

# **FP 43: The Participation of the Manobo In the Development of Their Community**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study describes the participation of the Manobo in the development of their community. It also sought their participation in the processes of the conflict resolution, property and human rights, governance and environmental care programs. The study made use of the descriptive-qualitative research design employing specially, interview and Focus Group Discussion conducted in the Manobo communities in South Central Mindanao. The findings showed that the Manobo actively participated to peace-building in terms of conflict resolution, property and human rights, governance and the care of environment. Despite of the different problems they encountered, the different programs/projects implemented helped them a lot in the development of their family and their community as well.

**KEYWORDS:** Community Participation, Conflict Resolution, Governance Systems, and Environmental Care, Descriptive-Qualitative, South Central Mindanao

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Participation of people is an essential element in community development programs stems from the objective of the idea of community development itself, which is the development of people through their broad and actual participation in community activities and projects. The concept of community development may thus be identified and measured by the extent of peoples' involvement in their activities and projects. A more powerful form of participation, self-mobilisation has been at the heart of several successful programmes, especially in India, Rahman (2006) termed this people's self-development, rejected dogmatism about collectivism as the ultimate emancipation of labour, and suggested leaving the question to the organic evolution of people's search for life.

According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous People, there are about 370 million people native to a specific region, in 70 countries throughout the world. These people have retained their different social, cultural, economic and political characteristics in societies with dominant cultural groups (Ramos, Osório & Pimenta, 2009). Most indigenous groups live in remote protected areas where typical conditions include poor accessibility and an underdeveloped infrastructure, superstructure, educational systems, finance and banking service and social welfare (UNDP, 1992, as cited in Sofield, 2003; Altman & Finlayson, 2003; Rogerson, 2004). Many of these groups also live in poverty with special problems relating to discrimination and human rights abuse (United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/128 of 17 December 1991, as

cited in Sofield, 2003). In addition, it is commonly reported that indigenous people have been excluded from economic, social and political activities (Scheyvens, 2009) and have been assimilated by dominant societies (Ramos, Osório & Pimenta, 2009).

In the context of this research, the term participation is regarded as the ability of the community to identify their challenges and needs and then take charge of their scenario. Participation also refers to “empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors, rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives.” (International Institute for Environment and Development, IIED, 2010). Change agents are only there as catalysts, and the community members are at the centre of development.

In essence, the process is a planned and organized effort to assist people to develop attitudes, acquire skills and understand concepts required to ensure their participation in solving community problems in an order of priority determined by their increasing level of competence. As the United Nations declared “New approaches to national development tend to turn away from narrow economic concepts and to recognize human resources as the most important factor in developing social change as a major prerequisite and popular participation as an essential requirement for the successful foundation and execution of national plans.”

If community development is to be taken as a process, it is imperative that primary consideration be given to the people who give life to it. As Ross (2006) puts it, without peoples’ participation, democracy has no life or vitality. Hence, to look at the degree and level of people’s participation in community activities is an undertaking aimed at analysing the very life and vitality of community development as a process.

The present investigation is an attempt to look into the participation of the Manobo in community projects and activities. Greatly inspired by the bulk of literature on the participation of the Manobo in community activities, whereby the indigenous people’s group particularly the Manobo have been shown to have extended the least involvement and participation.

The Manobo like in many other in the country or even abroad, are the most abused in terms of servitude to their families and to the community in general. They work and sacrifice silently, without complaint, not only because of the tradition or cultural practices but also of the inherent quality of loving and caring. All of these sacrifices are taken for granted and are seldom being acknowledged. The Manobo of Libungan, Arakan of North Cotabato and in Kulaman of Senator Ninoy Aquino Municipality, Sultan Kudarat, have the same plight. The present study attempts to look into the issues of the Manobo in their participation of the community development.

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on Stufflebeam's Context-Input-Procedure-Product or CIPP Model (1971). Stufflebeam views a program as a system with three components which must be analysed: antecedents or inputs, operation or processes, and outcomes or products. To be important in decision making, evaluation must provide information concerning all these three components and their relationship with one another.

Context evaluation serves as the rationale for viewing programs. This includes the various programs and their needs as well as opportunities for addressing these needs. The context involve an analytical effort to gather data which will help identify needs, opportunities and problems in program implementation.

Inputs could be the resources necessary to achieve the program objectives. These are the programs on education, health and sanitation, economic and livelihood programs, organizational development and peace and development.

Process component describes what happen to the input in the system. These include establishment of formal and non-formal classes, personal hygiene, clean water, teaching basic agriculture and communal farms, encourage preservation of culture and values and introduction of livelihood programs.

Building a community for unity and progress contributes to the promotion of peace and development which is a strong point of achieving the commitment to regain the dignity of a person and strengthen the community relationship for sustainable development. The participation of the Manobo, the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, the establishment of appropriate programs, empowering them through livelihood projects and making their community aware of the importance of their environment are all clear solutions towards the attainment of peace and development in their area.

Product refers to the output or result of the programs. These include the growth and development of the Manobo tribe, reduced illiteracy, reduced mortality rate and rate of early marriage, empowerment of women and became self-reliant community, preservation of culture and arts, improved health and sanitation, and created peace and sustainable development in the community.

The procedure of evaluating the objectives of the different programs in improving the quality of life of the Manobo is shown in Figure 1. The four boxes represent the components of the participations of the Manobo themselves in raising the standard of living of their community. The arrows that connect the product back to the context, input and process dimensions provide information on what changes or adjustments in these dimensions need to be made to effect greater attainment of the objectives of the programs.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to determine the participation of the Manobo in the development of their community of the peace-building in terms of conflict resolution, property and human rights, governance systems and environmental care.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study employed the descriptive-qualitative design. Methods used include: focus group discussion, interviews and survey questionnaire. There were 103 total respondents who answered the survey questionnaire and 39 participants of the FGD. This was conducted in the Municipalities of Libungan (particularly Sitio Misulo, Barangay Dimapaco ), Barangay Bato-Bato, Arakan of North Cotabato and the Manobo Village, Kulaman of Sen. Ninoy Aquino Municipality, Sultan Kudarat were once the home of a member of ethno-linguistic tribes, predominantly the Manobo.

To gather the data needed in the research study the help of contact persons were sought. These persons assisted the Manobo respondents to answer the survey questionnaire and acted as interpreters during the interviews. The actual visits to the Manobo communities provided and validated the important data for the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the data gathered based on the results of the interview and FGD on how the Manobo participated in the development of their community of peace-building in various aspects in their life such as conflict resolution, property and human rights, governance and environmental care for the benefit of their family and the society in general. The Manobo of Arakan, Libungan, and Kulaman have more or less similar tasks.

### **Conflict Resolution**

One of the functions of a political system is the resolution and settlement of conflicts which may be achieved peacefully by adjudicating disputes, negotiating compromises, or by the threat of social sanctions. When such procedures fail due to the absence of a mediating process, disputes may erupt into violent conflicts. The peaceful resolution of conflicts is found in all societies but differs in procedure and process. Industrial states have formal institutions such as police, lawyers, courts and a penal system – all of which generally operate according to codified laws. Transgressions of the law by an individual give the State the threat of force. The State has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and has the right to coerce its subjects into agreement with its regulations, customs, and procedures.

According to respondent A, *“kung aduna man kami panagbangi sa among katribo o silingan, kasagaran nga mahitabo moadto kami sa among datu ug ipatawag ang nalambigit kiini ug husayon aron dili kini modako”*(if conflict arises within our tribes or neighbour, we usually ask our datu to settle such conflict so that it will not create more damage.) Respondent B added by saying; *“may mga panahon nga lisud husayon ang panagbangi labi na kung dako na kini ug damage pero mangita jud ug pamaagi ang among datu para mahusay kini ug kung kinahanglan jud, pabayaron kung pila ang bili sa nadaut o nadamage, unya kung magkasabot na ang matag panig mahatagan na ug solusyon ang problema.”*(there are times that conflict will not be resolved because of the value of the damage but our datu will really look for ways and means just to settle things, sometimes they will pay the damage in order to resolve the said conflict.) During the FGD, the key informant added; *“kung unsahay wala ang datu, pwede usab namo matawag ang among bae sa komunidad ug siya na ang mohuwasa sa mga nagbangi. Kining bae, gipili usab kini sa among mga katigulangan ug girespito kini sa among komunidad.”*(in the absence of our datu, we can also ask the help of our Bae to mediate and settle the aggrieved party because we also considered her as women leader counterpart of our datu).

One of the respondents was asked about their participation of the conflict resolution in the community, he said; *“kaming mga tribu nga umulupyo, sa panahon nga adunay mga miyembro nga magbangi dili lang mi manghinanaw...among istoryahon ang mga nag-away nga mokalma ug mag-ostoryahanay aron malikayan ang pagdako sa kagubot.”*(We, as tribal community, if there is conflict within the members of our tribal community, we have to see to it to talk to both the aggrieved parties to calm down in order to avoid more damage.) He added; *“ang mga pariente sa mga hitungdan nga mga nag-away maoy among duolon ug istoryahan aron dili na modako ang kagubot, tungod kay sa tinuod lang kaming nga lumad dili mi gusto ug gubot, ang kalinaw ang among gusto.”*(the members of the community also ask the help of the relatives of the aggrieved parties in order to pacify and resolve the conflict because frankly speaking, we the lumad don't like conflict and what we want is peace.)

Among the Manobos, there was an assumption or understanding that "peace is the concern of all," thus everyone should contribute or pool resources in paying tamok or damages to ensure immediate settlement of conflict among aggrieved parties. Since Manobo society is kinship-bound, it is difficult to prolong conflict as many will be affected. This concept of cost-sharing in conflict resolution may be worth studying by peace groups in the country.

### Property and Human Rights

During the FGD there were testimonies of two Manobos from Libungan and Arakan impart relevant insights on their concept of property rights.

According to Reyes Santos; *“kining yuta amoa jud ni kay gikan man gud ni sa among mga katigulangan nga maoy unang lumulupyo diri, sila usab naghatag ug*

*ngalan sa lugar, sila usab ang nagtanom sa mga kakahuyan, labi na ang kahoy nga gitawag nilag mam-on nga maoy boundary sa ilang yuta.*" ("This land belongs to the lumad, because we have succeeded our ancestors, who were the first people to live here, and from whom we received this land, the names they gave the places there, the yubas or fallow fields, and the mamoti trees they planted there as monuments or boundaries.") Similarly, Timuay Osinta asserted: *"amoa kining yuta nga gikan sa among mga katigulangan nga maoy unang lumulopyo diri, silay naghatag ug pangalan sa among teritoryo ug lugar ug nagtanom sila ug kahoy nga gitawag ug mam-on"* ("We own this land, because we received them from our ancestors, who were the first people here as shown by the names they gave the places in our territory, the yubas or fallow areas and the mam-on trees they planted here.")

According to Garvan (2006), property rights among the Manobo are "understood and rigidly upheld, so much so that there seems to be the conception of a gift as such." For example, large tracts of lands are considered property of a clan, but settlement on the land including the rights of a clansman is extended to a friend or ally, except those of fishing. He likewise stated:

Slavery is a recognized institution, but since the diminution of intertribal and interclan wars the number of slaves had diminished. Slaves were originally obtained by capture and then passed from one hand to hand in making marriage payments. It sometimes occurs, in an exigency, that a man delivers a child, even his own, into captivity.

The slave is generally not ill-treated but has to try to do all the work that is assigned to him. He has no rights of any kind, possesses no property except a threadbare suit, and is usually not allowed to marry. However, he receives a sufficiency of food and seems to be contented with his lot (2006).

Another respondent also commented about their situation of the land ownership, he said; *"kaniadto, wala man unta mi problema tungod kay ang among mga giuma kami man gayud ang tag-iya pero sa pag-abot sa mga bisaya didto nagsugod ang problema tungod kay giaangkon naman nila ang among uma ug aduna silay papeles nga gipakita sa amoa...sa laktud nga pag-istorya nagmata nalang mi ug buntag nga dili na diay amoa ang yuta nga among giuma. Mao kini ang hinungdan nga mipalayo kami didto sa bukid kay di man namo gusto ug kasamok."* (we do not have a problem before in our farm until the arrival of the bisaya settlers who showed us all the documents that they owned our land and as a result we were being exiled and went to the mountains because we do not want to have conflict with them.)

### Governance Systems

The Manobo tribes had their own indigenous governance systems and practices which guided their way of life even before the coming of the Spanish

colonizers. This is gleaned from the preliminary appraisal conducted on leadership as an overarching element of governance.

In the traditional Manobo society, the centre of governance was the datu. He was "the arbiter, the judge, the provider, the peacekeeper, and important religious performer, the sage, the spokesperson and the ambassador of goodwill." His sphere of influence or domain of authority "may only be one kalibung kut Manobo (cluster of houses) or one inged (territorial district), or the entire sub-tribal or tribal territory". According to Olson (2007), each village is led by a datu "who has absolute authority in the village but delegates responsibility to other leaders under him."

Other studies, nonetheless, affirmed the existence of the datu authority system. The datu came from the bahani/bagani class who had a very prestigious social status in the Manobo society. Bahanis were mostly men whose "status were achieved through the demonstration formidable courage and ability in fighting, and every member of the village knew and respected their local bahani." While some stories were told of women warriors in the past, many of them stayed behind to protect their children and look for food, and very few actually participated in direct fighting (Kaliwat Theater, Inc. 2006).

During the interview as well as in the Focus Group Discussion, the respondents unanimously confirmed what is mentioned above, they said; *"sa una ang datu ra ang among gisunod sa tanan nga mga buluhaton ug sa pamalaod ug among Makita nga wala may problema tungod kay maayo man ang iyang pamaagi labi sa pagdala sa iyang ka tribu pero sa diha nga aduna nay barangay kapitan naglibug na kami kung kinsa ang sundon tungod kay naanad man kami sa among datu. Kung mahimo gani nga ibalik tong among tradisyunal nga pamunoan aron dili mi mapulita kay among naobservahan nga gamiton lang kami sa panahon sa eleksyon sa mga pulitiko ug daghan nagsaad nga tabangan ang among katilingban pero hangtud karon wala jud nahitabo ug nagpabilin intawon kami sa kapobrehon. Aduna man untay balaod nga gitawag ug IPRA Law pero hangtud lang man kini sa libro ug wala man maimplementar, kung moingon ang gobeyerno nga giimplementar pero ngano man nga wa namo natagamtaman?"* (Before the our datu was the only leader in our community and we do not have any problem because he was a good leader but when the barangay captain came we were on the dilemma whom to follow, we are hoping to go back to our traditional governance so that we will not be used by the politicians wherein they always promised to help us but it did not materialized and until now we are still poor. We were informed about IPRA Law but until now it was not implemented.) Manobo tribal community is still hoping to go back to their traditional governance systems.

### Environmental Care

Nowadays, the Indigenous Peoples are facing a lot of problems when it comes to their relationship with nature, our environment. For the IPs, land is life

itself. Their life revolves around land, natural resources such as; pasture, forest, honey, water, salt-licks, wildlife, domestic animals and wild plants that provide food. During the FGD, there are a lot of reactions when they were asked what is happening now with our environment. A respondent commented; *“kaniadto katong bata pa ako wala man mi problema sa kinaiyahan tungod kay daghan kayo mi ug makuha sa mga nagkalailaing pagkaon para mabuhi pero karon ambot unsa nay nahitabo?”* (Before, when I was still a young, I don't see any problem about nature and our environment, we can get different food for living but now, what happen?). For the Manobo, the rainforest is their university. They see the resources (water, plants, and wild animals) belong to the whole community. Land and nature are one, the spiritual, the social, and the materials are all entwined. God is thought to be all around, living in the landscape, and the earth is revered like a parent.

Another respondent added; *“ang kinaiyahan kaniadto puno kini sa bendesyon sa kahitas-an, lipyo and tubig sa kasapaan, daghang nagkalainlaing ihalas nga mga hayop, nagkalainlaing tanaman, dagkong mga nagkalainlaing kahoy...sa tinuod lang, haruhay ang among kinabuhi ug wa kami nasinati nga problema.”*(the nature are full of blessings from the Supreme; clean waters, different wild animals, different plants, and different kinds of trees. In short, we had lived harmoniously with nature and do not experience any problem.)

During the FGD, when the respondents were asked of what is happening now of our environment, the tribal chieftain commented; *“Sa tinuod lang, daghan ug dako gayud ang among problema karon sa kinaiyahan; ang una, nawagtangan na kami ug yuta tungod kay wala man kami titulo ug mga papeles, ikaduha, kining pagputol sa mga kahoy legal man o dili, ikatulo, kining gitawag nila sa englis large-scale commercial farming ug uban pa.”*(actually, we had a lot of problems as regards to our environment, first, we lost our land because we do not have title/documents to show as a proof that we owned the land, second, the legal as well as the illegal logging, third, the so-called large-scale commercial farming and others.)

When the respondents were asked about their participation in order to solve the different problems of our environment, their datu said; *“ang ubang mga problema murag wala na jud mi mahimo labi na niining large-scale farming kay kadaghanan sa amoa gi-hire naman mi nga farmers pero sa amoang kaugalingong uma nagtanom usab kami ug mga kahoy aron among masigurado nga aduna pa kami mainom nga limpyong tubig kay sumala pa sa gitudlo sa amoa...kung wala na daw mga kahoy mahutdan nasab ug tubig an kabukiran, giawhag usab nako ang akong ka-tribu and undangon na ang pagpanguling ug ang pagkaingin ug kalooy sa Dios ila man usab kining gisunod.”*(we cannot do anything in some of the problem like large-scale farming because some of us are working as hired farmer but in our own farm we really planted trees because we were taught that if all the tress were gone we will have scarcity of water. I also encouraged our tribes to stop kaingin as well as cutting trees for charcoal and thanks be to God all of them followed.)



## **CONCLUSIONS**

In the light of the above findings, the following conclusions have been drawn:

The Manobo as revealed by the study play key participation on peace-building such as conflict resolution, property and human rights, governance systems and environmental care towards the development of their communities.

They have also participated in the political affairs of their communities, datu and barangay captains who serve as heads. Nonetheless, they participate in the political exercises like elections. Older men and women are recognized for their wisdom and advice for young generations and are accepted as peacemakers.

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