

Subject: July 2020 Monthly Activity Report for AGREEN
Date: August 13, 2020
Site: Philippines, Cordillera Administrative Region, Province of Ifugao
Title: Butterflies as Bio-indicator of Ifugao Ecosystem Vigor



The Ifugao socio-ecological production landscape (SEPL) that includes the *muyung* (woodlot/forest) and *payoh* (rice terraces) is home to a rich indigenous flora and fauna. The *muyung* plays important economic and environmental functions within the Ifugao Rice Terraces landscape. However, it is currently beset by unregulated land-use conversion into inorganic agricultural farms causing the decline of its biodiversity richness. Despite this, stewardship of the *muyung* is still a cultural obligation of the Ifugao people.

On August 7, 2020, some community members of Kinakin, Banaue, joined by the Ifugao Satoyama Meisters, participated in a re-greening activity in a forested area in the said village. This is to support the establishment of a butterfly sanctuary through reforestation activities such as tree planting and dissemination of sustainable forest management concepts. The group started planting 300 citrus seedlings in 2019 and recently planted more fruit and indigenous trees in the area. These trees will not only home butterflies but as plant food for them. In the future, the area will serve as an educational and environmental attraction for natural heritage conservation activities.



The presence of butterflies is a bio-indicator of the Ifugao SEPL of its ecosystem health and a representative of a rich biodiversity since they are particularly perceptive to environmental alteration. In Ifugao, it is believed that the presence of butterflies is a sign of good weather in a village. For the indigenous peoples, the butterfly visiting a household is believed to be carriers/channels of the souls of the ancestors.



Surrounding the area are unregulated inorganic farming activities converting the forests into vegetable farms aided by massive use of inorganic fertilizers and other synthetic inputs. In order for the butterflies to thrive in the area considering the inorganic agricultural application, the trees planted will serve as protection and buffer zone for the area.



Thereafter, a community meeting was conducted to plan for the sustainability of the re-greening activities and the butterfly sanctuary project including other related activities such as propagation of heirloom rice through the production of rice wine for commercial and ritual purposes.

The owner of the woodlot who is an indigenous knowledge holder shared indigenous practices and systems on *muyung* conservation among the participants particularly the younger generation. Forest management is a cultural practice in Ifugao. During the sharing, it was mentioned by the elders that hunting in the forest has been passed down by their ancestors where it is considered as an heirloom to them.

The values of being responsible and the observance of reverence to nature is innate among the villagers that was taught to them by their bloodline who are *mumbaki* (native priests). During hunting and gathering for timber and other forest resources, offerings and prayers must be done for permission and gratitude to nature and the unseen to allow the use of the ecosystem services.



Aside from the reforestation activities, constructions of built heritage (Ifugao Native House) are being done in the area. It is to learn the traditional practice of construction as a way to conserve the said material culture.

Native houses serve as abode for the villagers and as rice granary. In Ifugao SEPL, the forest and rice terraces shares one system directed by indigenous knowledge and practices.

