



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN FOOD SECURITY AND LAND GOVERNANCE

BACKGROUND

As defined by the Youth Nation Building Act of 1995, youth in the Philippines are those 15 to 30 years old. Filipinos aged 15 to 29, consisting approximately 18.6 percent (29.4 million) of the Philippines' projected population by 2019 (PSA, 2015a), are expected to exponentially increase given the broad base of the Philippine population pyramid (see Figure 1).

While considered significant in number in the total labor force (those aged 15 and above), the youth sector is vulnerable to unemployment owing to their lower

educational, technical, and skills qualifications, and relatively short work experience (UN, 2000). According to the Philippine Statistics Authority/PSA (2019), the highest unemployed population comes from the 15 to 24 age group (43.7 percent).

Further, while they comprise almost one-third of the Philippine population – utilizing significant amount of spaces and natural resources – the youth sector is often deemed excluded from the topic of land ownership and tenure security. They are expected to access land through adults, or to wait until

Box 1. Kulahi Performing Arts Group (KPAG) of the Talaandig Tribe¹

The youth of Manobo and Talaandig tribe in Talakag and Pangantucan, Bukidnon have faced the threat of dwindling knowledge on their traditional language and rituals. Trying to conform with the assimilated culture due to negative stereotypes about indigenous peoples, most youth of the tribe no longer speak their traditional language making a generation who are no longer in touch with their heritage.

However, there has been a revival of interest and cultural awareness among Manobo and Talaandig youth through the efforts of performing arts groups like the Kulahi Performing Arts Group (KPAG) of Barangay Portulin (in Talakag, Bukidnon).

KPAG started out as a band composed of indigenous youth in 2010 until recently, it branched out to be a theater-performing arts group. Most of the group's performances portray the Talaandig culture and traditions, their way of life, and their relationship with the land and the environment. Being a member of KPAG does not only entail performing and playing traditional music, but also involves demonstrating knowledge of the Talaandig culture and showcasing the skills they learned from the group.

Witnessing the positive impacts of the initiative, KPAG has inspired other indigenous youth in Pangantucan, such as those in Barangay Bacusanon, to establish their own performing arts group. "Kulahi has shown how music and dance can bring together the youth and give them a sense of pride in their heritage. Hopefully, with our own group, we can bring the same to Bacusanon," Melvin Pongautan, an IP and barangay youth leader from barangay Bacusanon, shares. □

they themselves are adults. Hence, their role and participation in decision-making if not minimal, is generally not recognized.

YOUTH'S ROLE AS KEY TO ACHIEVING TENURE AND FOOD SECURITY

The youth sector is considered mobile, social, and creative in a rapidly-transforming world (UN-HABITAT – GLTN, 2013). They have the

¹ Source: Dumlao, G.J. (2019). Keeping the Flame Alive: Talaandig and Manobo youth groups of Mt. Kalatungan take the lead in keeping their indigenous practices and traditions alive. In ANGOC (Ed). *Stories of hope from Mt. Kalatungan: the Manobo and Talaandig experience in defending and conserving their ancestral lands*. Quezon City and Cagayan de Oro City: ANGOC and XSF.

untapped transformative attitudes towards the needed progress or change in approach to resolve the equally-changing issues on land.

Their relationship with the land is linked with their pursuit of identity, community, and cultural expressions. In the Philippines, where 48.77 percent resides in rural areas (PSA, 2015b), the rural youth's perception on land may be influenced by the prevailing use of these lands. They may view them as a resource for performing farming activities and/or for practicing traditional lifeways (in the case of indigenous peoples [IPs]). Understanding and harnessing their experiences, capabilities, perspectives, as well as needs in terms of land will therefore be imperative in determining solutions to the existing land concerns in the country including tenure and food security.

In the case of the IP youth of Talaandig and Manobo tribes in Talakag and Pangantucan, Bukidnon in Northern Mindanao, Philippines, the following are their roles and recognized as significant contributions in securing their food and land tenure:²

- Heirs to the governance of their ancestral lands, specifically on:
 - its protection and management;
 - improving the living condition of the community; and,
 - preserving their indigenous culture and traditions.
- Key actors that will uphold their communities' culture, indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs) on traditional livelihoods and agriculture.

² Based from the results of **Landscape Governance Training of Trainors** held in June and July 2019 in Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental and Valencia City, Bukidnon in Northern Mindanao, Philippines as part of the project on *Improving Tenure Security of Smallholder Farmers in Select Areas in the Philippines*.

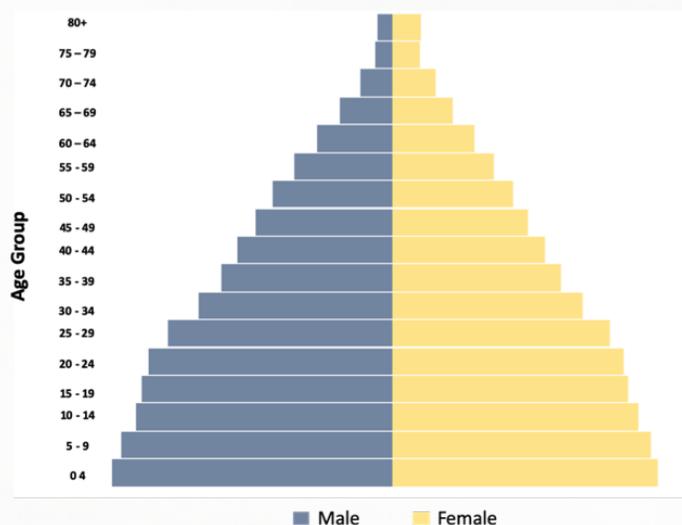


Figure 1. Projected 2019 population pyramid, medium assumption (using the 2010 population as the base year), Philippines. Source: PSA, 2015.

Youth can also play a key role in promoting transparency and accountability in land governance. Their participation in decision-making processes enables the capitalization on their energies and capabilities; well-representation of their sector's needs and expectations; and, building youth capacities to prepare them for their current and future responsibilities (UN-HABITAT – GLTN, 2013).

PHILIPPINE YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE

In the Philippines, the participation of youth in governance is recognized through various legal frameworks and programs ratified and legislated by the Philippine Government. It traces back to 1974, when Presidential Decree (PD) No. 603 (The Child and Youth Welfare Code) which recognizes the active participation of youth in civic affairs and in the promotion of the general welfare, was enacted. The following year (1975), PD 687 (Strengthening and Defining the Role of the Barangay Youth in Every Barangay) provided the creation of Kabataang Barangay in every village (barangay) as the implementing committees (composed of youth aged 18

and below) for programs and projects on sports, education, livelihood, and culture.

With the change in administration, the Kabataang Barangay was replaced by the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) following the ratification of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, and enactment of Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act/RA 7160) and the Youth in Nation Building Act (RA 8044) in 1995. Through the latter, the National Youth Commission (NYC) was created serving as the secretariat of the SK. The NYC also acts as the policy-making/coordinating body of all youth-related institutions, programs, projects, and activities of the government.

The SK is comprised of young village leaders 15 to 17 years old. Specific functions of the SK include:

- promulgation of resolutions necessary to carry out the objectives of the youth in the barangay;
- initiating programs designed to enhance the social, political, economic, cultural, moral, spiritual, and physical development of the members;
- conducting fundraising activities;
- consulting and coordinating with all youth organizations in the barangay for policy formulation and implementation of programs; and,
- coordination with the appropriate agency for the implementation of youth development projects and programs at the national level.

According to a study conducted by the United Nation Children's Fund (2007), SK leaders and members have improved their knowledge and skills on decision-making, management, leadership, and governance; and gained access to new opportunities such as financial benefits, scholarships, and opportunities to serve the community.

YOUTH IN LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCE POLICIES

There are Philippine land and resource laws that recognize youth participation and land access to some extent. RA 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law permits land ownership of young people at least 15 years of age given that their parent is an agrarian reform beneficiary (ARB). This allows young farmers to pursue farming and exercise their rights to land and land governance.

Both the Fisheries Code (RA 8550) and Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (RA 8371) distinguish youth as a sector that will benefit from their family's and/or communities' entitlements over municipal waters and ancestral domains, respectively.

Decision-making bodies in-charge of the governance over ancestral domains and municipal waters also require youth representation in the said platforms – i.e. Municipal/City and Integrated Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Councils (M/C/IFAMRCs). Youth engagement in these mechanisms promotes their well-being and development – they are able to express their views and opinions, develop skills, build competencies, and acquire confidence and aspirations towards upholding their rights to land and natural resources.

CHALLENGES

Avenues for youth participation in governance are not maximized

Sangguniang Kabataan has a long history of being politicized. While the SK provides a platform for youth participation in government decision-making and program/project implementation, it has also been an avenue for government officials to manipulate SK leaders and members towards their vested interests in exchange for fees and favors.

There are also cases wherein SK chairpersons are relatives of then-government officials. As a result, youth leaders are introduced and involved early in corruption, nepotism, and the preservation of political dynasties.

Youth engagement in national government decision-making is still limited. Existing decision-making mechanisms on land that encourage youth participation are mostly functioning only in the village and municipal levels. While youth claim their civic spaces in the national level, usually through membership in civil society organizations, they are rarely heard and acknowledged by national government and are otherwise faced with violence and harassment whenever they participate in mass mobilizations.

Tenure insecurity, unemployment, and poverty

As a sector vulnerable to unemployment, one of youth's primary challenges is the struggle to escape the cycle of poverty that comes with the lack of employment. Most of the poorest families are found in rural areas, where access to and ownership of land continue to be contentious issues. Youth from rural poor and landless families tend to remain landless in the rural setting. Others seek for jobs in urban areas, resulting to rural-to-urban migration. However, many young individuals are likely to be part of the high percentage of urban unemployment, continuously trapping them in the cycle of poverty.

Out-migration and changing perceptions among rural youth

Rural youth out-migration is a phenomenon that can change the landscape of agricultural and indigenous communities. Based on the computations of the Philippine Commission on Population using the 2000 Census of Population and Housing, 52 percent of migration occurs mostly among the working



Youth participants during the Training on Land Governance. Photo by Xavier Science Foundation Inc.

age (20 to 39 years old). Economic concerns (i.e. lack of employment, livelihood, and economic opportunities) are said to be the primary push factors (Perez III, 2015).

Further, as an overarching economic factor of out-migration among rural youth, globalization and modernization may affect youth perceptions on land. In attempts to seek a better life, youth may tend to change their perspectives about development and quality of life, and thereby perceive that these are attained outside their rural communities. Hence, they leave their rural communities including their traditional livelihoods and lifeways. Among the long-term implications of increasing rural out-migration coupled with the declining interest of youth in traditional uses of rural lands include: the loss of potential among the most productive group in the labor force, decline in agricultural productivity, ageing population, and even the non-preservation of traditions and culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the discussions on the issues above, the following points are recommended:

- *Utilize civic spaces of youth and recognize their opinions and expressions, and include youth representation in national decision-making mechanisms.* Elevating the recognition of youth's opinions and expressions in the national level promotes a wider perspective on determining the strategies in addressing the issues of the country. Having the progressive ideas and equipped with innovative technical skills, youth are able to introduce new approaches and tools/instruments in policy-making and implementation.
- *Secure tenure and rights of families over land and natural resources.* Pursuing land and resource reforms paves the way for landless rural families to pull themselves out of poverty; hence, being more capable to provide for the needs of their children.
- *Empower rural youth with focus on activities related to responsible governance of land and natural resources and preserving culture.* It is

The Youth and Land Responsiveness Criteria (YLRC) as applied to efforts to improve tenure security of smallholder farmers in the Philippines

Recognizing the importance of understanding relationships of young people with land, GLTN developed the YLRC “to provide specific information on the magnitude of the land sector’s effect on youth, while being flexible enough to be adapted to various contexts.” It is a tool “that can be used to increase the incorporation of youth perspectives into land matters at both institutional and [program] levels, through a participatory process” (UN-HABITAT – GLTN, 2015).

ANGOC and XSF implemented the project, “Improving Tenure Security of Smallholder Farmers in Select Areas in the Philippines,” with the view, among others, to uplift the status of youth in indigenous communities. Below are the five YLRC criteria vis-à-vis how the project strived to promote IP youth-inclusivity and respond to the needs of IP youth:

Youth Recognition. The project recognizes youth as a sector important in the discussions on land – as they will be the heirs of the gains as well as the challenges in relation to their land rights. Further, the implementers acknowledge that youth have the progressive knowledge and capabilities that will contribute in addressing long-standing and contemporary issues on land.

Throughout its implementation, the project ensured engagement and participation of youth in its activities such as training courses, forums, and participatory enumeration on land information.

Land Information. The project gathered land information and compiled a land data

inventory using the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM). Using this tool, youth access to and roles on land are recorded, and made available and accessible by the community, including the young people.

Land Governance and Participation. Roles and avenues for participation of IP youth in the governance of their ancestral domains were highlighted in the results of surveys, focus group discussions, and training courses. IP youth are seen to be the future leaders and stewards of ancestral domains. They are encouraged to participate in community activities and assemblies. During the training courses, participation of IP youth in meetings of IP leaders was raised as an important proposition.

Land Policies. During the training courses, participants including youth, were oriented on the existing law on indigenous peoples – Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act – where the vital roles of IP youth in nation-building and in the protection and promotion of their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being are recognized.

Land Use and Access. Land use is among the sub-topics which the project delved into. During a forum on landscape governance conducted under the project, the Philippine land use planning system was presented to IP participants. The presentation also laid down the avenues wherein IPs, including IP youth, can participate and raise their concerns, needs, and objectives for ancestral domain governance. □

important to integrate topics related to responsible land and resource governance in the existing plans, programs, and projects on youth empowerment. Exposing youth to land issues and interventions will help them build their aspirations and motivations towards the preservation of culture and natural resources and responsible governance of land. In the case of indigenous communities, initiatives promoting their culture is a way to

revive their traditional lifeways and carry on their IKSPs.

- *Documentation of youth participation and ownership of land.* Documenting land access and ownership of youth increases their visibility in policy planning – which is essential in promoting inclusivity of land policies. □

This issue brief was prepared by Marianne Jane Naungayan of ANGOC.

(The views expressed in this brief do not necessarily reflect those of GLTN, UN Habitat, and BMZ.)

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PROJECT IMPLEMENTERS AND PARTNERS



ANGOC

The **Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)** is a regional coalition of national and regional CSOs in Asia actively engaged in promoting food sovereignty, land rights and agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance, and rural

development. For more information, refer to www.angoc.org



The **Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF)** is a legal, non-stock, non-profit, non-government organization advocating programs and projects that will alleviate poverty and promote social empowerment. XSF serves as a conduit of funds to support

development projects, innovative programs, fora, and dialogues. For more information, refer to www.xsfoundationinc.org



The **United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)** is working

towards a better urban future. Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all. It facilitates the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and hosts its Secretariat. For more information, refer to www.unhabitat.org



The **Global Land Tool Network (GLTN)** is an alliance of global, regional, and national partners contributing to poverty alleviation through land

reform, improved land management, and security of tenure particularly through the development and dissemination of pro-poor and gender sensitive tools. For more information, refer to www.gltn.net



The **German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)** is the primary State development body in Germany. BMZ's governing principle is the

protection of human rights, which includes the right to live in peace and freedom, and to help address the poverty issues in the world. For more information, refer to www.bmz.de

Concerns over food insecurity in developing countries are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. Given that land plays an important role in the livelihoods of most people in developing countries, food security and poverty reduction cannot be achieved unless issues of access to land, security of tenure, and the capacity to use land productively and in a sustainable manner are addressed.

Thus, the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), as facilitated by UN-Habitat, is implementing "Secure Access to Land and Resources (SALaR)" Project through the support of Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), with the overall goal of improving land and natural resources tenure security of rural smallholder farmers in Uganda, the Philippines, and Laos.

In the Philippines, while a number of land laws are being implemented, several gaps need to be addressed to improve the situation of their intended beneficiaries. Hence, "**Improving Tenure Security of Smallholder Farmers in Select Areas in the Philippines**" aims to contribute to the goal of SALaR Project.

This project is implemented by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) in partnership with Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF), with technical and financial support from Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and Germany's Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

For more information about this project:

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