

# UNDERSTANDING AND CONSERVING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ON SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE CORDILLERAS ADMINISTRATIVE REGION OF THE PHILIPPINES

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## ABSTRACT

The Cordilleras Region of the Philippines has a rich diversity of indigenous knowledge on sustainable resource management. It is the basis for agriculture, food preparation, health care and environmental conservation. This paper aims to integrate the lessons learned from the local people's knowledge on natural resource management. Strategic options on environmental communication and education will be drawn from these findings. Natural resource management strategies practiced by various communities were documented using a variety of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools and literature survey. Some of the practices in the Cordilleras like *Muyong* by the Ifugao's and *Batangan* in Mountain Province have sustain the lives of the people by providing steady source of food, construction materials, firewood/fuel and medicine while maintaining forest biodiversity in the region. Shifting cultivation, known as *Uma* system or patch farming, is a traditional crop production system practiced in the Cordilleras to rejuvenate soil fertility. Another indigenous soil fertility management practice in the Mountain Province is *Payew* where sunflower cuttings is incorporated and allowed to decompose in the rice paddy fields during the rice growing season. Natural resource management practices in the Cordilleras have sustained the diversity of forest resources and lives of the local people. Policy makers, scientists and researchers must recognize and include the role of local people's knowledge in management decisions of the country's fragile environmental resources. Development of information exchange campaign (IEC) materials translated into local dialects is vital so that other communities can learn from these indigenous practices.

*Keywords: sustainable natural resource management, environmental communication, indigenous knowledge, local people's knowledge*