

REDD+ in the Philippines uplands: Opportunity or threat for Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional livelihoods?

Marie Boulinaud, MSc Sustainable Development, SOAS, University of London



Introduction and context

- At time of the research (2016): **Philippines REDD+ readiness phase**
- **REDD+: in theory**, an inclusive mechanism with co-benefits for the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities, and strong safeguards, **in reality?**
- The Philippines: a **strong legal framework** 'theoretically' protecting IPs rights and self-determination over their Ancestral Domain
- High rate of deforestation in the country in 20th century: migration of farmers to uplands with expansion of agricultural lands + adoption of unsustainable agricultural practices such as **cultivation of corn on steep slopes** (Kummer et al 1994)

Methods

- A qualitative, case study and a right regime approaches to understand how IPs were able to uphold their rights
- Primary data collection: fieldwork in Luzon (northern Philippines)
- Four focus group discussions with two indigenous communities representatives involved in forest carbon projects and having a land title (CADT)
- Thirteen key informant interviews with IP leaders, academics', government rep., international agencies' and civil society involved in REDD+
- Literature review

Results

- Indigenous groups are not homogeneous but all still use and **rely on forest resources for their livelihoods and basic needs** (e.g. handicraft, housing, medicinal plants, fuel)
- Environment and IPs governmental institutions lack capacities and are not trusted: impediments for good governance
- Shifting cultivation blamed as a source of deforestation, unjustly?
- **IPs lack knowledge, capital** (financial, social) and **power** to uphold their rights
- **Unclear tenure regime** on IPs lands, with overlap of instruments

Conclusion

- REDD+ offers **opportunities** to: 1) improve IPs knowledge of their rights 2) develop strong IPs management plans (ADSDPP) for more self-determination and 3) reinforce capacity of national institutions and revisit the role played for IPs' rights protection
- Concerns about elite capture of REDD+ co-benefits: lack of clarity on who will get them and how
- REDD+ as of now: **threat** for IPs not to access co-benefits and loose access to forest resources in an unclear tenure regime

Quote: "People would not give up kaingin or charcoal-making without any incentive" (IP leader, 2016)



Fig. 2 and 3: Signs of erosion, deforestation and soil degradation around corn and banana plantations in Quirino province, Philippines (Photo: Marie Boulinaud 2016)



Fig. 4: Chayote (squash) production threatening to encroach protected forest in Imugan, Santa Fe, Nueva Viscaya Province

Highlight

IPs met still practice **shifting cultivation (kaingin)** at a smaller scale, to produce root crops, ginger, and chayote with a 3-year fallow (with use of *Alnus* tree for fallowing)

➤ IPs testified of the disappearance of the traditional 10-years fallow period

➤ REDD+ could help recognize the sustainability of this practice, even with shorter fallow?