

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH THE EYES OF THE CALAMIAN TAGBANWA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Farisal Ungkakay-Bagsit^{1*}, Jerry Ian L. Leonida², Josielou Chan-Leonida³ and
Fredel B. Mued⁴

¹Institute of Fisheries Policy and Development Studies, CFOS, UP Visayas, Philippines

²Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanology, CFOS, UP Visayas, Philippines

³Ugnayan ng Pahinungód/Oblation Corps, UP Visayas, Philippines

⁴Nurunutan Yang Tagbanua Calamian Tong Calawit may Quezon (NTCQ)

*fubagsit@up.edu.ph

The concept of sustainability (*likas-kaya* in Filipino) as an integral part of international development has been around for almost four decades. The complex, contextual, and dynamic nature of this concept makes it an elusive goal despite the many metrics developed to quantify it. The road to sustainability is anchored on sustainable development, which entails a development that is mindful of the needs of the present and future generations. But how does this pathway translate to local communities? Where do we draw the line between development and sustainability? This paper attempts to visualize sustainability through the eyes of the women and men members of the Calamian Tagbanwa Indigenous Peoples (IPs) community in Calauit Island, Philippines.

To explore how sustainability is interpreted at the local level and how it is manifested in the IPs engagements, we interviewed members of the Calamian Tagbanwa IP community on their personal views on: 1) sustainability; 2) characteristics of a sustainable community; 3) whether they consider their community as sustainable; 4) how is sustainability manifested in their community; 5) their personal aspirations; and 6) their aspirations for their community. Using sustainability interpretations based on the Man-Earth Dominance lens, our findings show a strong leaning towards Ecocentrism viewpoints, which range from faith to ethics and value to conservation of resources based on carrying capacity. Our key informants (KIs) defined sustainability as “maintained status and use of the environment and way of life”. A sustainable community is described as one that “has good leaders who genuinely protect their community”, “has strong conviction and observes the rules and regulations to conserve the environment”, “one that unites, is connected, and has common goals”, and “one that gives a good quality of life to its people, the environment and natural resources, and the next generations”. Our KIs also consider their community as sustainable as manifested by the presence of *dugong* (sea cows) in their nearshore waters which also serves as a sustainable livelihood for the IP members; native tree and mangrove planting activities; presence of the spirit of *bayanihan* especially in times of calamities; observance of carrying capacity for tourism activities; zonation and designation of protected areas; and sustainable farming and fishing practices. Common aspirations in life cited by the KIs include “having 3 meals a day”, “finishing school”, “having a stable job”, “serving the community”, “providing a good future for our children”, among others. For the community, KIs aspire to “maintain the management of their natural resources”, “revive cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge systems and practices”, and “nurture and help in the activities in the community”.