



ISSN. 1655-2245 • Volume 28 No. 1 • June 2024

# IKOROTA

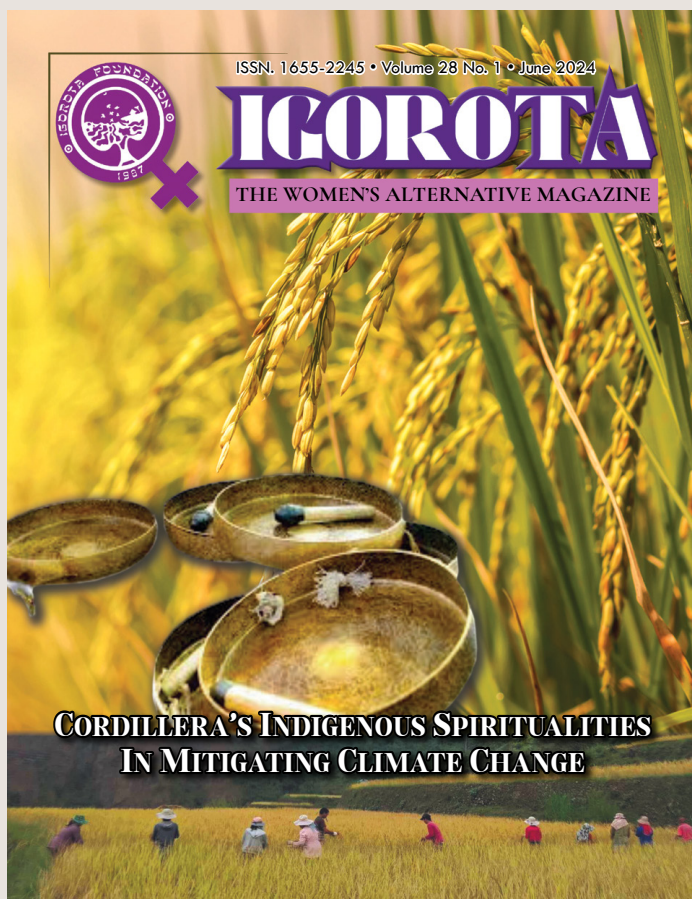
THE WOMEN'S ALTERNATIVE MAGAZINE



## CORDILLERA'S INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITIES IN MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE







### *Our Cover*

The gongs, *palay*, and the practice of *alluyon* symbolize the rich cultural heritage of the Cordillera.

Gongs are important to traditional ceremonies, bringing people together, and reinforcing identity. *Palay* as a staple food, symbolizes sustenance, life, and survival. *Alluyon* represents the strength and resilience of community bonds. Each element/practice has attached values and spiritualities contributing to environmental protection as well as climate change mitigation.

The opinions expressed in the articles belong to their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IGOROTA Foundation.

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Igorota wants to hear from you! Send in your emails to [igorota.foundation@yahoo.com](mailto:igorota.foundation@yahoo.com) and send your feedbacks, comments, suggestions, even essays, and literary pieces. Who knows, yours could be published next!

## WHAT IS INSIDE?

03

Editorial

04

Embracing Spirituality and Community Empowerment: The Journey of the IGOROTA Foundation, Inc.

-Tess Godio

07

Traditional Rice Farming System in Bila, Bokod Benguet

-Corazon Pindog

10

Pijew Fosters Respect and Discipline among the Ibaloi People

-Marjorie Kissing

12

Nature Spirits as Guardians and Keepers

-Jorie Joy Attiw

13

Alluyon System in Kibungan

-Merqula Estepa

15

Cañao of Benguet

-Marlyn Toyda-an

16

Helping One Another, the *Changah* Way

-Febelene Maggay

18

Preserving Cultural Wisdom: The Ritual of *Mamoh-gwat Ja Mon-gar-gar* in Mayoyao

-Jerome Mombael

19

Mayoyao Rice Terraces in Mitigating Climate Change

-Edna Chinolong

20

Reminiscing to Realization

-Georgina Atipen-Cardona

21

I am a Woman, Of Course

-Ivanee "Ivee" Bongosia

# Spirituality in Action

- Georgina Atipen-Cardona -



Clean river flowing freely.



Peaceful community.

Spirituality is everywhere. It can be just on your side—a woman watering plants or the woman you witnessed rearing a child. It can also be the community you observed helping each other or perhaps the family you saw going to church together.

This is a multifaceted aspect; it extends beyond religion or the church. It includes our deep connections with God, fellow humans, and our environment. It can be a driving force pushing us forward and helping us become better versions of ourselves. For others, spirituality is rooted in their indigenous practices, the values attached to these *kaugaliangs* (traditions/practices). For some, spirituality is enhanced through the everyday experiences of individuals from work, peers, or life's challenges. In the Cordillera region, the spiritualities are indeed profoundly rich and are deeply rooted in indigenous cultures.

This issue embarks on a journey to explore the role of spiritualities in addressing one of the most pressing global challenges—climate change. The authors relate their stories to their traditions and practices that have to do with protecting the environment. This covers the places specifically in Bokod and Kibungan in Benguet and in Mayoyao, Ifugao.

Here, we discover the journey of the IGOROTA Foundation in embracing spirituality as a guiding force in filling its activities with purpose and compassion that was carried up today. First is the traditional rice farming in Bila, Bokod which helps sustain the land. Second, the *pijew* which is more than just a set of rules and a tradition that symbolizes values of respect and discipline. And the rest are mountain spirits believed to be guardians of the nature; the *cañao* ceremony to ensure a bountiful harvest, good health, and protection from evil spirits; the *alluyon* or *changah* system as rendering free labor to help a relative or neighbor in need; the ritual of *e-majawjaw* which is *Mamoh-gwat Ja Mon-gar-gar* ensuring a bountiful harvest where no one will starve in the community; and, the Mayoyao rice terraces in mitigating climate change.

Through the pages, we recognize that the spirit exists in all things. We see the interconnectedness of people to nature where spiritual practices are deeply tied to the land, which is our everything. A gift that must be preserved for future generations. Above all, that is what indigenous Cordilleran spirituality is all about.

Finally, our spiritualities inspire us to action, urging us to become guardians of life in all its forms. How we choose to integrate these spiritual values into our lives, our work, and our interactions with the world around us is a deeply personal journey—one that holds the promise of a brighter, more sustainable future for all.//





Food processing activity under the Social Enterprise Program

## Embracing Spirituality and Community Empowerment: The Journey of the IGOROTA Foundation, Inc.

-Tess Godio-

Spirituality serves as a guiding force within IGOROTA Foundation, Inc. (IFI), infusing its activities with a profound sense of purpose and compassion. Founded out of a deep belief in the strengths and rightful position of women within creation and society, IFI's vision and mission are rooted in the Christian faith, embodying a commitment to holistic empowerment and community upliftment.

**Vision:** "Women's Holistic Development for Self-Sustaining Communities."

**Mission:** Women's empowerment through transformative training, education, advocacy, and organizing.

The inception of IFI paralleled the process of conceiving and nurturing new life, with each member contributing to the collective growth and resilience of the organization. Originally part of the Montañosa Social Action Center, IFI emerged as a response to the reorganization that left various programs without a legal entity. Recognizing the need to continue their vital work, the founders of IFI came together, driven by a shared vision of the empowerment of women and social justice. Thus, the essence of IFI's stated vision and mission has remained over the years.

In the early days, IFI operated from humble beginnings, holding office at Home Sweet Home while field workers continued their essential community outreach. The conceptualization of the Foundation was

a collaborative effort, with input from all involved in formulating its vision, mission, and guiding principles. Central to this process was a recognition of the unique attributes of women and the spiritual dimension that infused their work.

Sr. Teresa Dagdag, MM, and her circle of friends worked for the registration of the IGOROTA Foundation. She especially mentions her friend, Elizabeth Pineda Dela Fuente, who suggested and assisted her in going through the legal process required for the establishment of the Foundation. We honor the founding members who worked at different levels to birth IFI. As the legal process was in progress, work in the field continued.

**next page »**





« from page 4

As IFI evolved, it navigated both familiar and uncharted territories, adapting to the evolving needs of the communities it serves. Through ongoing community engagement and strategic development initiatives, IFI expanded its reach and impact, becoming a catalyst for positive change in the region. Leadership training and capacity-building programs exemplify IFI's commitment to continuous improvement and staff empowerment, ensuring its responsiveness and relevance in a dynamic landscape. The women and community issues that IFI addressed during the early days are documented in Inglayan magazine of the Women's Programs which evolved into the Igorota magazine.

The journey of IFI is one of resilience, innovation, and unwavering commitment to the principles of spirituality and community empowerment. As it celebrated 37 years of service on April 27, 2024, IFI stands as a testament to the transformative power of spirituality in action, inspiring hope, and creating lasting changes.

Honoring Indigenous Wisdom and Gospel Teachings:  
IFI's Commitment to Environmental Conservation

At the core of IFI's spirituality lies a profound reverence for both indigenous culture and the Gospel of Jesus, which teach us about the interconnectedness of all things around and within us. This interconnectedness serves as a guiding principle, reminding us of our responsibility as individuals and as a community to conserve nature and protect the delicate balance of life on Earth.

In our indigenous culture, we find a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings. Our ancestors recognized that we are not separate from nature but intricately woven into its tapestry, each part essential to the whole. This wisdom calls us to honor and respect the natural world, acknowledging our role as stewards of the Earth entrusted with its care.

Similarly, the Gospel of Jesus teaches us about love, compassion, and the importance of caring for one another and the world around us. Jesus' teachings emphasize the interconnectedness of humanity with God and with each other, reminding us of our responsibility to love and protect all of God's creation.

next page »



The dancing held during the Founding day of IFI in 1987 gives tribute to the women who sustain and renew the life forces in the Cordillera.





## « from page 5

For IFI, the conservation of nature is not just a duty but a sacred calling. It is a recognition of the inherent value of all life and a commitment to preserving the beauty and diversity of the Earth for future generations. Through our work, we seek to embody the principles of indigenous wisdom and Gospel teachings, fostering a deeper connection to the natural world and nurturing a sense of reverence and awe for its wonders.

As individuals and as a community, we strive to live in harmony with nature, mindful of the impact of our actions on the world around us. We embrace sustainable practices, support environmental initiatives, and advocate for policies that protect the Earth and its inhabitants. In doing so, we honor our spiritual heritage and fulfill our sacred duty to care for the Earth and all its creatures.

The heart of IFI is a profound commitment to environmental conservation, rooted in the timeless wisdom of indigenous culture and the Gospel of Jesus. This is the spirituality and the very life force that IFI endeavors to guide her in fulfilling her avowed vision and mission in the ever-evolving landscape surrounding her. In doing so, together we can impart relevant and timely partnerships with our local communities, our region, our country, and our planet.

As we continue our journey, we invite others to join us in this sacred work, as together we strive to create a world where all beings can thrive in harmony and abundance.//

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« Enhancement trainings on Organic Farming, Food Processing, Voter's Education, and Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) processing are some activities of IFI under its four programs: Sustainable Agriculture, Social Enterprise, Gender and Development, and Ancestral Domain (*From first to fourth picture*)







Land preparation on the traditional rice farming. Photos by Jasmin Chomawat

# Traditional Rice Farming System in Bila, Bokod, Benguet

-Corazon Pindog-

The farmers in Bila plant rice twice a year. The *kintoman* cycle runs from December / January to July / August, while the *talon* cycle runs from June / July to December / January.

In both rice farming periods, the farmers prepare the seed beds. They uproot the weeds and loosen the soil using a grab hoe or a convenient farming tool. They apply sunflower leaves and other composts as fertilizer. Then, they water the seed bed and sow the rice seeds. While they monitor the growth of the seedlings, they prepare the main rice field.

After 30 days or less, the farmers transplant the healthy seedlings at 2 seedlings per hill, 12 to 15 centimeters apart. On the other hand, they transplant the less healthy seedlings when they are more than 30 days old at 3 seedlings per hill, 6 to 8 centimeters apart.

The farmers adopted a high-breed rice variety they call *biit / iloko*, which they transplanted with 4 to 5 seedlings per hill.

As the rice plants grow, the farmers monitor the water level of the rice field and ensure that the

seedlings are free from pests. They drain the rice field half an inch from the ground so snails cannot reach the plant's young shoots. The farmers call this practice *Kutinap*. They position mouse traps and other devices to drive away rats and other pests. They remove the weeds between the rice plants and around the rice fields. Moreover, they put up scarecrows and other materials to drive away birds and other harmful insects.

In all the stages of the rice cycle, the farmers ensure that water does not leave the rice field except in the late stage of the *talon*.

After the *kintoman* cycle, the farmers cut the rice stalks and leave them on the field to rot with the water and soil. When they prepare for the *talon* cycle, they mix the rotten stalks with sunflower leaves and other weeds to fertilize the rice field. The farmers shared that the fertilizer lasts until the next *kintoman* cycle.

In addition, the farmers drain the rice fields before the *talon* harvest. It will remain dry until they restore water for the *kintoman*. This is to loosen the soil before they plow it.

next page »



**« from page 7**

The farmers harvest the rice grains using a tool called a *rakem*. They bind the stems of the rice grains using a tie prepared from the bark of bamboo. For the high-breed variety, they use a sickle to harvest. They beat the rice stalks to make the seeds fall out.

They bring home the rice grains and dry them under the sun. When the grains are well-dried, some farmers store them in their granaries, and others store them in a vacant room inside their homes. Before they pound the rice, they bring some bundles and put them in their *so-olan* for easier pounding. The *so-olan* is a space located above their fireplace where they put firewood.

At this time, the farmers in Bila maintain their traditional rice varieties, which they plant alternately. The traditional rice varieties are the following: *baguan*, *balatinaw* (*diket*/glutinous rice), *bengbeng*, *bitalga*, *bongkitan*, *bontok*, *karit*, *malatikan*, *marinao* (*diket*/glutinous rice - also planted in warm areas like Nawal, Penged, and Poblacion), *puti-an*, *tudoy*, and *sangkideb*. Rice varieties can be grown in both the *kintoman* and *talon* cycles, but some produce best during the *kintoman*, and some are exclusive to the *talon*. Other varieties grow well in warm areas only.

The high-yield variety thrives during the *talon*. It is a product of an experiment. The variety was introduced in Bila in 2008. The farmers planted it several times until it was adopted as their farming method. They use local compost to grow the rice, and they have seedbanked it.

The farmers said that a rice field in Bila can produce its maximum yield when it has nutritious soil, clean and fresh water, and fresh air, its surroundings are in good physical shape, the weather is wholesome, there are positive energies around, the farmer is happy, and there are no pests and calamities.

One farmer shared that her family cultivates a rice field with an area of 1,000 square meters, which can produce 140 kilos of rice in one crop cycle. This is exclusive of the five bundles/ *tan-ay* of rice grains that they keep as seeds for the next planting season. There are 7 of them in the family, and they eat this with their chicken, ducks, and dogs until the next harvest. In their experience, a cavan of manually pounded rice lasts longer than a cavan of purchased commercial rice. She believes that when they pound the rice, loads of positive energy join them, causing it to last long.

**next page »**

*Rakem/ Harvest Knife. Photo grabbed at The Cordillera Sun in courtesy of Maxine Bag-ayan.*



## « from page 8

She, however, conveyed that the 140 kilos of rice per harvest is not constant. Though that is the reality, they are satisfied and grateful for their harvests. They always perform their thanksgiving rituals after every harvest. This rice farming system contributes to mitigating climate change in several ways.

First, by incorporating traditional farming methods such as leaving rice stalks to rot in the fields and using organic materials like sunflower leaves and compost as fertilizer, the farming system promotes carbon sequestration. This helps to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in the soil, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

Second, it supports biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems. Biodiverse systems are more resilient to climate change impacts and contribute to ecosystem stability.

Third is water conservation. The farmers' careful management of water resources, including monitoring water levels in rice fields and minimizing water runoff contributes to water conservation. Efficient water use helps to mitigate the impacts of climate change-induced water scarcity and supports agricultural resilience.

Fourth, traditional rice varieties are often more resilient to climate variability and extreme weather events compared to high-yield varieties. By cultivating a diverse range of traditional rice varieties adapted to local conditions, farmers in Bila are better equipped

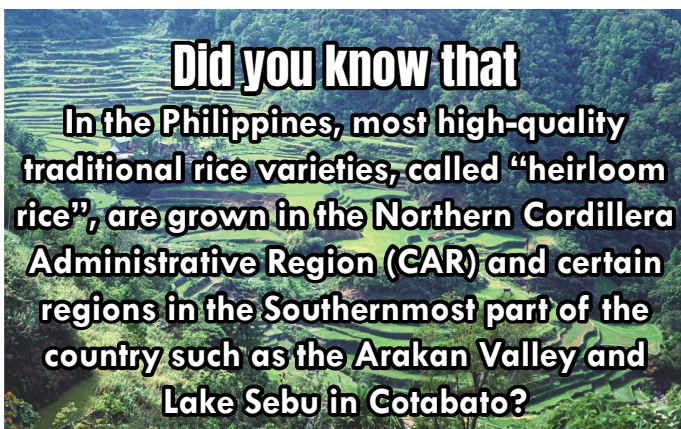
to cope with climate change impacts such as droughts, floods, and pests.

Lastly, the reliance on traditional farming practices minimizes the use of external inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which are associated with greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts.

The traditional rice farming system in Bila stands as proof of the resilience and wisdom of indigenous agricultural practices in the face of climate change. By embracing traditional methods, the farmers in Bila contribute significantly to mitigating the impacts of climate change on both local ecosystems and global environmental health. This system serves as a model of living together in peace with nature, demonstrating how indigenous wisdom and cultural heritage can be powerful tools in the fight against climate change. As we continue to navigate the difficulties of environmental sustainability, it is better that we recognize, respect, and learn from the time-tested practices of communities like those in Bila, who have long been stewards of the land and guardians of our shared future.//



*Kintoman Rice*





# *Pijew* Fosters Respect and Discipline among the Ibaloi People

-Marjorie Kissing-

I am proud to be an Ibaloi. The Ibaloi tribe is rich in different Indigenous Knowledge, Systems, and Practices (IKSPs) that are still observed today. The elders value and treasure these IKSPs, and they are doing their best to ensure that these practices will be preserved by passing them on to younger generations. One of these is known as *pijew*.

*Pijew* has no absolute meaning. But in stories that have been passed on since time immemorial, it is considered a deed that is prohibited. In this article, we will learn the deeper meaning through *pijew ni payew*. *Payew* is a local term for rice fields; therefore, it talks about actions that must be prohibited in the field for a specific reason and timeframe.

In a conversation I had with my 74-year-old father, Camilo Paran Gosgos Sr., he told me that *pijew ni payew* has practices that must be done before planting and before harvesting. He also mentioned things that must be avoided during those timeframes and the possible outcomes if these practices fail to be recognized. According to him, you put *pureng* before planting. *Pureng* is the tip of a stick with its leaves attached and tied as a knot as a sign that nobody is allowed to cross or walk near the field. In addition, the purpose of *pureng* is to protect the plants from *demka* or criticisms because it is believed that it results in low yield when *palay* are criticized. A person who chooses to still walk near that field even with the presence of *pureng* will have to pay a price with either a pig or depending on the decisions of the elders.

On the other hand, a jar of rice wine and a bundle of *palay* are offered inside the *abong* or a granary house before harvesting. This signifies the beginning of *pijew* wherein no one is allowed to visit the field in preparation for harvesting. In this case, they believed that the *palay* will yield a low volume of rice grains if the people fail to recognize *pijew*.

From this culture passed down to different generations, it has evolved and been adopted. Today, it is not only applicable in the rice fields because *pureng* already exists in vegetable farms. From my point of view, *pijew* as a belief does not only mean to inflict

next page »

*Pureng*. Tip of a stick with its leaves attached and tied as a knot



**« from page 10**

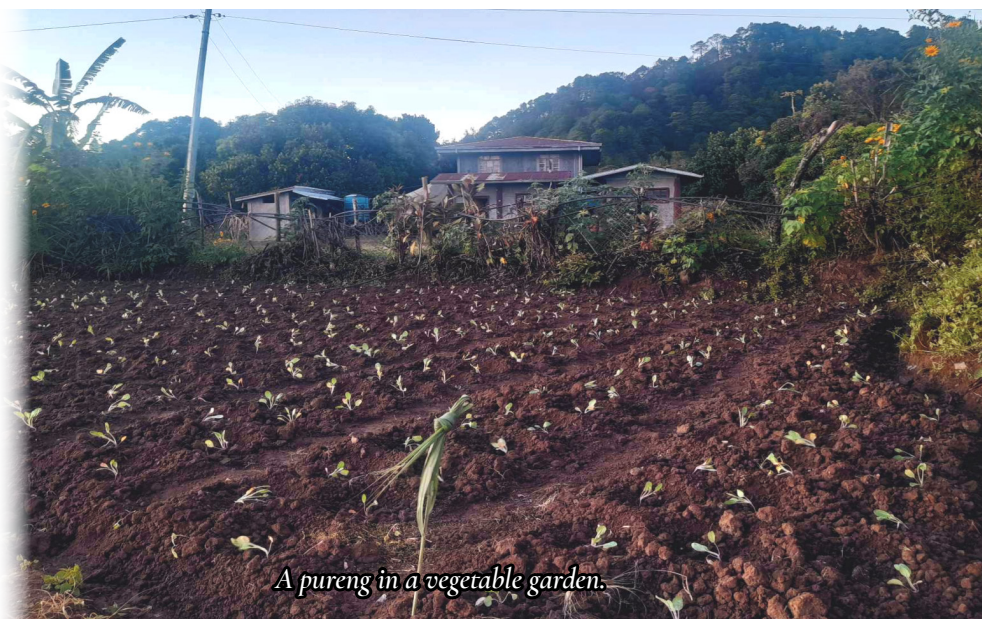
fear on anyone. In a deeper sense, it is a reminder for us to respect boundaries, have discipline, respect people's beliefs, and be considerate of every decision we make even when we are unsure why something is considered as *pijew*.

*Pijew* encourages a respectful relationship with nature by emphasizing the importance of certain practices before planting and harvesting. For example, the use of *pureng* to protect the rice fields signifies respect for the natural process of growth and acknowledges the potential impact of human actions on agricultural yield. This respect for nature aligns with sustainable farming principles, which are essential for mitigating climate change. It also fosters respect for cultural traditions and beliefs, creating a sense of unity and understanding among diverse communities. By embracing *pijew* and other cultural practices, communities uphold their cultural heritage while promoting cooperation and collaboration in addressing environmental challenges. This sense of cultural unity can strengthen collective efforts towards sustainable development and climate resilience

*Pijew* is more than just a set of rules. It symbolizes values of respect and discipline deeply ingrained in our culture. By applying traditions like *pijew*, we not only preserve our heritage but also pave the way for a future where cultural diversity thrives. This, in turn, creates a world where respect for tradition and heritage enriches the fabric of society, fostering a sense of unity and understanding among diverse communities.//



*A pureng in a rice field.*



*A pureng in a vegetable garden.*



# Nature Spirits as Guardians and Keepers

-Jorie Joy Atiw-

The belief in Nature Spirits, particularly the *tomongaw* or Mountain Spirits, is deeply ingrained in the cultural belief of the Benguet people, mainly in Kibungan. These spirits, believed to inhabit the sky world and underworld, are thought to use power over humans and the natural world.

*Tomongaw* is believed to be the guardians of the forest and its inhabitants, including animals like boars, deer, and wild fowls, as well as valuable resources such as gold, silver, and minerals. They are said to reside in caves, stones, and trees. So, the community takes great care not to offend or disturb their dwelling places, fearing punishment through injury or sickness.



A deer believed to be an animal of a *tomongaw*.  
Photo grabbed from the Department of Environment  
and Natural Resources Facebook page.

The *mambunong*, a native priest, plays a crucial role in healing rituals for those suffering from sickness believed to be caused by the *tomongaw*. These rituals, involving sacrificial offerings of food and prayers, seek guidance from *Kabunyan*, the supreme deity, for healing and protection.

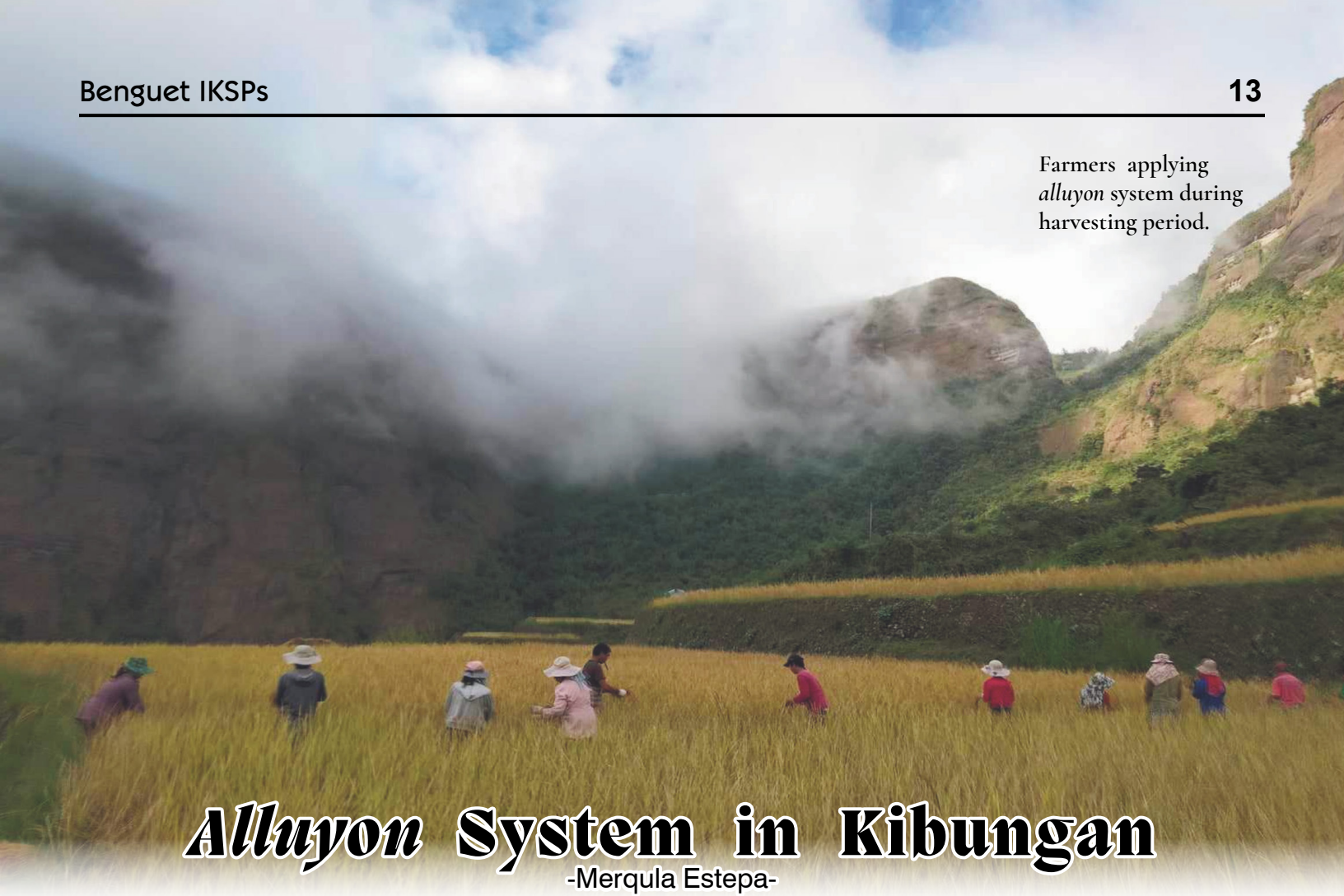
Here is a narrator's childhood story that illustrates the consequences of offending the *tomongaw*. A neighbor noticed that his cabbage was eaten by an unidentified animal, so he installed a trap. A deer was then trapped and butchered by the neighbor, resulting in a complicated illness that even a doctor could not diagnose. The family sought the intervention of a *mambunong*. Through ritual offerings and prayers, they pursued to appease the *tomongaw* and lessen the harm caused.

This story serves as a warning for the community, emphasizing the importance of respecting the spiritual beliefs and practices associated with hunting and interacting with nature. It highlights the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world and the need to maintain harmony and balance in these relationships.

These words, "*inayan baka animal di tomongaw sa,*" translate as "don't harm that because it might be an animal of the *tomongaw*," reflect the community's respect for the unseen spirits that govern nature, reminding them to interact with nature with mindfulness and respect.

Overall, the belief in Nature Spirits like the *tomongaw* is not just a cultural belief but a deeply rooted aspect of the Benguet people's identity and worldview. It guides their interactions with the environment and reinforces their sense of stewardship and responsibility towards nature. By acknowledging the spiritual significance of the natural world, the community is motivated to conserve biodiversity and protect ecosystems, contributing to climate change mitigation efforts by preserving carbon sinks and maintaining ecological balance.//





Farmers applying  
*alluyon* system during  
harvesting period.

## *Alluyon* System in Kibungan

-Merqula Estepa-

The *alluyon* system, deeply rooted in Igorot tradition, is a testament to the unity and cooperation among communities. In Kibungan, this centuries-old practice thrives particularly during rice planting and harvesting seasons, symbolizing values of camaraderie and support.

*Alluyon* fosters a culture of collaboration without the need for monetary exchange. Instead, it relies on a shared labor system where community members coordinate schedules for tasks such as cleaning, planting, and harvesting. I saw and learned this practice when I was still young. I often heard from my parents, “*ta enak maki ani ono makitunod tan din alluyon ko*” (I will go help in harvesting/planting rice as part of my *alluyon*). As to experience, there is a profound sense of satisfaction and pride after the work. This tradition, passed down through generations,

instills a deep sense of responsibility and fulfillment in its participants. As the saying goes, “Two heads are better than one,” emphasizing the efficiency and companionship achieved through shared effort.

Beyond its practical aspects, *alluyon* is filled with spiritual and cultural significance. It is guided by beliefs such as *inayan* or *lawa* (not doing prohibited acts because something bad might happen), which not only ensure the success of the planting or harvesting but also strengthen the performers’ connection to ancestral beliefs and environmental stewardship. Additionally, the tradition of exchanging stories, riddles, and chants during *alluyon* enriches the experience, fostering community, and preserving oral traditions for future generations.



« from page 13

## “INAYAN”

refers to all thoughts or acts that are considered as bad, evil, forbidden, or immoral.

It implies to prevent someone from doing something unpleasant to oneself or others.

In a more profound sense, it is the fear of a Supreme Creator who cautions or forbids someone from doing anything destructive or harmful.

**SO, IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO DO SOMETHING BAD, “INAYAN”, DON’T DO IT!**

Importantly, *alluyon* contributes significantly to protecting the environment. It promotes traditional and labor-intensive farming methods that are often more environmentally friendly than mechanized or industrialized farming. By relying on shared labor rather than machinery, it reduces the carbon footprint associated with agriculture, minimizes chemical inputs, and preserves soil health. Also, *alluyon* is deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge and spiritual beliefs that maintain cultural practices tied to agriculture and land stewardship as it creates a sense of respect for the environment and promotes protection of natural resources.

Nowadays, it is being observed that this practice is gradually diminishing because of the continuing threats from modernization. The mechanized farming and urban employment draw youth away from traditional practices, endangering the continuity of this practice. As an advocate, I stand to accept the challenge and help in the continuance of *alluyon* culture since it holds the unity of the group or a certain community and the ancestral domain. Also, it is nature-friendly, and it portrays gender equality. As stated by one elder of Tacadang, “*binmela di machines ta lumaklaka di ubla waday adi kasiwat ay payew ngem ed idi ay nowang ya ipugaw di man ubla yan ma-ubla di payew*,” (The rice fields before were being completely cultivated by a carabao and through human power. Compared today that rice fields are no longer cultivated when there are the presence of machinery). The reason is because of the cons of technology, which can lead to laziness among people. Modernization is good, but abusing its use is different.

The *alluyon* system serves as a powerful reminder of the values deeply rooted in indigenous practices. It not only strengthens community bonds but also fosters a harmonious relationship with nature and tradition. We must not only safeguard but also actively promote such practices, for they weave our communities together and keep our ancestral traditions alive. //



# Cañao of Benguet

-Marlyn Toyda-an-

The Igorot people of Benguet have a rich culture and unique religious practices passed down from generation to generation. They closely tie their way of life to animism, the belief that spirits inhabit the natural world around them. They have a deep respect for nature and believe in the interconnectedness of all things. They also have various ceremonies and rituals for their lives, such as agricultural practices, weddings, and funerals. These rituals are an integral part of their culture and serve to show respect to their ancestors and gods.

One of the ceremonies of the Igorot is *cañao*, a ritual where they offer rice wine to their deities as a sign of gratitude and make offerings of pigs or chickens. *Cañao* is a meaningful ceremony to ensure a bountiful harvest, good health, and protection from evil spirits, as well as a traditional festival where the Igorot people butcher pigs in a ritualistic way called *owik*. The ceremony is led by a native priest or *mambunong*, who oversees the killing and butchering of the pig. A pointed piece of wood pierces the pig's heart to kill it. Then it is butchered traditionally. During the ceremony, the native priest examines the butchered pig's *apdo* (liver), which is considered an essential part of the ceremony. The *apdo* is believed to determine the family's fortune, and if it is not good, they advise butchering another pig to avoid bad luck.

Dancing is also a crucial part of the *cañao* ceremony aside from butchering ritual. The dance involves two people, a man and a woman, who wear traditional woven blankets. The man hangs the woven blankets over his shoulder, while the woman wraps a single traditional woven blanket around her waist. The man leads the

woman, and they dance in a circular motion to the beat of sticks and gongs. The dancing continues until a member of the audience decides to honor the dancers with a shout, signaling that the dancing should end.

Preserving this tradition can also raise awareness about environmental issues and inspire others to take action to protect the environment. In essence, *cañao* serves as a cultural bridge that connects the spiritual beliefs of the Benguet people with their actions toward environmental protection and sustainability. *Cañao* reinforces the importance of living in harmony with nature and preserving the Earth for future generations through its rituals and practices.

Regrettably, some parts of Cordillera no longer practice some of our ancestors' traditions. Western culture has influenced the gradual disappearance of these traditions. These traditions hold significant value in preserving our identity. We hope that the younger generation will realize the importance of these traditions and put them into practice.//

The dance during *cañao* where a pair of dancers: the *manedjaw* or male dancer and the *meneshung* or female dancer perform the *tayaw* dance. Photo grabbed from [cordilleravillagecrier.blogspot.com](http://cordilleravillagecrier.blogspot.com) in courtesy of Arthur Allad-iw





# Helping One Another, the *Changah* Way

-By Febelene Maggay-

*Changah* is an Ayangan term for rendering free labor to help a relative or neighbor in need. You can perform this in times of *munlachap hi ajiw* (cutting lumber from logs), *pfunag chi ajiw* (hauling of woods/lumbers), *pakhad chi pfalay* (house roofing), *topeng* (riprap/stone walling), and *pfunag chi pfato* (hauling of stones for stone pavement).

The beginning of *changah*. A long time ago, there was a certain name “*Pfakali*” in barangay Chaya. He plans to move and align the big rocks to the *pognad* (foundation) of the riprap. *Pfakali* and his wife prepared rice wine and *hager* (wood used as a fulcrum). Knowing that they have a few relatives to call, they acted as if *Pfakali* was buried by the stones. The wife then shouts, announcing that the stones bury *Pfakali*. Many people came to help, including women, children, and older men. The wife had their pig butchered and told the older men to cook rice in the *palo’po* (vat), the children were instructed to clean the intestine, and the women were requested to prepare the rice in the *tagkhai* (basket). The older men cut the cooked meat for serving while the young men moved the big rocks to align the riprap using the wood bar.

Since then, people have seen the essence of helping each other and have begun to follow the practice, but they have modified it to inform or invite before the *changah*.

Eventually, when a couple starts to build a house, the man calls for relatives or neighbors to go to the eastern forested area while the woman is left to raise a pig to prepare for *changah*. After more than one year, when the lumber is dried, the couple will make rice wine and butcher their pig for salting (*inasinan*). The wife then calls their relatives, neighbors, and friends. The men are in charge of going to the forested areas to carry the lumbers, while the women cook the rice and salted meat then bring it to the designated area where the members of *changah* will eat.

next page »



Students of the water course are helping to restore the damaged stone-walls in Batad, Ifugao. Photo grabbed on <https://journals.openedition.org/ethnoecologie> inspired by Harold Conklin



*Inasinan* or salted pork meat is cured in salt and then air-dried under the sun for several days or weeks. *Inasinan* usually is the best additive for *pinikpikan*, legumes, and vegetables. It is one of the best delicacies in the Cordillera. Photo grabbed on <https://www.flickr.com> by Mariciel Fulangen-Ballast



## « from page 16

The jars of rice wine will be brought out when the *changah* members arrive at the couple's house. They then start to socialize by telling stories after all the members of the *nun-changah* have eaten.

The *changah* system contributes a lot to the lives of Ayangan. It represents the principle of “Bayanihan” or communal unity, where everyone help one another without expecting anything in return. It's a beautiful example of how communities can come together to achieve common goals and overcome challenges.

*Changah* reduces the burden on individual households by sharing the workload among neighbors, relatives, and friends. The shared responsibility makes tasks more manageable, strengthens social ties, and promotes a sense of belongingness within the community. For now, the young generations are still performing this practice, not only the abovementioned activities but also ferrying crops from *kaingin* to residence.

*Changah* is more than just a set of activities; it manifests the values, relationships, and resilience of Ayangan communities. Future generations can continue to benefit from its social, cultural, and economic contributions by sustaining and passing down this tradition.//





# Preserving Cultural Wisdom: The Ritual of *Mamoh-gwat Ja Mon-gar-gar* in Mayoyao

-By Jerome Amawan Mombael-

Mayoyao, aside from its beauty, takes pride on its rich culture. One of which is a tradition known as *Mamoh-gwat Ja Mon-gar-gar*. It is significant because it embodies the profound connection between humans and nature.

**The Ritual Process.** *Mamoh-Gwat Ja Mon-Gar-Gar* is a term that refers to the ritual. It observes the processes of *ngilin/apfig/khipid*—the rules and regulations in removing the *palay* (unhusked rice) from the *pfalog* (upper deck) of the rice granary storage. When a family household requires *palay* for sustenance, the elders/parents rise early to *fo'gwat* (set up right) a few bundles of *palay*, initiating the *mamoh-gwat* practice. Then, a handful of straw known as *mon-gar-gar* is carefully separated from the *palay* and brought down to be processed. The *palay* grains are pounded, cooked, and consumed by the performer without viand (side dish). This is followed by a day of abstinence from food, water, work, and marital relations, except for sips of *pfaja* (rice wine).

**Cultural Significance.** *Mamoh-Gwat Ja Mon-Gar-Gar* is more than a mere ritual. It is sacred and shows the deep connection between the environment and the *e-majawjaw* for rice abundance. The Mayoyao people ensure the sustainability and productivity of their rice cultivation by adhering to cultural practices with respect. The belief of every aspect of the ritual emphasizes the intimate relationship between humanity and the rice fields.

Further, preserving and practicing these traditions, the community reduces reliance on potentially harmful modern agricultural techniques that contribute to climate change. Also, it ensures the sustainability and productivity of rice cultivation in Mayoyao. By following traditional practices, such as careful harvesting and consumption rituals, the community guarantees that their rice fields remain fertile and productive. This not only mitigates climate change but also contributes to food security by ensuring a stable and plentiful food supply, even in the face of environmental challenges such as extreme weather events or changing growing conditions.

**Sustainability.** The *e-majawjaw* ensures the continuity of their culture by practicing it. They ensure plentiful production throughout the year, where no one in the community will starve by honoring indigenous, systems, and practices. The ritual serves as a testament to the resilience of the Mayoyao people, guiding them toward a future where cultural wisdom and environmental stewardship go together.

*Mamoh-Gwat Ja Mon-Gar-Gar* inspires cultural preservation and ecological harmony. The people in the place ensure the sustainability and prosperity of their community for generations to come by practicing such. They unfolds resilience, unity, and abundance—a testament to the enduring spirit of the Cordilleran people. //

*Alang* or Ifugao rice granary with the *bulul* or carved ancestor figures that were placed in granaries to guard the rice crop. Photo grabbed at flickr.com





# Mayoyao Rice Terraces in Mitigating Climate Change

-By Edna Chinolong-

The rice terraces in barangay Maga.

Mayoyao is nestled within the Ifugao region and is home to the iconic Mayoyao rice terraces. These terraces, part of the UNESCO World Heritage site. They serve as an example of how traditional agriculture tied with agroforestry practices plays a significant role in mitigating climate change.

The Mayoyao rice terraces, with a history dating back centuries, stand as a testament to the resilience of the Indigenous People who have cultivated the land for generations. As climate change continues to pose threats to our world, Mayoyao, particularly barangay Maga and Magulon, have embraced a modern approach. They have been integrating agroforestry into their traditional rice farming techniques.

The terraces are a form of stepped farming system designed to make the most efficient use of hills or mountain terrain for cultivation. They are characterized by stone-walled paddies that follow the contours of the mountains, allowing for the retention of water and soil. This ancient farming method has been practiced by the Indigenous Peoples of the region for generations and is recognized for its cultural and agricultural significance.

Barangay Maga and Magulon's success in mitigating climate change is linked to their embrace of Agroecology against the backdrop of their timeless rice terraces. Mayoyao's agroforestry marvel offers several

significant benefits to both the community and the environment.

Benefits to the community. The traditional rice terraces benefit the community in terms of food security, economic stability, cultural preservation, and community cohesion. It ensures a stable food supply for the community and reduces the risk of hunger and malnutrition. Maintaining these traditional agricultural systems helps preserve the cultural heritage and identity of the community. Lastly, the collaborative effort required to keep the terraces fosters a sense of unity and shared responsibility among community members.

Benefits to the environment. Their practices only contribute to the people, but it also has a huge benefit to the environment. These are biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, soil health, water management, and scenic beauty. Agroforestry practices integrated with the rice terraces support native plant and tree species, enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. Likewise, the trees in agroforestry systems capture and store carbon, mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It also enhances soil fertility and reduces erosion, ensuring the sustainability of agriculture and preventing soil degradation. The terraces help manage water runoff, preventing soil erosion and ensuring efficient water use for agricultural purposes.

**next page »**



**« from page 19**

Sustainability is through community education and awareness campaigns. The local communities were informed about the importance of agroforestry in mitigating climate change. There are also workshops, seminars, and outreach programs to spread knowledge and foster a sense of ownership among people.

In addition, government policies and incentives are designed to encourage and support agroforestry practices. Researches to improve agroforestry techniques, crop varieties, and tree species that are well-suited to the region's unique conditions can enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of the practice.

Fortunately, there are programs on local leadership and ownership to empower local leaders and organizations to take the lead in preserving and promoting agroforestry. This is to ensure that the

practice remains culturally relevant and that the community actively participates in its conservation.

This data can inform adaptive management strategies and demonstrate the benefits of the practice. Collaboration and partnerships with national and international organizations, non-government organizations, and academic institutions to access resources, expertise, and funding to support agroforestry initiatives, sustainable practices, youth engagement, and tourism and cultural promotion are of great help.

Mayoyao's agroforestry system in Barangay Maga and Magulon showcases the unique combination of traditional wisdom and modern environmental consciousness in combating climate change. This innovative approach demonstrates the transformative power of indigenous knowledge in sustainable agriculture.//



**The rice terraces in barangay Magulon.**



# Reminiscing to Realization

-by Georgina Atipen-Cardona-

Turning back from the past,  
Where sacred forests boldly stand,  
Too many indigenous ways,  
In preserving our natural resources.

Secrets to sustain a healthy soil,  
To till with care, to never spoil,  
Healthy crops dancing with the rain,  
Giving good health, no complicated pain.

Forests, they guard with humble might.  
Each tree is a guardian of the night,  
Their fruit breathes and sings,  
Balancing to the air that brings.

Rivers were cherished, flowing free,  
Veins of life, to land and sea,  
Their waters clear, a crystal song,  
Reflecting where we all belong.

Now, the whole thing is different,  
And so, with climate change.  
We should cleanse these in some ways,  
One is avoiding chemicals, instead.

Let us help one another to restore...  
The rhythms we want for next-gen to lore.  
For they deserve to experience such,  
Like we've experienced from the start.

Together, we can repair the hole,  
We must learn from the lesson, after all!  
We shouldn't be selfish!  
There is no planet B, isn't it?



# I am a Woman, Of Course

-by Ivannee "Ivee" Bongosia-

I am a woman, of course  
They tell me to speak my mind  
But not too much  
Or I'll be labeled difficult

I am a woman, of course  
I must express how I feel  
But not too much  
Or they'll think I'm unhinged

I am a woman, of course  
I lead with confidence  
But not too much  
Or they'll hate me for being bossy

I am a woman, of course  
I maintain an OK body  
Just make it OK, not too skinny,  
muscular, curvy, plump  
Because anything too much is not OK

I am a woman, of course  
I must balance home, work, hobbies, socials  
And settle for the residuals of my time  
To finally let it all loose and just be

I am a woman, of course  
I should tell my story  
But don't make it too, too long,  
Or they'll interrupt mid-way with  
"Well, actually..."

I am a woman, of course  
They tell me to smile more  
But not too much  
Or I'll be seen as over-eager, insincere, weak.

I am a woman, of course  
I wear what I want  
But they say that too demure won't get me dates  
And too sexy might get me raped

I am a woman, of course  
I am strong  
But not too strong,  
OK Don't be too proud, too self-reliant,  
it's not feminine they say

I am a woman, of course  
I follow my heart  
But don't be too out there they say,  
And don't be too perfect, too flawed

Too settled, too unfettered  
Too expansive, too reserved  
As if being too anything  
Might disrupt something in them

As if being too raw, too real  
Might take away their ripeness  
Their aliveness  
But I am as alive too

I am a woman, of course  
I care, I give, I make  
I've carved out my space  
And I exist as me

Just like you  
And I will always hold and harness  
What is true, good, beautiful, strong, and real  
Because I am a woman, of course.

Written: March 2, 2024



## **IGOROTA Foundation, Inc.**

is a non-stock, non-profit, non-government social development organization established in recognition of the right and responsibility of women to fully develop their God-given potentials

### **OUR VISION**

“Women’s Holistic Development for Self-Sustaining Communities.”

### **OUR MISSION**

To empower women through transformative training, education, organizing, and advocacy.

### **OUR PROGRAMS**

#### **Gender and Development Program**

From our awareness of Gender and Development springs an ardent commitment to work in transforming gender-based relationships and structures in society. It aims to enable women to be aware of the socio-cultural and political conditions that affect their roles, choices, image and relationships, and to facilitate responsive actions as a result of their awareness and consciousness.

#### **Ancestral Domain Program**

To ensure that our region remains worthy as our children’s legacy, we pursue efforts in response to issues of development aggression, underdevelopment, and the risks of development. It aims to sustain the resources of our ancestral domain through the Indigenous Knowledge, Systems, and Practices (IKSPs) in development work, the respect and exercise by the Indigenous People of their rights and strengthen communities’ resilience to climate change by increasing their capacities and mainstreaming IKSPs in disaster risk reduction, and management and resiliency program.

#### **Sustainable Agriculture Program**

To sustain our people’s existing indigenous practices of farming and land use towards well-being, sustainable development, and food sovereignty.

#### **Social Enterprise Program**

To address the practical gender needs of women and provide opportunities for women’s livelihood activities towards sustainability.



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**Realize our Vision of Women’s Holistic  
Development for Self-Sustaining  
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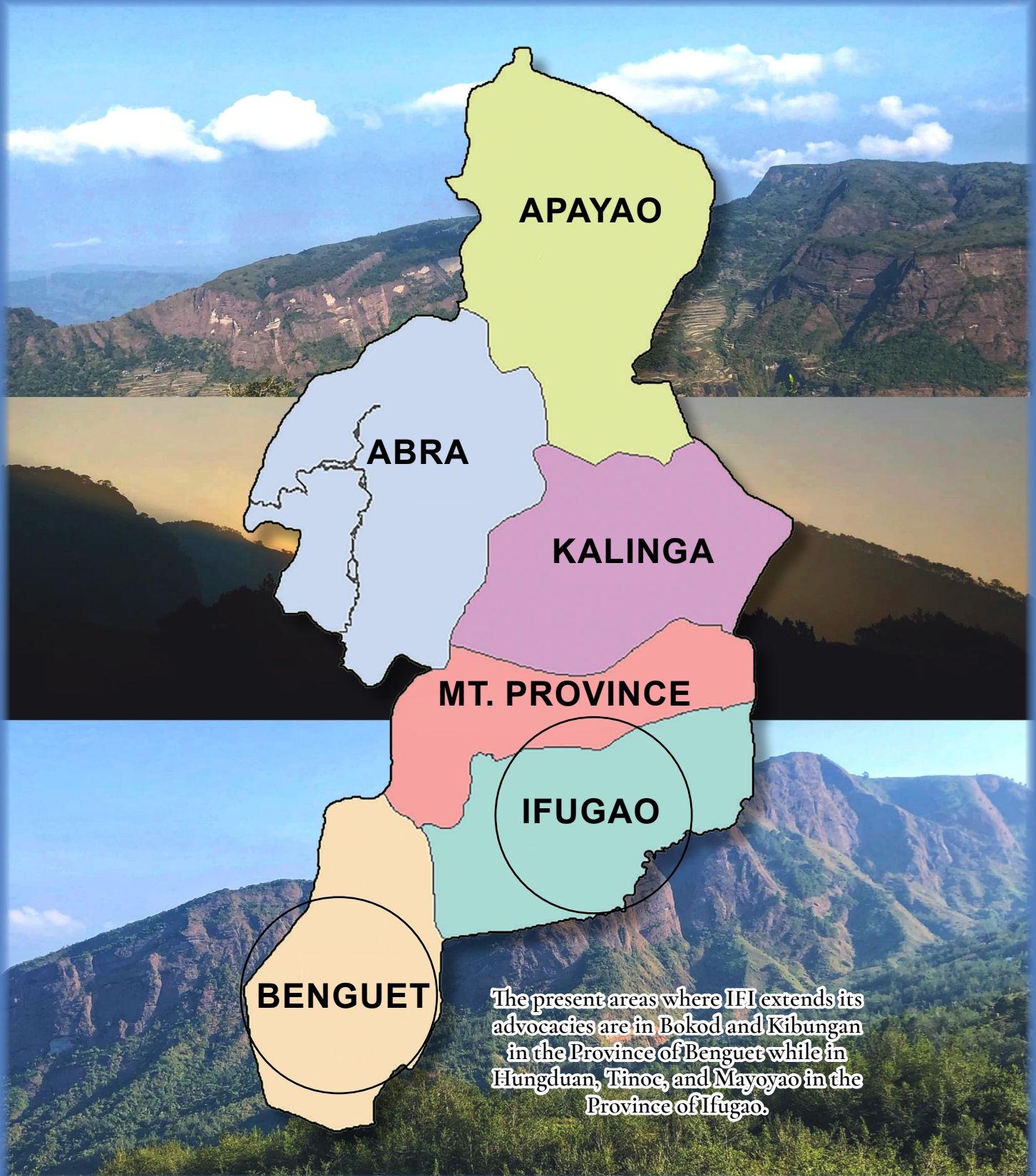
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The present areas where IFI extends its advocacies are in Bokod and Kibungan in the Province of Benguet while in Hungduan, Tinoc, and Mayoyao in the Province of Ifugao.