Arakan, North Cotabato

Address: North Cotabato

Description: Arakan Valley is a 4,024.73-hectare territory that represents the southern end of the Central Mindanao Cordillera and serves as home to the Manobo indigenous people. Primary growth forests have shrunk to less than 5% by the early 1990s due to massive commercial logging and land conversion for agricultural use, but further forest degradation has since been curtailed.

Status: On-going

Site Profile Summary

Ecosystem Types	Lowland to Sub-montane Forest
Area	4,024.73 hectares
Biogeographic Highlights	- Mt. Sinaka, which hosts one of the remaining forest fragments in Arakan Valley is Priority Area No. 138 within Greater Mindanao, rated as an “Extremely High Critical” in conservation importance, according ot the Philippine Biodiversity Conservation Priority-setting Program (PBCPP). It is also a candidate Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) candidate, being home to a highly diverse endemic flora and fauna species. - Arakan Valley hosts a number of critical watersheds (Mt. Sinaka; KABIKU or Kabalantian, Binoongan, and Kulaman; and Mt. Kimamulig/Mahuson) that provide headwaters for the Pulangi river system on which Central Mindanao depends for its water resources.
Flora	- 97 identified species in Mt. Sinaka and 79 species of trees were identified and recorded in Mt. Mahuson, with Mt. Sinaka having higher species diversity and richness
Fauna	- Arakan Valley is a critical habitat of the endangered Philippine Eagle (Pithecophaga jefferyi).
Indigenous People and Community	- Ancestral domains of the two indigenous peoples organizations of the Manobos can be found – PALUPA in sitio Panguandig and KIMALUPA in sitio Kiapat. These are two CADC areas occupying approximately 1,047 ha and 848 ha, respectively.

Livelihood Resources	- Agriculture is the base of the Arakan economy and the main source of livelihood of about 75% of the population. - Most of the Manobo inhabitants depend heavily on monocropping of corn and upland rice. This vegetation creates corridors that connect the forest patches. - Freshwater aquaculture and micro enterprises are also sources of livelihood.

Biophysical Profile

Arakan Valley consists of cultivated and uncultivated lands (e.g., grasslands) in alluvial plains (>500 masl) and rolling to undulating lands in the footslopes and hilly lands (elevation 500-750 masl); Mid-montane (750-900 masl) farms and agro-forest plantations, secondary,and primary growth forests; high elevation (>900 masl) primary growth and mossy forest

Economic Situation

- As of 2007, 80.8% of the population were in the labor force and 20% were unemployed ; 52.1% of all families in North Cotabato are agricultural wage-earners and self-employed agricultural workers.
- 95% of women work as housekeepers with no income of their own. Women workers employed by the municipal government make up 47.7% and account for 66.7% of casual/contractual workers. Wives, both waged and non-waged employees, also do agricultural work, including backyard gardening and small livestock raising.

Geopolitical Situation

- The main institutional framework for environmental governance in Arakan is the municipal government and its 28 component barangays. The general development directions, goals, strategies, policies, programs, and projects have been articulated in its first ever Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP). Realization of the development targets hinges on the effectiveness of its leadership in directing and coordinating all local action, from development policy and planning to program/project implementation.

Threats

- Illegal logging is the primary extractive activity that severely affects Arakan Valley’s natural resource base. Land clearing for agriculture, including slash-and-burn practices, also create immense pressure on the forest cover.
- Encroachment and population pressure drive the above extractive practices further.
- Forest management in the two CADC areas where the Manobo populations reside needs to grapple with accelerated reduction of biodiversity, depletion of non-renewable resources, and soil degradation.
- Difficulty in protecting the wilderness areas because of increasing population, extreme environmental conditions, and varied cultural traditions among the residents further compound the problem.

FPE-funded Projects and Initiatives

Project	Grant Type, Strategy	Duration	Implementing Partners

Arakan Indigenous Manobo Kulamanon-Tinanon Summit: Towards Furthering and Strengthening Indigenous Forest Governance For Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	Small, Capacity-building	2012	- Manobo Lumadnong Panaghiusa Sa Arakan Valley, Inc. (MALUPA)
Forest Corridor Development Project In Arakan Valley, North Cotabato	Large, Site-focused	2009-2011	- Philippine Eagle Foundation, Inc. (PEFI)
Participation Of Arakan Forest Carbon Project To The League Of Corporate Foudnations' Corporate Social Responsibility Expo 2009	Small, Constituency-building, Proactive	2009	
A Shift Towards Area Specific Intervention Through Strategic Planning for The FPE Priority Site In Arakan	Medium, Site-focused, Proactive	2007	
Arakan Community-based Resource Management Project for Forest Corridor Development	Medium to Large, Site-focused	2000-2007	- Philippine Eagle Foundation, Inc. (PEFI)

Key Outcomes

- Biophysical resource assessment and community mapping conducted to provide baseline data for future conservation initiatives. Enterprise feasibility studies have also been implemented to cover the sustainable livelihood needs of the communities residing in the area.
- Community leadership trainings, alongside documentation of indigenous knowledge, beliefs, systems and practices, have created means to capacitate the local community members while integrating traditional culture and knowledge systems in sustainable resource management practices.
- Establishment of a forest corridor in the site as a means of connecting strips of forest that will allow wildlife to travel freely and safely across the main forest patches. In the long term, these efforts are expected to address the fragmentation of forest ecosystems, habitat loss, and species conservation in these important mountain ranges.
- Partnership with LGUs, LGAs, other NGOs, and the academe are important factors in generating support that heightens the stakeholders recognition of the importance of protection, rehabilitation and conservation of the remaining forests’ biodiversity.

Reference

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- *Manipon AJN and Mesina SR. 2009. Communities, Conservation, and the Filipino Environmentalist. Quezon City, Philippines: Foundation for the Philippine Environment.*
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