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“Can agroecological farming feed the world?  
Farmers’ and academia’s views”

## REDD+ in the Philippines uplands: opportunity or threat for indigenous peoples’ rights and traditional livelihoods?

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### Abstract

Across the world, REDD+ projects have been taking place on indigenous lands, in forests upon which their livelihoods are dependent. REDD+ has often involved changes in traditional farming methods, with shifting cultivation blamed for being the cause of deforestation. REDD+ has been criticised for not sufficiently involving local communities in decision-making processes and for not rewarding them and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) protecting the forest with tangible benefits. A strong theoretical safeguard for IPs in the Philippines exists, and it lies in the respect of the “Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan” (ADSDPP), a management plan that should be developed by IPs following the granting of their land title. The research reviewed the Philippines IPs’ rights regime to identify whether it could effectively protect their rights and livelihoods in the context of REDD+ projects and enable IPs to access co-benefits.

A qualitative, inductive, case study approach was superimposed on a rights regime approach to understand how IPs are able to uphold their rights, through their own point of views. Primary data collection was done through fieldwork in the northern part of the Philippines during which seven focus group discussions and thirteen key informant interviews with representatives of two indigenous communities having been involved in forest carbon projects were conducted.

Findings of the research confirm that most indigenous communities still heavily rely on the forest and its resources for their livelihoods and basic needs (e.g. housing and fuel). IPs have hope that REDD+ will recognise the traditional “kaingin” system (shifting cultivation) as practised sustainably by IPs on their land and condemn the unsustainable “kaingin” as practised by others. The research highlights concerns about elite capture of REDD+ co-benefits, with lack of clarity remaining around its recipients and the channel mechanism and around the protection of IPs rights in a REDD+ context. However, the research showed that REDD+ in the country is an opportunity to promote IPs’ traditional livelihoods, enhance IPs’ ADSDPP, clarify the tenure regime, improve IPs knowledge of their rights and capacities to uphold them, revisit the role played by national institutions for IPs’ rights protection and reinforce their capacity.

**Keywords:** Forest, forest carbon projects, indigenous lands, indigenous peoples, livelihoods, Philippines, REDD+, shifting cultivation, tenure regime

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