack of health care facilities, communities need to be in control of their own primary health care. The project thus promotes local traditional medicine and knowledge of its use among the Karen people, as well as the preservation of forests and natural resources for the survival of local people and Karen culture.

The Karen are the indigenous people of the border area between Burma and Thailand. Traditionally they are farmers of paddy as well as upland rice. Forests are used for hunting and for gathering a wide variety of non-timber forest products including medicinal plants. Timber and fuel wood are also collected in the forest. Decades of civil war and human rights abuses have resulted in a public health catastrophe in eastern Burma. Access to health services is extremely limited while Karen are losing control of their land and natural resources. Disease is rampant and people have little access to western medicine. The project aims to counter this threat to health by revitalising traditional medicinal knowledge and practice.

One of the project activities is the production of a traditional health booklet containing available medicinal and ecological knowledge. The booklet is not an end in itself but an instrument to increase knowledge of local medicine. Containing instructions for establishing herbal medicine gardens and clinics, it will be used as a teaching tool in community workshops.

The project is implemented by KESAN, the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network, in collaboration with the Karen Department of Health and Welfare. The first step was to collect herbalists' knowledge of diseases and medicinal plants. The material, including photographs, is currently being edited; the text is in the Karen language. Once the book is ready it will be taken to the communities and used in trainings for primary health care, including instruction for first aid. Preliminary meetings have already been held in the Doooplaya, Pa-an and Mutraw districts where health care is most urgently needed. Wardens will be appointed over the newly established community herbal medicine gardens. Their harvests will be distributed to herbal clinics in other districts to promote this kind of medicine.

It is hoped that the present project will be continued and that additional gardens will be established in areas where communities no longer have access to forest resources. Additional health clinics will be necessary to ensure health care facilities in remote areas. One of the lessons learnt thus far is that people are regaining confidence in their own medicinal traditions. In contexts where modern medicine is practically absent, self sufficiency in elementary forms of health care is crucial. The extremely difficult political situation, full of insecurity, should not allow organisations to turn a blind eye to the pressing needs of the Karen people.





SECURING SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE TALAANDIG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN MINDANAO (THE PHILIPPINES)

THE PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION FOR INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (PAFID)

This project helps tribal and non-tribal families in Portulin to sustain their farming initiatives and to increase their income by growing potatoes and carrots. The project provides planting materials and training on care and maintenance as well as technical skills for sustainable agriculture. Cross-farm visits to learn from other locations are an important part of the project activities. The project also aims to establish a cooperative.

The Talaandigs are an indigenous people living in the province of Bukidnon on Mindanao. They number about 75,000 and occupy the area around a number of sacred mountains. Despite the influence of modernisation, they retain their traditional customs, beliefs and practices. While their ancestral domain is rich in natural resources, the Talaandig people are poor. Their land, however, is well-suited for agriculture.

The area has suffered from unscrupulous financiers who have left local farmers impoverished and in debt, and the lack of basic social facilities and government support has allowed the situation to continue. As there were no local entrepreneurs to market agricultural surpluses at reasonable prices, many Talaandigs ended up as wage labourers on lowland sugarcane plantations. Conflicts over land increased as lowland migrants began clearing land on the sloping hills within the ancestral domains.

As indigenous people and the children of migrants share a common future in the area, the project aims to build unity within the population, not by excluding migrant farmers but by taking the interests of all residents into account. Improvement of livelihoods is combined with responsibility for the remaining biodiversity on the foothills and mountains.

The project works with selected poor families to help increase their food supply, some of which will be marketed. The greater aim, however, is to strengthen the capacity of community members to undertake cooperative endeavours and to respond to the challenges of managing not only their agricultural lands but their entire ancestral domain. The rehabilitation of degraded lands through the development of agro-forestry farms, contour farming and reforestation is part of the project.

The project is implemented by PAFID, an organization based in Manila with long experience in these kinds of activities. At the local level the project is managed by the Portulin Tribal Association (PTA), an indigenous organisation entirely composed of local people, while PAFID's network is used to bring in technical support and to facilitate farmers' on-site training.

The first phase of the project resulted in increased agricultural output, leading to more family income and a reduction in malnutrition. It is also evident that projects like these need longer periods to sustain results and to involve more families in bringing about a better future. Fortunately the RNIP Trust Fund was in a position to prolong the project with a second phase.





ECO-TOURISM PROJECT

YAYASAN NAZARET PAPUA (YNP)

Yayasan Nazaret Papua (YNP) is an independent organisation based in Sorong, Papua, Indonesia. YNP is working to enhance local communities' traditional knowledge of natural resources on the Raja Empat Islands, where resources are exploited unsustainably through illegal mining, illegal logging, illegal bird hunting, man-instigated forest fires, and dynamite and cyanide fishing. Local indigenous communities are further facing severe social problems including HIV/AIDS, poor healthcare and meagre access to government facilities.

The RNIP project is located in the sub-district of Mayalibit Bay, inhabited by some 1,500 indigenous Papuans. For their livelihood these peoples depend upon fishing and subsistence farming. More than 50% of the population is illiterate. Surrounded by a limestone mountain range, Mayalibit Bay is known for its rich marine resources and its great variety of birds, butterflies and bats, some of which are endemic to the area.

In order to safeguard these natural resources while improving the livelihood of local communities, YNP is building infrastructure for eco-tourism. Within the context of the RNIP project, a local management body has been formed, a bird watching post has been built, and consultations have been held with stakeholders. Plans have also been made to expand YNP by opening another office in the village of Waifoio to help in the implementation of future projects. In the meantime a villager has offered his house as a temporary field office.

In June, nine experts from the Indonesian science institute Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) rented the bird watching tower, providing the local management body with its first revenue. As a result of intense consultations, local community members are now more aware of their role in the management of natural resources. Signs of change can be seen in how Mayalibit residents are managing their garbage, keeping the beaches clean, and not cutting trees unnecessarily.



TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN LANG THUONG VILLAGE

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MOUNTAINOUS AREAS (CSDM)

Lang Thuong is a village in the Chi Lang district of Lang Son province in northeast Vietnam. It is home to 77 households with 402 people from three different ethnic groups: Tay, Nung and Kinh. Three out of five households live on less than 200 kg of rice per year, which is below the national poverty line. Poor soil conditions, lack of proper cultivation practices and poor control of animal diseases are behind this poverty, while the overuse of chemical fertilisers and pesticides is causing severe soil degradation and water pollution. Unfortunately forest and agricultural extension services are very limited, while those that exist often do not meet local needs. As a result local communities often use improper cultivation practices and lack knowledge on how to prevent animal diseases.

This project aims to augment the income and quality of life of the Lang Thuong indigenous peoples through improved agricultural practices. Both sustainable agriculture and sound animal husbandry are part of the improved extension services now offered to the villagers. All households in Lang Thuong village will benefit from the project. All villagers participated in the various trainings and pilot projects, while results are being shared with the other inhabitants of Quan Son district. Efforts may end up reaching a population of some 3,700 persons.

A village extension group and a village development plan taking into account the village constitution were set up to implement the project's activities. As soon as these were in place we held several training sessions on the proper use of fertilisers, seed selection and improved agricultural and animal husbandry techniques. All trainings were combined with workshops and follow-up activities. These resulted in a village vet network to improve animal husbandry and a pilot project to produce organic fertiliser.

Forty households are now growing potatoes on land that would otherwise be fallow in winter. With a loan of 150,000 VND per household, 40 households were able to produce 80 tons of potatoes over the winter of 2006. At an average price of 1.4 million VND per ton, total earnings amounted to some 112 million VND. After paying for the seedlings and fertiliser, villagers were left with a profit of approximately 60 million VND.



Watermelon, bananas and taro were also introduced. Especially the introduction of bananas and taro, intercropped under the forest canopy, made the villagers realise they can augment their incomes without deforestation. The project has also resulted in the more responsible use of chemical fertiliser. Though not fully replaced, its use has been reduced through the introduction of organic fertiliser. Living conditions for the animals have also improved. Animals no longer roam around the village damaging crops, but are kept in stables which are cleaned regularly, while sick and dead animals are taken care of in a way to prevent the spread of animal diseases. As a result the stocks of some households have increased.

The indirect results of the project can be seen in the social sphere. Villagers' sense of cohesion has grown while social evils such as gambling, drinking and petty theft seem to have decreased. People seem more aware of their influence on the natural environment and their ability to make a difference without waiting for help from the authorities.





TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The staff and partners of RNIP have found their involvement in the project thus far a rich and challenging learning experience. New insights have been gained – on the level of policy and research, and especially, on the level of practical implementation. Below are some brief reflections on our ‘thoughts-in-progress’.

ON THE CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Lively discussions have taken place on how to define indigenous people. It remains true that the majority of Asian countries do not acknowledge their existence, while in some countries such as Indonesia, distinguishing indigenous from non-indigenous peoples remains problematic. For example, while the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs previously counted some 1.5 million ‘isolated people’, the pan-Indonesian organisation AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara) now claims it represents at least five million people. This increase in membership of a previously ostracized group in Indonesian society is telling; besides political expediency, it shows the extreme fluidity of ethno-political identities. Vietnam also has discrepancies between what is called the anthropological definition of indigenous peoples – leading to 54 identified groups – and the local understanding of indigenous peoples – leading to at least 68 ethnic groups.

While policies of international donors and local CSOs are geared towards the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples’ needs and rights, to be effective they need appeal to the policies and discourses of national governments.

ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ RIGHTS

Despite the fact that RNIP wishes to omit a rights based approach, government recognition of indigenous rights remains a recurring issue within RNIP discussions. The majority of RNIP partners considers the formal recognition of rights (to land and natural resources, as well as political rights) necessary before other issues (such as poverty) can be addressed. While many indigenous groups in Southeast Asia are striving for formal recognition, the example of the Philippines shows that the formal recognition of rights is no panacea: newly acquired rights on paper can still be undermined in practice by administrative decisions. Another factor that weakens the formal and substantive recognition of indigenous people’s rights is lack of continuity among government officials and their policies. So while CSOs in many Asian countries are still relatively weak, they remain crucial for sustained advocacy.





ON THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY

It is said that indigenous peoples around the world are disproportionately represented among the poor. But while indigeneity and poverty are clearly related, the relationship has yet to be fully understood. The idea that indigenous peoples are the 'poorest of the poor' would benefit from a more nuanced approach, for how poverty is experienced is largely a matter of perspective. Within RNIP, poverty among indigenous peoples is mainly discussed in terms of impoverishment – resulting from the denial of rights, including access to and control over territory and resources, and the rights to autonomy and self-determination. Further issues include unequal participation of indigenous peoples within broader society; ill-defined policies meant to incorporate indigenous peoples into mainstream society but which instead inflict greater poverty; powerful images of indigenous peoples that trigger social exclusion, discrimination, cultural suppression and subsequently exploitation; and internal segregation among indigenous peoples themselves.

ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION

It is precisely around poverty alleviation that the notion of modernity emerges. Some have argued that the further indigenous peoples move from traditional lifestyles and practices, the less indigenous they become. Seen from this perspective, the inescapable quest for modernity will eventually lead to the extinction of indigenous groups as distinct peoples. The question whether modernity and indigenous peoples can co-exist has been the subject of heated debate; some argue that CSOs can do nothing more than advocate their move into modernity. This, however, implausibly implies that the contemporary existence of many indigenous peoples lies outside the realm of modernity.



ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The relationship between indigenous peoples and the ecologically sound use of the natural environment is also put to the test within RNIP. We have found that while indigenous peoples have extensive knowledge of their natural environments, it is often very specific and localised. Indigenous knowledge systems are also increasingly under pressure – not only from logging, mining, dam construction and resettlement projects, but because indigenous peoples are subject to mainstream education, westernisation, eco-colonialism, and the co-opting of their leaders. Here again we touch upon the notion of modernity. While almost all indigenous peoples seek it, it is their ability to control what enters their communities that brings empowerment. The level of empowerment in turn determines the extent to which indigenous groups can adapt, choose from the opportunities presented to them, and determine their own future.

We also see a growing gulf between environmentalists and advocates of indigenous people's rights. Recent academic writings show ample evidence of this alienation. Advocates of indigenous rights have been accused of hijacking the conservation agenda while delivering few tangible (conservation) results. Others claim the opposite is true – that outsiders have appropriated indigenous peoples' knowledge and used it for their own ends. The establishment of protected parks, for instance, is often seen to increase poverty among indigenous peoples as park regulations leave them without livelihoods and alternative income-generating activities.



ON THE ROLE AND THE WORKING OF CSOS

CSOs have an important role to play in the indigenous peoples' movement. However, the question remains whether they are sufficiently resourced, trained, and empowered. To be effective, CSOs need to cooperate with governments. But governments generally do not seem very eager to work with CSOs. Initiatives for collaboration therefore have to come from the CSOs themselves.

The majority of CSOs further seem to experience difficulty critically evaluating themselves and the impact of their activities. The conviction is strong that they are 'doing good' – as witnessed by the commitment and work ethic of their staff. Suggestions to implement quantifiable monitoring and systematic evaluation, for example, are not always enthusiastically received.

With a little more than a year of DGIS support remaining, RNIP is continuing its efforts towards poverty alleviation among indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia. Opportunities are continuously being sought for sustainable interventions on the use of natural resources. Within this process, RNIP continues to promote indigenous knowledge systems and sustainable practices known to the indigenous communities themselves. To reach this goal, RNIP continues to focus on capacity building among CSOs, not least through international workshops and specialised trainings that share the knowledge and experience necessary for institutional capacity-building. It is hoped that by the end of 2008 the network will be self-supporting and linked to other networks in the field.



Funded by the Dutch Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS), the Regional Network for Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia (RNIP) constitutes of a network of local CSOs that are willing to deal with the particular need of indigenous peoples to tackle poverty through the sustainable use of natural resources. The RNIP desires to support the exchange of knowledge and the building of capacity with regard to the sustainable management of natural resources for the sake of poverty alleviation among indigenous communities in five selected countries in Southeast Asia (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam). This booklet gives an insight in the activities undertaken and the findings gathered by the RNIP so far.

