

## **Indigenous Knowledge – Call for Audit Cases SAI Philippines**

The Indigenous Peoples (IPs) or Cultural Communities (ICCs) of the Philippines who shared common bonds of language, traditions and customs are widely dispersed in different parts of the country. Their area/sites occupied are mostly in fragile ecosystems such as uplands and coastal areas and in spite of this, they were able to survive being the local managers of these resources and protected them by employing their indigenous knowledge, practices and systems.

As defined, traditional knowledge is one that people in a given community have developed over time. It is based on experience, tested over centuries of use adapted to local culture and environment, and it is dynamic and rapidly changing.

Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity states that each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate and subject to national legislation, **respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity** and promote their application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge and practices.

In a project entitled “*General Framework for the Protection and Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices in the Philippines*” by the Philippine Resource Center for Sustainable Development and Indigenous Knowledge (PHIRCSDIK), et al., funded by the UNDP and ILO, it stated that in the Philippines, indigenous knowledge has been proven to contribute to the sustainability and productivity of many ecosystems. Evidence of which are the rice terraces in Banaue (Ifugao), muyung (private woodlot of Ifugao), the traditional biodiverse swidden of the Hanunuo Mangyan (in Mindoro island), the fish conversation practices of the Dumagat (coastal people in Mindanao), and the traditional herbal medicines of many Filipino ethnic communities.

However, to date, SAI Philippines has not assessed how the government include traditional knowledge on the environment in their policies and in their implementation of projects, programs and activities. Further, it has not thus far integrated indigenous knowledge in any environmental audit work.

Thus, amid this pressing global problems on climate change and biodiversity loss and that indigenous environmental knowledge could help getting into terms with changing environment, SAI Philippines commits, thru its Performance Audit Office, to include in its audit portfolio for the succeeding years, the assessment of indigenous environmental knowledge in government policies and in their programs, projects or activities being implemented.