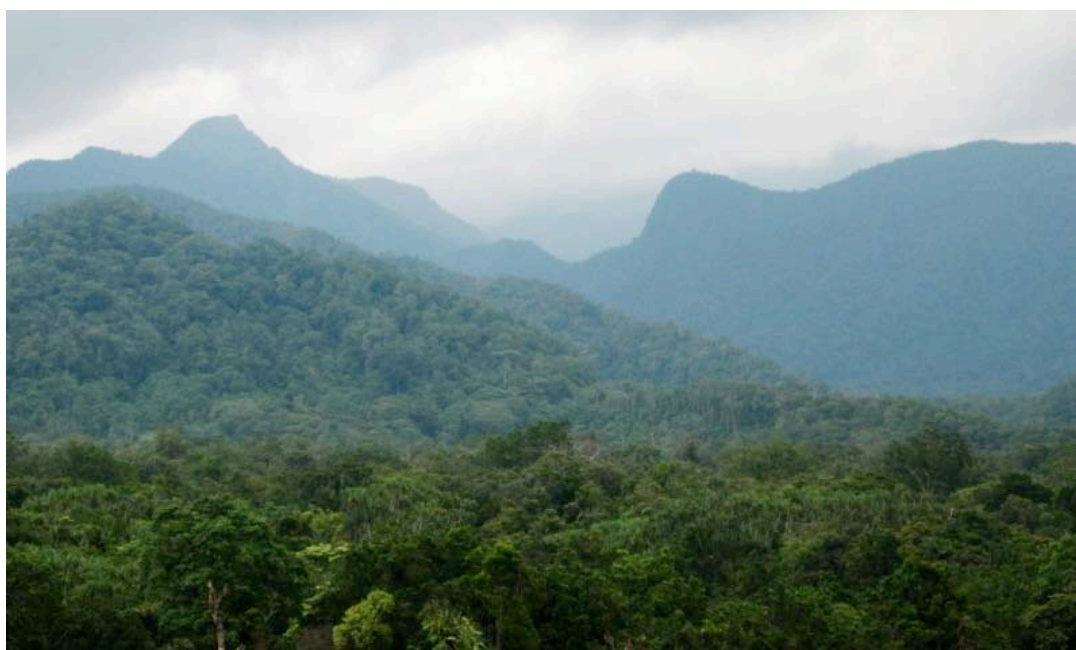




The Igmale'ng'en sacred forests of Portulin- part of the Ancestral Domain conserved by the Talaandig Peoples of Mindanao, Philippines



Dave de Vera and Datu Johnny Guina

The Portulin Tribal Association

July 2008

Executive Summary

The “*Igmale’ng’en*” sacred forests of Laindag is located within the ancestral domain of the Talaandig Tribe in the village of Portulin in the Municipality of Pangantucan within the province of Bukidnon. Bukidnon is a land-locked province in Mindanao, the second biggest island in the Philippines. The sacred forests occupy a total area of 3,470 hectares, characterized by steep to rolling topography with a sizeable stand of primary forest combined with some secondary growth forest. The site is geographically located at latitude 4°22’33.36”N and 128°21’58.70 longitude.

The Talaandig tribe is one of the 110 groups of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The Talaandig people are mostly concentrated in the northern and western part of the province of Bukidnon, Mindanao Island, Philippines. Their territory is marked by the Kitanglad and Kalatungan mountain ranges. The local knowledge of the Talaandig people was derived from oral history and traditions. These traditions include religious rituals, dances, songs and music, epic traditions, folktales, games, handicrafts, and customary mediation.

The Talaandig community in Portulin has a population of 465 individuals distributed in 93 households. The community is located high up in the Mount Kalatungan mountain range of north central Mindanao, approximately 1200 meters above sea level (MASL). There are several major rivers in the place such as Bagik-ikan River, Ootah River and Dumagook River that flows from northern towards southern part of the community.

The sacred forests are of extreme importance to the Talaandig as they represent everything that is pure and strong and their continued existence ensures the community’s continued existence and survival. For the Talaandig, the sacred forests of Mt. Kalatungan are home to the tallest and hardest trees, it is where the cleanest waters will always flow, where the waters never runs dry and where the deer and wild boar will always roam and, most importantly, where the “*Kalumbata*”¹ will always fly free.

The *Igmale’ng’en* continues to play a central role in the day to day affairs of the community. With its continued existence, rituals are sustained as the spirits are assured of a place to rest. The forests still continue to provide the raw materials such as medicinal herbs for the village healers and timber for the construction of the village “*Tulugan*” or altar. Most importantly, the oral tradition of the Talaandig made up of chants, poems and songs continue to flourish as the sacred forest provides the platform for the unique interaction among the spirits, deities and the Talaandig.

The *Igmale’ng’en* forests are under pressure from migrant communities surrounding Mt. Kalatungan. Fortunately, to date, they are still almost intact and occupy a sizeable portion of the Talaandig territory. The traditional rules governing the sacred forests are for the most part respected by the community members and occupy an important role in the over-all resource management rules of the

¹ Local term for the Philippine Eagle (*Pithecopaga Jeffryi*)

ancestral domain. The existence of the sacred forests plays a vital role in the conservation and protection of the biodiversity of Mt. Kalatungan.

Mining, illegal logging and the poaching of flora and fauna poses the biggest threat to the continued existence of the sacred forest of the Talaandig. As the population of migrant communities surrounding Mt. Kalatungan increases, attempts to illegally cut timber and set-up traps have also doubled. The demand for more lumber as well as the high price for exotic game has encouraged migrants to take the risk and enter the sacred forests.

The declaration of Mt. Kalatungan as a National Park by the National Government has also been both a boon and bane to the Talaandig. The declaration has given an additional layer of legal protection to the sacred forests and thus will help protect it from further destruction. However, the declaration only looks at the protection of the forest from a scientific and bio-physical point of view and does not recognize the cultural and spiritual significance of the forest to the people. The rights and role of the Talaandig community in the management of the sacred forest must not be sacrificed in the name of collective participation, efficiency and legal mandate of the law. Their relationship and stewardship role with the *Igmale'ng'en* has been in place since time immemorial handed to them by their ancestors. This must be respected now and in the future.

Introduction

A community grassroots discussion and consultation to discuss the “*Igmale’ng’en*”² was formally conducted by a team from the PAFID³ on June 20 -21, 2008. The activity -- held at the community multi-purpose hall and at the house of the community village Chief Datu Johnny Guina -- was attended by at least 55 representatives of the Talaandig community of Portulin in the Municipality of Pangantucan, Province of Bukidnon. This activity was undertaken with the full approval and support of the council of elders of the community as well as the officers of the Portulin Tribal Association, Inc. (PTA), which had been earlier formally informed of the objectives of the “grassroots discussion” on the Community Conserved Area of the Talaandig people.



Portulin

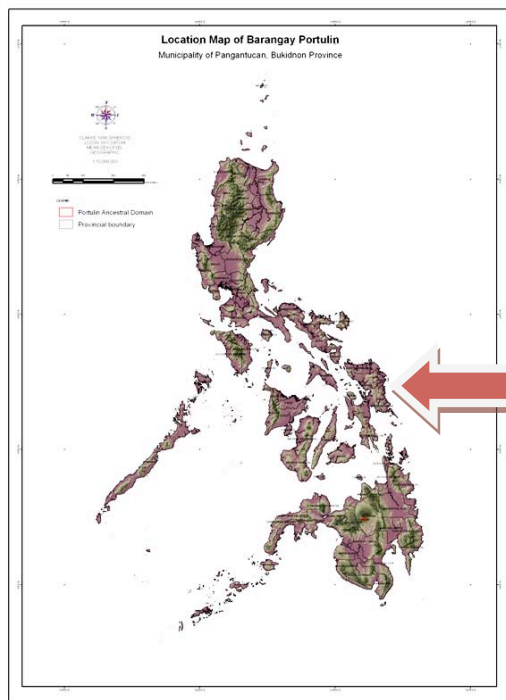
Portulin is one of the nineteen Barangays⁴ of the municipality of Pangantucan in the province of Bukidnon in the southern part of the Philippines also known as Mindanao. It is composed of six villages namely, Mapayag, Bolohon, San Vicente, Lower Sinasaan, Kauswagan and Ootah. Portulin is approximately fourteen kilometers from the municipality of Pangantucan. From the town a thirty-minute ride on a motorcycle will bring you to heart of the place.

The Barangay is bounded in the north by the municipality of Lantapan and in the south by the Barangay of New Eden, Pangantucan, while on the east by the municipality of Maramag and in the west by the Barangay of Concepcion, Pangantucan. Portulin is situated in the northern part of the municipality with an elevation of approximately 1,200 meters above sea level, while Pangantucan lies at the southwestern part of Bukidnon, and is situated about 75 kilometers south of Malaybalay the capital city of the province. Cagayan de Oro City is about 166 kilometers away. The area can be located at geographic coordinates 4° 22’33.36”N (Latitude) and 128° 21’58.70”E (Longitude). There are several major rivers in the place such as Bagik-ikan River, Ootah River and Dumagook River that flows from northern towards southern part of the community.

² *Igmale’ng’en* the Talaandig term for a Sacred Forest; pronounced Eeg-muh-lengen

³ Philippine Association For Intercultural Development, Inc. An NGO working with Indigenous Communities in the Philippines.

⁴ A Barangay is the smallest Local Government Unit in the Philippines similar to a village or hamlet



Portulin is located in the Province of Bukidnon in North-Central Mindanao

Rolling hills and mountains surround Portulin and plains are rare. The mountains are home to rich flora and fauna. There are also log-over areas or secondary forest. The proximity of the place to the mountains of Kalatungan, Kilakiron, Ootah, Hangaron, Tamaing, and Kata-kata makes the climate of the place cool and pleasant. The ancestral domain of the Talaandig covers approximately 6,500 hectares that includes the Mt.

Kalatungan. Mt. Kalatungan, is approximately 2,894 meters above sea level making it one of the two highest peaks in the southern part of the province.

The total land area is 4,267.50 hectares. It has three classifications of soil. These are clay, which measures 85.94% from the total land area, sandy which is 2.03% and sandy clay which measures 12.016%. From the total land area 1,462.50 hectares is classified as alienable and disposable land and the remaining 2,805.00 hectares is classified as timberland that is included in the Talaandig Ancestral Domain. The area claimed to be part of the Ancestral Domain of the

Talaandig People is 6,679.83 ha and thus goes beyond the Barangay boundaries, extending to other administrations in the Kalatungan range.

The Indigenous Conserved Territory of the Talaandig in Portulin is composed of all the sacred forests of the clan-based Talaandig communities. These occupy a total area of 3,470 hectares, characterized by steep to rolling topography with a sizeable stand of primary forest combined with some secondary growth forest.

Local Issues

Similar to other IP communities in Mindanao, the Talaandig people of Portulin are beset by many problems that affect their day-to-day living. However, a series of incidents in the year 1997 posed the biggest challenge to their survival as an Indigenous Community.

The mid '90s ushered the most difficult times for the Talaandig indigenous community of Portulin. This was the year that a long drought struck the area and crops in the farms were destroyed. The community suffered from scarcity of food and consequent hunger, and sickness. They survived by gathering whatever was left in the forest, such as rattan, and hunting wildlife. Whatever they managed to accumulate was bartered with rice or corn grits from people in the lowland. They were forced to consume "*lab-o*" a poisonous plant that can be made edible when dried and soaked with water overnight. It is cooked in water and prepared as soup.

It was during this crisis that mineral prospectors visited the neighboring Barangay of Dagolos, La Roxas, Maramag, looking for indicator stones that determine the presence of precious minerals in the area. With promises of untold riches, eventually the tribe was convinced to help find these indicator stones. Later, upon scrutiny and testing of the materials that were gathered, it was determined that a substantial section the mountain within the ancestral domain had a sizeable load of precious minerals, the community later gave in to the unrelenting convincing and at times deceitful declarations done by the mineral prospectors. Thus, the decision to conduct mining activity was given by the Talaandig community.



Datu Batiao, a respected community elder, acted as one of the key resource persons in the grassroots dialogue

Mining operations started in May 1998. The first ones were implemented by Visayan and Igorot migrants financed by the former Mayor of the town, Mayor Antonio Garces and CENRO⁵ officials. Workers from the neighboring places of Gango, Don Carlos, and Pangantucan soon arrived. Others to follow came from the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato and Davao. An estimated fifteen persons owned three to four tunnels.

Datu Johnny Guina a community elder and the local owner of the parcel of the land where the 1st mining activity commenced, was offered a ten percent share of the profit in every tunnel. Due to his unfamiliarity with the business and the extreme pressure exerted on him, Datu Johnny accepted the offer. As an initial budget for a month's operation, Guina received from the financier an amount of two thousand five hundred pesos⁶ a week for one and half month. It was intended for the food of the workers and of his family.

Representative from the Ayala Corporation a mining investor visited Portulin to make initial assessment on the prospect of mining operation in the area.

A month later, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of Cagayan de Oro City and Malaybalay, Bukidnon learned about the mining activity. On 22 June 1998, officials of the said agency convened a meeting in Barangay Portulin and told the people to submit necessary requirements to legalize small-scale mining concessions. In response, the Local Government without consulting the Talaandig community, initiated a move to formally reclassify Portulin as a mineral reservation through a local legislation and declare it as an area exclusively for commercial exploitation and reserved for investments in Gold and other precious mineral extraction.

Unregulated, illegal logging activities became soon rampant as more gold prospectors required timber to shore-up the ever-growing number of tunnels that were dug-up. New migrant families

⁵ Community Environment and Natural Resource Officer

⁶ Roughly EU35

required land to settle-on, soon conflicts arose as land grabbing and encroachment to traditionally owned lands became common. The unabated influx of mineworkers into Portulin also caused stress to the environment as migrants harvested more than what the local natural resources could provide. In less than two years several creeks were observed to have dried up while the natural forest line moved farther away from the village.

The new economic activity also worsened the land tenure situation of the Talaandig people. Not used to handling money and lacking the necessary skills to handle an enterprise, by 1999 nearly 21 Talaandig families were already deep in debt and had mortgaged their landholdings to migrant families. The damage brought about by the Gold rush affected not only the environment and tenurial situation of the Talaandig but also had a profound impact on their ability to exercise traditional practices and culture. The sacred forests or which they had maintained through the years were not spared by prospectors as tunnels were dug within and around their cemeteries and ritual areas. Areas of the spirit forests which had been off-limits to human activity became open access areas and were soon logged over.

With the worsening situation, the Talaandig community soon found themselves in the brink of losing everything they had. In just a few years their survival was now at risk. Frequent visits to the local DENR office and the Local Government officials yielded negative results. Clearly a better strategy to respond to demands and needs of the Talaandig community was needed. In 2001, the community with the help of PAFID completed the documentary requirements for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) application and formally submitted these to the Government. In the ensuing year, the Talaandig community formulated their own Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP) defining their own management priorities based on tradition.

Very recently, the Philippine Government declared the whole of Mt. Kalatungan as a Protected Area. This provided a glimmer of hope for the protection of the sacred forests of the Talaandig. However, this also posed new challenges as it imposed a new management regime to take control and exercise its authority over the Talaandig ancestral domain and sacred forests.

Origin of the CCA

As far as can be remembered by the elders of the community, their *Igmale'ng'en* or sacred forests have been defined by their ancestors and have been in practice for generations. The Talaandig believe that the boundaries of their sacred forests have been designated by their ancestors through spirit-guides or "*apuhan*" who were responsible to sanctify the sacred forests as a source of spiritual strength and power. Moreover, these areas are considered resting places of the spirits both of their ancestors as well as the acknowledged deities of the Talaandig people.

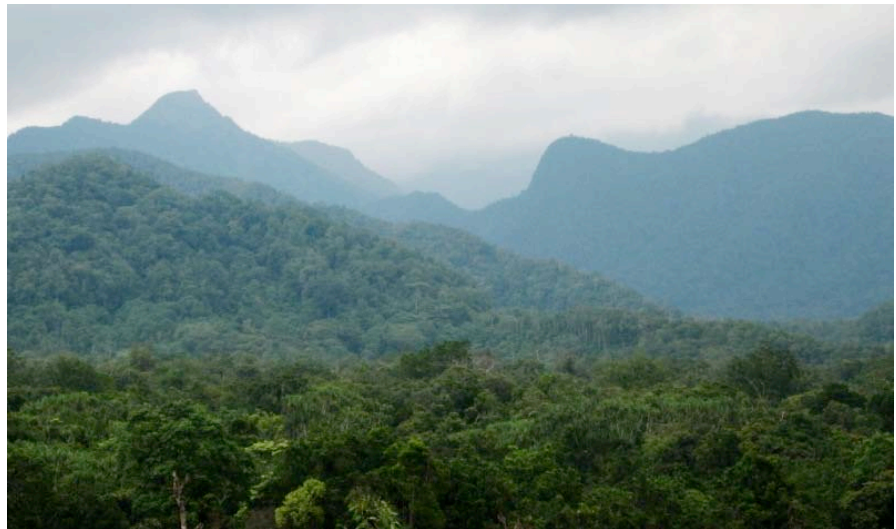
The sacred forests are of extreme importance to the Talaandig as they represent everything that is pure and strong and their continued existence ensures the community's continued existence and survival. For the Talaandig, the sacred forests of Mt. Kalatungan are home to the tallest and hardest trees, it is where the cleanest waters will always flow, where the waters never runs dry and where the

deer and wild boar will always roam and, most importantly, where the “*Kalumbata*”⁷ will always fly free.

Local Management and Rules Governing the CCA

The extents of the sacred forests are known to all members of the Talaandig community. Information regarding the boundaries of the sacred forests and the relationship of the community to them is transferred to the younger generations by the community elders and shamans during the chanting that accompanies the rituals that are regularly conducted during occasions such as the start of the planting season and during the thanksgiving for a good harvest.

Resource utilization in the sacred forests is limited to the gathering of materials used for rituals and whenever certain forest products are required by the shaman for healing sick and ailing community members. Some hunting is allowed provided the shaman has been informed and the proper offering to the spirits are undertaken. No human habitation is allowed within the



The sacred forests seen from the eastern section of Bgy. Portulin. The area is characterized by a very dense stand of dipterocarps which is an ideal habitat for the very rare Philippine Eagle

sacred forests. Whenever activities are conducted by the community where passage through the forest is required, strict rules are followed. These include speaking at a very low volume, refraining from using any foul language, refraining from pointing at any unique flora and fauna that one might encounter in the forest and refraining from leaving any foreign objects in the area covered by the sacred forest.

It is believed that rules for the interaction with the sacred forests are defined by the forest spirits and are then passed on (whispered by the spirits through dreams according to some elders) to the *Bailan* or shaman. These rules are strictly enforced by the village “Bailan” or shaman through the intercession of the village Datu or Chief. Conflicts arising from the perceived transgressions against the sacred forests are resolved by the Datu through dialogue and through the offering of ceremonial sacrifices to appease the spirits. Punishment for a proven transgression against the rules is left to the spirits who are believed to cast a spell on the offending party. However, also when other persons,

⁷ Local term for the Philippine Eagle (*Pithecopaga Jeffryi*)

such as village children, are afflicted with various illnesses, the problems are mainly attributed to the spirits as a result of the disturbance.

Thus it is very important for the Datu to immediately identify the perpetrators of an offense against the sacred forests and initiate a dialogue and a healing ritual with help of the village shaman to appease the offended spirits. This will ensure the safety of the innocent villagers from any illnesses and sustain the mutual coexistence of the Talaandig with the spirit guardians of the forests.

Each community or groups of communities composed of the same clan of the Talaandig People is headed by a “Datu” or chieftain who has his own “*Sakop*” or jurisdiction. All *sakops* have their own specific *Igmale’ng’en* or sacred forests. The basis for the establishment of these sacred forests are basically the same, however the bio-physical characteristics might vary from time to time. The rules and terms of management among these Gaops⁸ are also similar with little variations owing to geographical differences.

The restrictions related to the sacred forests proved to be a challenge during the survey and delineation of the extents of the Ancestral Domain Claim of the Talaandig Traditional Territory because a sizeable number of outsiders had to enter the sacred forests in order to conduct the survey. As a compromise, a series of rituals had to be conducted by the local shamans and elders to ensure that the rules set by the elders will be followed and for the spirits to be appeased and not bestow bad luck to the surveyors and the community alike for disturbing the peace within the sacred forests.

Value, Effectiveness and Sustainability of the CCA

The *Igmale’ng’en* forests are under pressure from migrant communities surrounding Mt. Kalatungan. Fortunately, to date, they are still almost intact and occupy a sizeable portion of the Talaandig territory. The traditional rules governing the sacred forests are for the most part respected by the community members and occupy an important role in the over-all resource management rules of the ancestral domain. The existence of the sacred forests plays a vital role in the conservation and protection of the biodiversity of Mt. Kalatungan.

Neighboring non-indigenous communities still exercise some caution and avoid the *Igmale’ng’en* forests of the Talaandig. While they may not necessarily believe in the spirit-guardians of the forests, most of them would rather avoid them as precautionary measure. Stories about spirits dwelling in the forests that are spread by word of mouth among the villages surrounding Mt. Kalatungan have developed into local folklore with details that deviated from the original concept and belief of the Talaandig. This has acted as a very strong social deterrent against the poaching of timber and wildlife in the sacred forests.

Hardwood species endemic to Mindanao can still be found in very high density in the *Igmale’ng’en* forests, while the most endangered avian specie in the country the Philippine Eagle (*Pithecopaga*

⁸ The term means “jurisdiction”.

Jeffryi) locally known as the “*Kalumbata*” which is the tallest and one of the largest raptor in the world and is in the 2007 Red List of the IUCN, still maintains several documented nesting areas in the forests of Barangay Portulin. Also common to the area are the local Philippine Deer (*Rusa Alfrede*) and the Philippine Wild Boar (*Sus Mindanensis*) along with several species of mountain rodents. While the presence of this fauna is confirmed by personal witnesses, no comprehensive resource inventory has been undertaken within the sacred forests as this activity would be considered a taboo.

The *Igmale'ng'en* continues to play a central role in the day to day affairs of the community. With its continued existence, rituals are sustained as the spirits are assured of a place to rest. The forests still continue to provide the raw materials such as medicinal herbs for the village healers and timber for the construction of the village “*Tulugan*” or altar. Most importantly, the oral tradition of the Talaandig made up of chants, poems and songs continue to flourish as the sacred forest provides the platform for the unique interaction among the spirits, deities and the Talaandig.

While the *Igmale'ng'en* is clearly being sustained by the Talaandig community of Portulin, several important factors have been identified by the community that will help them further strengthen their ability to continue maintaining the sacred forests.

- Land Tenure was identified as the most important factor that could strengthen their ability to impose the rules for the preservation of the sacred forests. The Talaandig maintain that legal documents recognizing their authority over their ancestral domain would put to rest a lot of the legal challenges thrown against them questioning their authority to enforce rules within the forests.
- The relationship of the Talaandig with the Local Government Unit (LGU) as well as the National Government is seen as a major issue that will determine the future of the sacred forest. The LGU has maintained its authority over the whole area, in fact it has already declared via a Municipal Ordinance a substantial portion of Mt. Kalatungan as Mineral Reservation. While on the other hand the national Government through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has declared Mt. Kalatungan as National Park.
- The relationship with both the LGU and the DENR is tenuous as of the moment. Recognition of the Talaandigs' right to enforce traditional rules over the sacred forests is merely tolerated and not included in any legal framework adopting their authority. The Talaandigs are adamant in saying that current laws such as the IPRA should already force both local as well as national governments to recognize their authority. However, they feel that further dialogue and negotiations should be pursued in order to clarify jurisdictional issues with the Government.
- In this context, the construction of infrastructure such as a farm-to-market road is seen both as a boon and bane for the protection of the sacred forests. It was seen as a positive measure by some as it would facilitate the delivery of local goods to the market and

[illegible]

Challenges and Threats and Opportunities to the CCA

These illegal activities at times are funded by well-to-do businessmen and some of the local elite in the nearby lowland municipalities. In 2006, the Talaandig forest guards arrested a team of illegal loggers and confiscated their equipment and chainsaw. However, this action has been challenged by the owners of the logging equipment and the Community chief Datu Johnny Guina has been threatened with a civil suit if he does not release the seized equipment. However, in spite of the threats, the community has not relented and have kept in custody all of the seized logging equipment.

With the threats faced by the community against various interest groups, the community wishes that they receive more support from the Government, specifically the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and the Department of Environment and Natural resources (DENR) whom they consider as their legal allies in their predicament. However, support from these organizations has been very minimal and negligible at the most.

This seeming apathy of the Government agencies mentioned has contributed to the emboldening of illegal loggers and poachers. They equate this apathy with a lack of legal or formal recognition of the Talaandigs' authority to enforce rules over the utilization of the sacred forests. This situation has further diluted the authority and capacity of the Talaandig to fully implement their traditional resource management systems over the sacred forests.

The declaration of Mt. Kalatungan as a National Park by the National Government has also been both a boon and bane to the Talaandig. During the community consultation, the Mt. Kalatungan National Park was viewed by the Talaandig in the following terms:

- The declaration has given an additional layer of legal protection to the sacred forests and thus will help protect it from further destruction. However, the declaration only looks at the protection of the forest from a scientific and bio-physical point of view and does not recognize the cultural and spiritual significance of the forest to the people.
- The new management authority created by the Parks Management System, the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB)⁹ imposes a separate authority over the sacred forest which is not culturally acceptable to the Talaandig. It is the firm belief of the Talaandig that they have received from their "*Apuhan*" or ancestors the traditional role of protectors and stewards of the forest. Further, it is the "*Bailan*" or the shaman who are designated to interpret the rules of forest management and protection as they are the ones who receive the rules from the spirits. This differs vastly with the PAMB where, politicians, community leaders and other technocrats have taken over this very sensitive role of defining rules for the management of the sacred forests.
- The Talaandig fear that soon enough their role as stewards of the sacred forests will gradually be diminished. While they are thankful that they have been formally invited to sit as members of the PAMB, their role is reduced to being mere spectators at times. Further, the whole concept of a Management Board and the rules that are followed to convene a meeting is outside of the experience of the Talaandig. While they would wish to become more active participants, the whole process that governs the PAMB deliberations does not allow them to do so.
- The PAMB has also created a parallel governing body which creates confusion among the people. The Talaandig have for centuries managed their resources through their own elders and shamans in their respective "*Gaops*" or jurisdictions. The PAMB is a new entity that does not mirror any management unit within the experience of the Talaandig. The delineation of

⁹ The Protective Area Management Board is created by law (RA 7586) to act as the multi-stakeholder body to responsible for the management of a National Park

authority between the local leaders and the PAMB is also not clear. The Talaandig are concerned that this confusion will create an impasse which will be taken advantage of by unscrupulous people out to profit from illegal activities in the sacred forest.

In spite of the numerous threats, there are allies who have provided critical support to the Talaandig to enable them to continue sustaining their *Igmale'ng'en* sacred forests. As a natural ally, some NGOs have been very instrumental in providing assistance in the identification, demarcation and mapping of the sacred forests. This has proven to be very valuable to the people as the community mapping process utilized by the partner-NGO has enable all of the Talaandig in Portulin to participate in the identification and demarcation of their *Igmale'ng'en*.

As the Talaandig have been able to produce their own maps and at the same time have the ability to discuss these maps, disseminating information about the sacred forest to the Local Government as well as the national Government has been made a lot easier and has also increased the credibility of the local leaders. The UNDP-GEF¹⁰ has also been instrumental in providing a small grant to the Talaandig to enable them to implement a community based biodiversity conservation project aimed at preserving the sacred forest. This has proven to be a very critical catalyst in consolidating the efforts of the Talaandig to conserve their *Igmale'ng'en*.

Formal Recognition

Technically, the *Igmale'ng'en* sacred forests are not formally recognized by the Government. However, there is a *de facto* acceptance that the Talaandig customary authority manages and enforces rules over this area. This practice is often observed in areas where the local Indigenous community maintains a sacred forest. This allows the Government which often lacks the necessary manpower and logistics to establish a formal forest management system. Governmental recognition also comes in other forms such as the adoption of the local traditional terms used by the Talaandig such as place names including the name Mt. Kalatungan which is a Talaandig term for sacred mountain.

One may also argue that formal Governmental recognition has also been given to the *Igmale'ng'en* with the declaration of the whole of Mt. Katalungan as a Protected Area.¹¹ This may be true, but the mechanics of its governance and the type and substance of the role of the Talaandig in managing the sacred forests have yet to be fully defined. Discussions to this end have been initiated by the Talaandig through their participation in the PAMB and they expect that in due time they will be able to convince the Government of the wisdom of accepting and supporting their role as stewards of the sacred forests.

¹⁰ The United Nations Development Program – Global Environmental Facility, small grants window provided so, small grants window provided some support for the implememntation of the PTA Community based Biodiversity conservation for Mt. Kalatungan

¹¹ Under RA 7586, traditional resource managment practices of Indigenous Peoples will be respected and recognized. Further, areas designated as “strict protection zones” will only be open for scientific research and/or local traditional rituals

The Talaandig are pursuing formal Government recognition by filing a claim for an Ancestral Domain Title (CADT).¹² The ancestral domain claim covers an area of 6,675.8049 hectares of which 3,470 hectares is categorized as the *Igmale'ng'en* or sacred forest. Under the IPRA, once the title is approved, the Indigenous Community can enforce their own traditional resource management systems as defined by their own Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP).

The only contentious issue that remains will be the nature of the relationship of the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) and all its declared Park management zones and the Talaandig council of elders and their own Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan for Mt. Kalatungan. The Talaandig feel that the approval of the CADT will resolve many of the issues as it will give them the formal recognition as the stewards of all of Mt. Kalatungan.¹³ Further, they demand that at the minimum, the management authority of the sacred forest which is only a part of Mt. Kalatungan be left to them as they have proved their capacity to maintain these forests for some time. However, they would welcome technical advice as well as material support in order to further strengthen their capacity to continue as forest stewards of the *Igmale'ng'en*

Networking

To the Talaandig, the capacity to network and establish links among communities with CCAs is a very important move that must be undertaken. It will give them the opportunity to listen to others with similar experiences; this will enable them to learn from other groups who might have been in the same predicament before. They also see this as an opportunity to brainstorm and lobby for better policies and programs for the Government as well as other groups who work in areas where Indigenous Peoples maintain CCAs. Lastly, the Talaandig feel that networking and linking with other IP groups with CCAs will give them a chance to have a bigger voice to declare to the whole world that Indigenous peoples are capable managers of conservation areas.

It is further advised by the Talaandig that a local network must first be established, this will give the IPs a chance to discuss amongst themselves common concepts and problems of CCA management. This will also give an opportunity for other IPs to learn that they are actually managing CCA and although they have been told many times by experts that they are not capable of doing it. Maybe by listening to others they will fully understand the impact of what they have been doing to help preserve the environment for a long time.

The establishment of Regional or International networks of IPs with CCAs can be a natural consequence after IPs from all over will be discussing their experiences with their own CCAs. To the Talaandig, it is very important that enough information regarding the experiences of others will be disseminated among communities in order to create a sense of familiarity and confidence among the

¹² The CADT claim of the people of Portulin is just one of at least 3 ancestral domain claims filed by Indigenous communities within the Mt. Kalatungan range.

¹³ Under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, Sec. 59., All protected areas within ancestral domains shall be maintained by the Indigenous Community concerned along with the concerned Government agency.

various participants. Furthermore, the objectives of organizing networks be it national, regional or international must be very clear with the people and must at all time be beneficial and be supportive to their struggle for land rights. If this is ensured all the work in establishing networks will be useful to the IPs there is no reason why the initiative will not succeed.

With the above-mentioned reasons, the Talaandig community of Portulin will be very interested and be supportive of an initiative to establish linkages and networks among IPs with CCAs.

Conclusion

The Talaandig communities around Mt. Kalatungan continue to maintain their sacred forests in spite of the tremendous pressures brought to bear upon them by various factors and interests groups. The Portulin community is just one of the many Indigenous communities who keep the tradition of protecting and maintaining the *Igmale'ng'en* benefitting not only their community but other downstream settlements and future generations.

In spite of the challenges they face, the Talaandig of Portulin are committed to maintain their sacred forests as it ensures their continued existence a distinct Indigenous Cultural Community.

They demand official recognition for their role as stewards of the forest and for the services that they continue to render which has ensured that the lowland farming communities continue to benefit from with the irrigation water and the Province from the sound ecological balance due to the maintenance of the forests.

They demand that their application for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title be immediately approved by the Government as this will give them the benefit of “legal” recognition and will lay the framework for their interaction with other entities such as the Government and private institutions.

The declaration of Mt. Kalatungan as a Protected Area has provided an additional layer of protection to the biodiversity of the area which include the *Igmale'ng'en*. However, the rights and role of the Talaandig community in the management of the sacred forest must not be sacrificed in the name of collective participation, efficiency and legal mandate of the law. Their relationship and stewardship role with the *Igmale'ng'en* has been in place since time immemorial handed to them by their ancestors. This must be respected now and in the future.

They recognize that they will need the help of other groups as the challenges that lay ahead are becoming more complex. Support from both the Government and private institutions are welcome as long as they recognize the primary rights of the stewards of the forests and as long as their interventions are culturally sensitive and not destructive of the environment.

Linking with other groups is seen as a very important step towards broadening the understanding of communities and conservation areas. The Talaandig are aware that many other communities beside them also maintain sacred forests but they have had very limited opportunities to exchange notes and experiences which might be mutually beneficial to them, Furthermore, such an opportunity will

make others aware that communities have been conserving the environment and they have to be recognized for their effort.

Acknowledgements

The Community Grassroots Dialogue was made possible with the invaluable assistance of Datu Johnny Guina and Datu Batia-o, community leaders of the Talaandig in Bgy. Portulin. Facilitation and additional translation and encoding were provided by Ms. Jerlyn Pesana and Mr. Rino Bersalona both of the PAFID-Mindanao Office. Acknowledgements are also due to the Talaandig community members who spent time in attending the consultations until the wee hours of the morning in spite of the very inclement weather prevailing in the Province of Bukidnon at that time.

This report was commissioned by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA) with the support of the WCPA-CEESP Strategic Direction on Governance, Equity, and Livelihoods (TILCEPA) and the Theme on Governance, Equity, and Rights (TGER) thematic networks of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Annex 1: Basic data

Site Name : the Igmale'ng'en sacred forests of Laindag/ Portulin (Laindag is the local name of what is now called Portulin)

1. Country: Philippines
Municipality of Pangantucan
Bukidnon Province
2. Area encompassed by the CCA (specify unit of measurement) : 3,470 hectares
3. GIS Coordinates (if available) : attached excel file of CCA technical description
4. Whether it includes sea areas : No
5. Whether it includes freshwater : Yes
6. Marine: No
7. Concerned community: Talaandig community
93 households (465 persons)
8. Is the community considering itself an indigenous people? Yes. Talaandig.
9. Is the community considering itself a minority? Yes
10. Is the community permanently settled? Yes
11. Is the community local per capita income inferior, basically the same or superior to national value?

Answer: Yes

12. Is the CCA recognized as a protected area by the governmental agencies?

Yes.

Mount Kalatungan Range Natural Park is under the jurisdiction of the DENR by virtue of Proclamation 305 declaring the whole range that covers the ancestral domain of the Talaandig domain as a protected area under Republic Act 7586. The proclamation was signed by then President Joseph Estrada on 05 May 2000. From the total land area of 6,675.8049 hectares of the ancestral domain of the Talaandig people in Barangay Portulin, a total of 4,958.1499 hectares is included in the protected area, including most of the sacred forests. Talaandigs have opposed the declaration because there was no consultation held prior to the inclusion of their territory as part of the protected area.

13. Conflicts with land tenure, natural resource use? None
14. What is the main management objective (e.g. livelihood, cultural, spiritual...)
Answer: economic, spiritual and cultural

15. By definition, a CCA fulfils a management objective. To which IUCN management category do you consider it would best fit (this does not imply that the management objective is consciously pursued by the concerned community, but that it is actually achieved):

They would want it to be a Category I, but current events and the situation would more accurately put the sacred forests in Category II.

Additional qualitative information

1. Main ecosystem type

Mixed Dipterocarp and Mossy Forest

2. Description of local ethnic groups and languages spoken:

Local ethnic groups: Cebuano, Talaandig, Manobo, Waray, Boholano

Languages/Dialect Spoken: Bisaya, Talaandig or Binukid, Waray, and Bol-anon

2. Broad historical context of the CCA

See report

3. Governance structure for the CCA (who takes management decisions, how?)

Customary religious authority is exercised by a Bailan or a Shaman in each clan. His work is done in association with the customary head of the clan called a Datu who enforces the rules with assistance from local forest guards called the Bantay Lasang who are nominated by the community for the job. The community elders help the Datu in decision-making through community meetings. In Portulin, a General Assembly of the community was conducted to update and define the current rules that shall govern the relationship of the community with the sacred forest.

4 Length of time the governance model has been in place

As far as the Talaandig can remember, the Sacred forests have been in place for hundreds of years and have been managed as such as. However, written policies were only put in place from 1999-2002. Land and resource ownership in the CCA

5. Type of land use in the CCA

primary forest (restricted as sacred) , secondary forest (allows limited use such as gathering of forest products), agricultural area, Burial areas, and hunting ground.

Existence of written or oral management plans and specific rules for the use of natural resources in the CCA

6. Management rules based on traditional/ customary laws of the Talaandig

Ancestral Domain Sustainable and Development Protection Plan (ADSDPP)

Some examples:

- For the protection and preservation of the forest, the practice of *kaingin* is prohibited. Since cutting of trees destroys the habitat of the wildlife and causes flood. Cutting of rattan is also prohibited since it can protect the soil against erosion. Its body also contains water that can sustain life during long period of drought. It serves as raw materials for weaving of basket and other products. Since there is enough land to sustain the living of the present generation the wide plain within the forest is reserved as an agricultural land for the future generation. The use thereof is submitted to the discussion of the community.
- Sacred grounds are places where rituals are held. These are the mountains, trees, rocks, springs and rivers particularly in the point where the waters meet or *sabangan*. To regard its sanctity sacred grounds must be spared from any unfavorable action. *Sala* or penalty is imposed to someone who commits a mistake causing its destruction. He is sanctioned to pay pig, carabao, textile and money. The number and amount of the goods depends on the extent of the misdeed. To appease the God that takes care of the abode, the animals that serve as payment are slaughtered in the place and the traditional ritual is performed. During the affair the *apog*, betel leaf and coins are placed in the plate. A prayer is pronounced and is offered to the spirit. When the meat and the rice are cooked the food are consumed by those who attend the affair. It is believed that without the *sala*, whoever commits the mistake may suffer the outrage of the God and death is the worst thing that may happen. One should make an excuse when passing by the sacred grounds and must refrain from making any unnecessary noise.
- Traditional rituals must be performed for thanksgiving and appeasement to the deities and spirits. Every year the *Palayag*, a thanksgiving ritual is performed offered to *Mangusal*, the spirit who safeguards the honeybees. A thanksgiving is executed for the honey that the bees produced sustains life in times of long drought. The request for more supply of honey can be pronounced. The ritual is done on the month of February or March as the trees bear more flowers during this time. At the foot of the tree where the honeybees live, a small table is built. A chicken is slaughtered while saying the prayer. The meat and the rice are cooked. When the food is cooked the rice is wrapped with a banana leaf. A prayer is said once more and the food is consumed.
- *Lalawag* is the spirit who safeguards the wild pigs. Sometime an illness is attributed to the dismay of the Gods when they are not remembered. And the ritual is performed to appease *Lalawag* or *Mangusal*. The *Baylan* knows who of the two needs the recognition. During the ritual betel leaf, coins and *apog* are placed in the plate. The *Baylan* held a live chicken while a prayer is pronounced that is offered to the spirit that caused illness of the person. The animal is then slaughtered. The rice and the meat are cooked. The prayer is said once more and the food is eaten.

- One may perform the ritual anytime to honor *Mangumanay*, the spirit who safeguards the wild chickens for a bountiful hunting. During the ritual the *apog*, betel leaf and coins are placed in the plate. A live chicken is held while a prayer is offered to the spirit. The meat is cooked after the animal is slaughtered. A prayer is said once more and whoever attend the affair consume the food.
- The *Layanon* is a ritual offered to *Bulalakaw*, the spirit who safeguards the creatures in the rivers. One can make request such as rain to sustain the life of the plants. This is performed any day within the month of December or January. During the ritual a barked wood is put on top of the rocks or if the river is narrow on the soil across the waters. The chicken is slaughtered while letting the blood drops on the wood. The rice and the meat are cooked at the bank. Afterwards, the cooked food is placed on the wood. A prayer is said and the feast begins
- Throwing of garbage to the water is disallowed. Cutting of trees near the river is prohibited to prevent landslide. The use of poison such as liquid chemical or poisonous vine is prohibited when catching fish as it also kills the small ones. Traditional ritual is performed every year to appease and for thanksgiving to the God of the waters. The *Datus* decide for the date of the activity. During the ritual the *apog*, betel leaf and coins are placed in the plate. A live chicken is held while a prayer is offered to the spirit. The animal is slaughtered and the meat is cooked while cooking the rice. A prayer is said once more and whoever attend the affair consume the food.
- *Sinebugan* is the ritual to honor the Supreme Being *Magbabaya* for the protection of those who enter the forest. One may pray that a bad luck will happen to someone who plans to do harm to the forest. It is performed on the month of December where the balete tree and other big trees are. Before the ritual begins a table is attached to a big tree. A *lugbak* a piece of cloth and chickens are tied in each post and a white shirt or a dress is hanged. The number of the animal depends on the number of the family who attended the affair. Though a family can bring more than one chicken and other family can chose not to bring if they do not have one. Those who failed to bring live animal can instead bring eggs. The chickens are slaughtered while the rice is cooked. The cooked rice is wrapped with a banana leaves. Half of the number of the chicken is provided to the family who brought it while leaving the other half in a plate at the center of the table. A *Datu* determines the number of each family by tearing a banana leaf including the members of the family who have failed to attend the affair. The meat that is placed at the center of the table is sliced according to the number of the community members. A prayer is said and the feast begins.
- For the protection of the hunting grounds and to give honor to the spirit who safeguards the wildlife a traditional ritual is performed. During hunting activity one must offer money in exchange of the animals. No specific amount is required. When bad luck strikes and the animals are nowhere to be found a ritual is performed to request the god for a bountiful hunting. During the ritual three pieces of *lugbak* a piece of cloth, boiled egg, *apog*, betel leaf and coins are placed on top of a *talapnay*. The structure is made up of a bark of a tree supported by a stick from below forming a small table. A prayer is said requesting the god to grant the wish

7. Map and zoning of the CCA
See Attached

9. Major threats to biodiversity and/or the CCA governance system

The mining threat is dead as of now. However, a substantial portion of Mt. Kalatungan is still a part of a mineral reservation, and in the Philippines, anything can happen, thus it can still be a threat in the near future. The unclear interaction between the Government and the Talaandig has greatly contributed in undermining the authority of the Indigenous Peoples thus reducing their ability to stop the unabated entry of migrants into the area

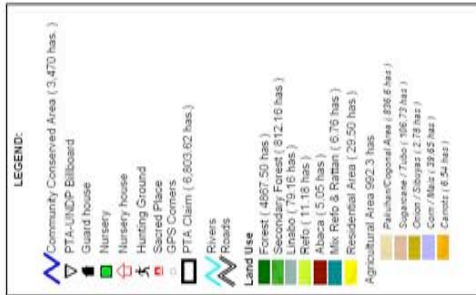
10. See Main Report for Local CCA-relevant features, stories, names, rules and practice

PRESENT LAND USE MAP OF PORTULIN TRIBAL ASSOCIATION, INC. (P. T. A.)



Situated in:
Barangay Portulin,
Municipality of Pikit-Tandagan,
Province of Bukidnon

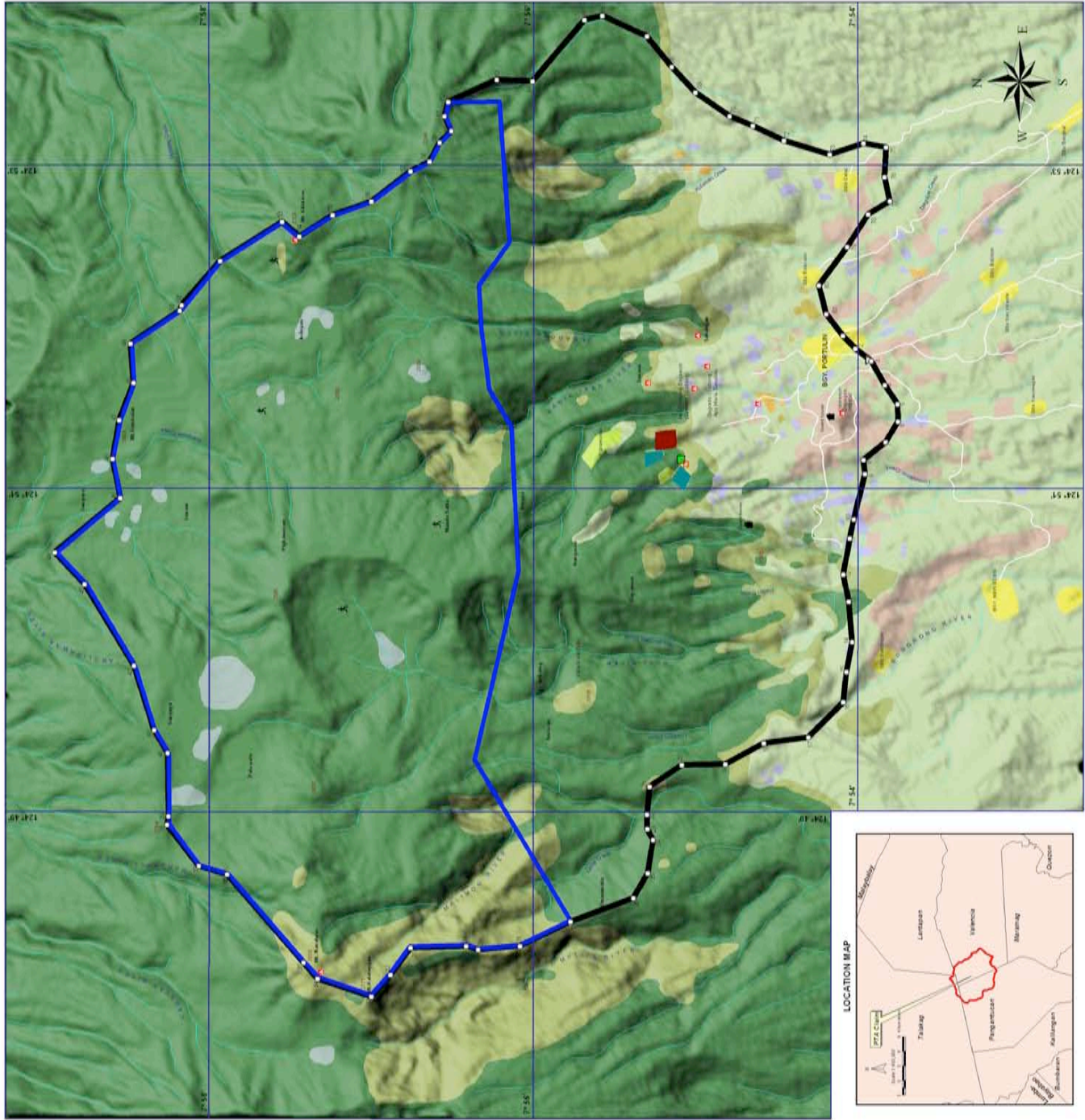
Scale: 1:25,000
0 1 2 Kilometers



SOURCES OF INFORMATION:
Contours obtained from actual ground GPS survey conducted last Nov. 11-21, 2001.
Topographic map of the area was obtained from the community files obtained from the 3-Dimensional (3D) map constructed by the community.

REFERENCES:
PROJECTION: TRANSVERSE MERCATOR
ELLIPSOID: CLARKE 1866 SPHEROID
ELEVATION: MEAN SEA LEVEL

PERSPECTIVE VIEW



Map Production by:

PAFID-Mindanao
Development, Inc.
485 Pikit-Tandagan Road,
Pikit-Tandagan, Bukidnon, Davao City
<http://www.pafid.org>

Thanks to:



MISEREOR
Biodiversity Support Program