

# KEYEGANGAN:

## At the Forefront of Changing Indigenous Food Culture

### Philippines

by John Vincent Colili and Maica Saar,  
Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Katutubong Kabataan  
(SNaKK)

The Pala'wan tribe maintains a 6,000-hectare ICCA located in the upland areas of Barangays Amas and Saraza in the Municipality of Brooke's Point. The lush bountiful forest of our ICCA is the main source of non-timber forest products such as parukpok (tigergrass), buri (corypha) and begtik (almaciga) among others. These serve as primary sources of livelihood for many of the community members, particularly those residing in the upland areas. Nature is central to the traditions and beliefs of the Pala'wan people.



### TRADITIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



The Indigenous farming or pag-uma - guided by a tightly knitted tradition of paying respect to nature before clearing, before planting and even after harvest.



Bertas - an Indigenous zoning system which sets limits on land use for farming and housing to protect watersheds and important forest patches in order to preserve resources, such as the almaciga, which is treated with high regard as it brings bountiful income for the community.



Wild forest foods - consisting of edible fruits and vegetables, which vary in taste, size, color and abundance.

### CHALLENGES

- Modern economic and educational demands have pushed many Indigenous youth to move out of their communities in order to seek education and employment opportunities elsewhere.
- Although some have learned Indigenous knowledge, a huge percentage of the youth who move out lacks in-depth understanding to continue these practices and pass it down to the next generation. In most cases, the youth only know the hows, but do not know the whys or the underlying reasons behind the practices, which mostly can only be acquired through firsthand experience.
- The onset of digital entertainment systems in the form of mobile games, online streaming sites and social media have also decreased the interest of youth in learning the traditional ways of food gathering and preparation.
- The decreased outdoor experience due to these new modes of entertainment has lessened the exposure of younger community members to nature and wild foods.
- The introduction of new food sources has also lessened the need or demand for wild foods.
- These developments have drastically changed the lifestyle of the youth, limiting their ability or interest to learn more about wild foods.

The Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Katutubong Kabataan (SNaKK), an organization of Indigenous youth with members from Amas, Saraza, Mainit and other parts of Brooke's Point, was formed due to their fascination for wild foods. SNaKK aims to create a fun and safe space for Indigenous youth to learn new things and improve their skills. They also envision contributing to community empowerment, forest protection and safekeeping of Indigenous Knowledge, Systems, and Practices (IKSP). With the goal of safekeeping Indigenous knowledge, SNaKK with support from Non Timber Forest Products - Exchange Program (NTFP-EP) ventured into knowledge transfer and documentation activities such as **youth camps, immersion activities, nursery tree planing, lectures and food festivals.**

#### Activities

- Younger generations learn firsthand various ways of traditional food preparation such as:
  - making the *purad* (traditional yeast)
  - finding the correct measurements of coconut milk for the *lutlut* (sticky-rice delicacy)
  - Foraging for different wild foods, such as *lipso* and *usaw*
- SNaKK takes these opportunities to **document the wildv foods and food preparation practices.** The video and written documentation are then processed and stored for safekeeping and used in future activities.

#### Way forward

- Exploring the creation and nurturing of strong networks and linkages with like-minded groups all over the Philippines.
- Partnerships and collaborations on the importance of wild foods, traditional delicacies, and maintaining communal food security.
- Reigniting the interest of youth in wild foods and indigenous legacies