



MDG MIDTERM REPORT:

The case of Ifugao* ❄

► By SHUBERT L. CIENCIA**

Introduction

ACCORDING to legend, the Ifugaos were descended from Kabigat and Bugan, the children of the supreme deity Wigan,¹ who settled in a small village called Kiyangan along the Ibulao River. There are two accounts on where the word “Ifugao” originated: (1) it was derived from “Ipugo” which means “from the hill,” or (2) it was derived from the rice grain that was given by the god Matungulan.²

* Presented in a focused group discussion with key officers of the Save the Ifugao Rice Terraces (SITMO) on 09 August 2007.

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¹ There is another legend from Mayaoyao where Bugan and Wigan are husband and wife, respectively.

² Sources: Ifugao by Christina Singahio (http://litera1no4.tripod.com/ifugao_frame.htm) and <http://www.geocities.com/babes70002/Kiangan.html>.

Present-day Ifugao province's story, however, began with the establishment in 1889 of the Comandancia Politico-Militar de Quingan by the Spanish colonial government as a means of subduing the Ifugaos and placing them under Spanish rule. During the American colonial period, Ifugao was a subprovince of Nueva Vizcaya from 1902 until 1905 before being integrated as yet another subprovince in 1906 of the newly-created Mt. Province. On June 18, 1966, Ifugao finally became a province by virtue of Republic Act 4695 which is known as the "Division Law of Mt. Province."³

Ifugao remained until 2003 to be one of the Philippines' poorest provinces, the poorest in Northern Luzon, and the poorest among the four Luzon provinces (after Camarines Norte, Occidental Mindoro and Marinduque) in the list of the top 15 poorest provinces.⁴

As such, it becomes a logical and automatic priority for MDG-related projects.

Ifugao as once the poorest province of the Northern Luzon area will be the case in point for this review. The methodology will be simple: review what has changed between 2000 and 2007, evaluate key efforts from both the national and local governments, look at civil society initiatives, and formulate conclusions and recommendations. Local data will be mostly referred to in order to help pinpoint the realities that are often glossed over by national statistics.

Assessment of status and progress

Poverty and hunger

A comparison of data from the 2000 and 2007 Ifugao Provincial Socioeconomic Profiles (SEP) has shown a remarkable decrease in poverty incidence among families from 74.60 percent in 1991 to 28.10 percent in 2003. This is further illustrated in the decrease in the number of families below the poverty threshold⁵ from 17,423 in 1997 to 9,069 in 2003, in the income gap⁶ from 39.00 percent in 1997 to 27.20 percent in

Table1: Comparison of Selected Poverty Indicators

Base Years	Poverty Incidence	Income Gap	Poverty Gap
1991	74.60	n/a	n/a
1994	72.10	n/a	n/a
1997	61.00	39.00	22.35
2000	55.57	33.00	18.24
2003	28.10	27.20	7.60

Source: 2000 and 2007 Ifugao Socioeconomic Profiles

Table2: Comparison of Nutritional Status of Pre and Elementary School Children

2000		SY 2005-2006		
1 st -3 rd Degree	2 nd & 3 rd Degrees	Below Normal	BNVL	BNL
Preschool Children (0-6 Years Old/0-71 Months Old)				
20.89	3.23	7.42	97 cases	1,562 cases
Elementary School Children				
18.62	5.03	8.77	n/a	n/a

Source: 2000 and 2007 Ifugao Socioeconomic Profiles

2003, and in the poverty gap⁷ from 22.35 percent in 1997 to 7.60 percent in 2003.

In terms of nutrition, 20.89 percent of preschoolers (i.e. 0-6 years old) weighed in 2000 were malnourished although only 3.23 percent belonged to the 2nd- and 3rd-degree categories; the rest or 4,170 are mildly malnourished. Elementary school children also registered an 18.62-percent malnourishment rate in the same year—where 5.03 percent is 2nd and 3rd-degree malnourished while 3,946 are mildly malnourished.

In 2006, the malnourishment rate for preschoolers (i.e. 0-71 months old) using the International Reference Standard (IRS) is 7.42 percent where there are 97 in the Below Normal Very Low (BNVL) category and 1,562 in the Below Normal Low (BNL) category. On the other hand, 8.77 percent of elementary school-children from School Year 2005-2006 are below the normal weight.

³ Draft 2007 Ifugao Socio-economic Profile, pages 1-4 (Ifugao Provincial Government).

⁴ A Civil Society Perspective: Reviewing Progress on the MDGs, powerpoint presentation (Social Watch Philippines, no date listed).

⁵ Defined in the 2007 Ifugao Sep as "individuals and families whose incomes fall below the official poverty threshold as defined by the government and/or cannot afford to provide in a sustained manner for their minimum basic needs for food, health, education, housing, and other social amenities of life".

⁶ Defined in the 2007 IfugaoSEP as "the average income shortfall (expressed in proportion to the poverty line) of those below the poverty threshold"

⁷ Defined in the 2007 Ifugao SEP as "the income shortfall (expressed in proportion to the poverty line) of those with income below the poverty line over the whole population".

⁸ 2000 Ifugao Socio-economic Profile, page 55.

Education and gender equality

It is difficult to exactly pinpoint the performance of primary education in Ifugao because of the lack of a matching data set between 2000 and 2007. It is, however, possible to establish a partial trend in elementary survival rate by comparing the 31,155 total elementary school enrolment to the 11,595 total secondary school enrolment of SY 2000-2001⁸ which indicates a possible 37.21-percent elementary education completion rate; and the 29,213 total elementary school enrolment to the 13,704 total secondary school enrolment of SY 2005-2006⁹ showing a possible and higher 46.91-percent elementary completion rate—which is close to the school year's cohort survival rate of 50.78 percent.¹⁰

These partial trends may indicate a downward slant in elementary enrolment (i.e. 31,155 enrollees in SY 2000-2001 versus 29,213 enrollees in SY 2005-2006) and improvement in the cohort survival rate (i.e., 37.21-percent possible completion rate of SY 2000-2001 versus 46.91-percent possible completion rate of SY 2005-2006 plus the school year's 50.78-percent cohort survival rate). A comparison between SY 2004-2005's 55.57-percent elementary achievement rate with SY 2005-2006's 62.79¹¹ percent also suggests an upward trend.

There are also no data in the Ifugao SEPs about promoting gender equality, but a comparison of the elementary female pupils' enrollment status of 13,726 in SY 2004-2005 with the 14,118¹² of SY 2006-2007 suggests an increasing number of female enrollees. The female cohort survival rate of 65.46 percent of SY 2006-2007 is also higher than the male cohort survival rate of 43.87 percent.

Health

A remarkable improvement in infant mortality rate (IMR) was registered in Ifugao from 17.39 per thousand live births in 1999 to 9.66 in year 2006. However, a slow and fluctuating increase is observed in the crude birth rate (CBR) at 22.88 per thousand population in year 1999 to 23.20 in year 2006; and crude death rate (CDR) per thousand population at 3.72 in year 2000 to 3.86 in year 2006. It was also observed that low birth

Table 3: Comparison of Vital Health Indicators

Base Year	Infant Mortality Rate	Crude Birth Rate	Crude Death Rate	Maternal Mortality Rate
1999	17.39	22.88	3.72	1.07
2000	18.08	24.19	3.52	1.73
2001	14.38	23.66	3.98	2.62
2002	8.74	23.35	4.02	0.26
2003	12.78	22.81	3.73	0.26
2004	12.68	24.19	3.44	0.48
2005	9.02	21.46	3.62	0.53
2006	9.66	23.20	3.86	1.20

Source: 2007 Ifugao Socio-Economic Profile

Table 4: Comparison of Government Health Personnel Ratio to Population

Indicators	2000 Ratio	2006 Ratio
Physicians	1:5,573	1:16,228
Nurses	1:2,099	1:16,228
Midwives	1:1,405	1:1,700
Dentists	1:40,406	1:29,757
Rural Sanitary Inspectors	1:13,469	1:17,854
Medical Technologists	1:11,545	1:11,903
Dietician/Nutritionists	1:80,812	1:178,540
Health Educators	1:161,623	1:178,540

Source: 2000 and 2007 Ifugao Socio-Economic Profiles

weight among newborns significantly increased from 6.18 percent in 2005 to 33.70 in 2006.¹³

The maternal mortality rate (MMR) per thousand live births also increased from 1.07 in 1999 to 2.62 in 2001, then steeply plunging to 0.26 in 2002 and 2003, before slowly but steadily climbing to 1.20 by 2006. There is also a steady decrease in the number of current contraceptive users from 9,402 in 2001 to 7,894 in 2006—resulting in the decrease in the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) from 47.76 percent in 2001 to 43.92 percent in 2006.¹⁴

A comparison of data between the 2000 and 2007 Ifugao SEPs showed that the population ratio to health personnel (i.e. physicians, nurses, midwives,

⁹ 2007 Ifugao Socio-economic Profile, page 74.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, page 67.

¹¹ *Ibid*, page 69.

¹² *Ibid*, page 74.

¹³ *Ibid*, page 100.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, page 101.

rural sanitary inspectors, medical technologists, dietician/nutritionists, health educators) has substantially increased except that for dentists which has significantly decreased.

In 2006, the top 5 leading causes of morbidity are ALRTI/pneumonia, bronchitis, acute watery diarrhea, hypertension/myocardial infarction/cardiovascular disease, and influenza.

The top 5 leading causes of mortality are pneumonia, hypertension/myocardial infarction/cardiovascular disease, bleeding peptic ulcer, cancer (all forms), and accident (all forms).¹⁵ This indicates that malaria and tuberculosis, once the scourge of remote upland rural areas like Ifugao, are no longer prevalent and threatening. There are no reported incidences of HIV/AIDS cases in Ifugao.

Environment

Both the 2000 and 2007 Ifugao SEPs did not report on the environmental condition of the province. Data on existing land use which could have provided a land use trend (e.g. increasing agricultural, residential and commercial areas versus decreasing woodland and increasing grassland/shrubland) has not been updated since 1988. However, the condition of Ifugao's most valuable possession—the world-famous rice terraces—can provide a glimpse of how the environment

is faring in the province.

Dating back to 1,000 BC, the Ifugao rice terraces is a complex system of interconnected ecosystems, architecture, and spirituality. It was inscribed in the Unesco World Heritage Site List in 1995 because of its outstanding universal value as a living cultural landscape. However, the low productivity level of the terraces and agriculture in general has encouraged Ifugao farmers to abandon their rice terraces that are now being converted into other uses. Today, around 25 to 30 percent of the rice terraces have been abandoned, and only half of its 15,000 hectares of total land area more than 50 years ago remain.¹⁶

The 2007 Ifugao SEP, citing the result report of a Population and Housing survey in 2000, also reported that most Ifugaos have and own their houses.¹⁷

Partnerships and ODA

In 1989, the European Union (EU)-supported integrated rural development project called Central Cordillera Agricultural Program (Cecap) was launched in the Cordillera provinces of Ifugao, Mt. Province, Kalinga and Abra. Cecap's main objective is to provide assistance in raising local incomes and living standards in the 25 municipalities, 341 barangays and 49,000 households. The 27.5-million-Euro, 2-phased project that ended in 2003 has six components: agricultural

Table 5: Summary of Cecap-Supported Projects in Ifugao

Project Areas	Number Of Micro-Projects						Cost (in pesos)
	Agriculture	NRM	Infrastructure	Marketing	RF	ID	
Asipulo	45	19	10	5	4	17	16,277,666.00
Aguinaldo	28	19	16	8	6	9	20,234,769.00
Banaue	30	17	13	2	13	13	13,807,112.30
Hingyon	42	18	9	2	8	10	14,422,585.00
Hungduan	23	12	13	3	10	12	10,586,006.00
Kiangan	45	18	6	6	8	13	14,443,398.52
Lagawe	30	16	11	3	9	14	5,482,680.03
Lamut	23	11	6	2	7	8	7,891,053.00
Mayoyao	29	22	18	3	9	14	11,845,810.18
Tinoc	20	18	13	6	5	18	18,734,170.15
TOTAL	313	171	113	40	83	159	133,725,250.18

¹⁵ Ibid, pages 94-95.

¹⁶ "Fighting Back: Citizen's Response to Development Aggression" in "Race for Survival: Hurdles on the Road to Meeting the MDGs in 2015", pages 44-45 (Shubert L. Ciencia, 2005).

¹⁷ 2007 Ifugao Socio-economic Profile, page 115.

development, natural resource management, marketing assistance, infrastructure development, rural financing and institutional development.¹⁸

For Ifugao alone, a total of P133,725,250.18 was spent on 879 micro-projects from July 1996 to June 2003 in 10 of Ifugao's 11 municipalities. In 1997, the poverty incidence in Ifugao was at 61 percent. It stood at 28.10 percent after the Cecap ended in 2003.

Another major ODA-supported project in the province is the Ifugao Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project that was spearheaded by the DILG and supported by the GTZ. The project aims to provide safe water in selected pilot areas in Ifugao from 2000 to 2004. As of 2003, the project was able to build three water supply systems in Hungduan, Lagawe and Tinoc; two almost completed in Asipulo and Mayoyao; and three starting in Hungduan, Mayoyao and Tinoc.¹⁹

Government programs

From 2002 to 2006, the Ifugao provincial government initiated a poverty alleviation program called the Health and Nutrition Status and Improvement-Poverty Alleviation Program (Hensi-PAP). The project was implemented in 23 most nutritionally and economically-depressed barangays across Ifugao. It has three components: health and nutrition, livelihood and income improvement, and institutional development and support services.²⁰

The project was implemented with a total cost of P2,707,096 mostly from the provincial government. Since 2000, Hensi-PAP is the most MDG-sensitive project undertaken by the Ifugao provincial government. It featured two key innovations: the use of the convergence approach to bring together all the stakeholders, and the institutionalization of the project in the barangay development plans to ensure sustainability.²¹



CSO initiatives

The Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement (SITMO) was organized in 2000 by the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement to advocate for the rehabilitation and protection of the Ifugao rice terraces by improving the quality of life of Ifugao farmers through a sustainable development approach, and linking with national and international support institutions and networks.²² Among its trailblazing projects are on renewable energy: it won an International Ashden Award for Renewable Energy in July 2005; and saving the rice terraces through sustainable agriculture, which won a grand prize in the 2006 Panibagong Paraan Development Innovation Marketplace. Sitmo also develops and implements community-based models on natural resource management, livelihood development, indigenous knowledge transmission and land use mapping.²³

Another pioneering SITMO initiative is ecocultural tourism that offers an alternative tourism package for the purpose of providing supplemental income to host communities, while promoting a deeper appreciation of the rich Ifugao heritage through community

¹⁸ Final Report to the Central Cordillera Public, pages 6-7 (CECAP, no date listed).

¹⁹ Program Assessment and Plan of Operation Workshop (DILG-GTZ Water Program, 16-18 September 2004).

²⁰ HENSI-PAP Completion Report (Powerpoint presentation, June 2006).

²¹ HENSI-PAP Completion Report (Powerpoint presentation, no date listed).

²² Kiphodan di Payo, Kiphodan di Muyong (SITMO, October 2006).

²³ 3rd SITMO General Conference (Powerpoint presentation, 26 July 2006).

immersions.²⁴ SITMO also operates a community e-center and is an active advocate of the Globally important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and the MDGs.

Analysis and conclusion

In 2003, Ifugao along with six other provinces finally graduated from the list of the country's top 10 poorest provinces, according to the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB). It is indeed a moment for celebration for a province where almost 75 percent of the population was impoverished 12 years earlier. However, a closer look at this amazing run will show that this might be just a bubble that could burst at any time.

Table 6: Comparison Income, Investments and Employment

Base Year	Total Investments	Total Employment
1998-2000	322,350,000 ²⁵	4,533
2000	n/a	n/a
2001	n/a	n/a
2002	n/a	n/a
2003	n/a	n/a
2004	161,252,298	1,471
2005	146,568,739	1,143
2006	165,539,270	827

Source: 2000 and 2007 Ifugao Socioeconomic Profiles

Table 6 shows that although investments increased in Ifugao by 58 percent in 2006 since the 1998-2000 period,²⁶ the employment rate ironically decreased by 45 percent. It is important to note that 77 percent of the total investments from the 1998-2000²⁷ and 2004-2006 period are from trading and services²⁸ which indicates that money may actually be flowing out of the province and may be the reason for the decrease in the employment rate. In fact, for the 2004-2006 period, the second most-invested area is construction services

which accounts for 12 percent of the total.²⁹

The fact is there is hardly any investment in the sectors that matters most like agri-based production and enterprises, where 14,816 of 18,475 families³⁰ depend for their main source of income. The province's 2002 and 2007 socioeconomic profile also reported tourist arrivals rising from 49,441 in 2000 to 90,874 in 2005; but it failed to indicate actual investments placed in this sector which could be an epicenter of local economic development. As host of the fabled rice terraces and the watershed of a major river system, the significance of Ifugao's natural and cultural resources should be seriously considered in both local and national development plans.

The decreasing trend in malnourishment and the increasing elementary school enrolment and cohort survival rates are laudable and encouraging. On the other hand, the increasing trend in maternal deaths³¹ is alarming and might be linked to the steady decrease in the CPR from 47.76 percent in 2001 to 36.85 percent in 2006.³²

Certainly, it was the huge amount of ODA money infused in Ifugao that has mainly fueled the growth in the province. But aid money will not last forever and at this time, the fluctuating economic and social indicators might signal the tapering off of the effect. Mechanisms for strategic sustainability must therefore be installed for the long haul. And Ifugao is not lacking in these. Sitmo's innovative models on community development are inspiring. Much can be learned too and replicated from the Hensi-PAP experience, which might have generated more impact had it been sustained and expanded beyond the term limits of local politicians. And there is definitely something to be built on from the Cecap project. The challenge is building on these best practices.

The way forward then is graduating from the bubble into sustainable development and staying that way, and addressing the remaining 28.10 percent of

²⁴ SITMO's Eco-cultural Tourism (undated brochure).

²⁵ The total investment for the cited period equally divided by P107,450,000 generating employment for 1,511 persons every year.

²⁶ 2002 Ifugao Socio-economic Profile, page 45.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ 2007 Ifugao Socio-economic Profile, page 58.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pages 41-42.

³¹ *Ibid.*, page 92.

³² *Ibid.*, page 101.

the population still mired in poverty. But eradicating poverty and staying out of it requires resources. This is a big challenge for a province that is 95-percent dependent on its Internal Revenue Allocation.³³

Recommendations

Based on the current state of realizing the MDGs in Ifugao, this paper presents the following recommendations:

Tracking and doing development. It is necessary at this time to take stock of the present to be able to determine the future. A comprehensive data base will be helpful in pinpointing where things stand at the moment; what are the specific gaps, how much is needed for these, and where to get the resources required. A solid information base can also facilitate the formulation of area-specific interventions in the Hensi-PAP mode, and measuring how progress is being made from these interventions. Parallel to this will be a capacity-development process on data base management, project development and social marketing, and project management for the implementers.

Attracting momentum-sustaining investments. Ifugao must break through beyond being largely IRA-dependent to be able to sustain what seemed to be an ODA-driven momentum. Sure, ODA funds can help but these are mostly for start-ups. A campaign to attract the right and hard investments, focusing on stimulating the local economy and local growth, will be timely. Since majority of Ifugao families depend on agriculture as their main source of income, these investments should logically add value to the province's agricultural production and the tourism sector, too. It is noted in this paper that the number of idle agricultural lands is increasing.³⁴

Maximizing the convergence approach. Limited resources from the local government units can only do so much. The development and expansion of community-based systems, especially in the health sector, can complement government services as illustrated by the Hensi-PAP experience.

Strengthening CSO participation. As always, participation must always be encouraged specially

from the primary stakeholders. The lesson from nearby Nueva Vizcaya's experience also shows that drawing in, expanding and maximizing CSO participation in local development can transcend the political dynamics of local governments. They can also be effective (and sometimes pesky) advocates.

The Cordillera context

The Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) is composed of the provinces of Abra, Benguet, Kalinga, Apayao, Ifugao and Mt. Province with Baguio City as the regional capital. It is the Philippines' only land-locked region and covers one-sixth of the whole Luzon island. It has a population of around 1.1 million mostly from the following indigenous ethnolinguistic groups:

Table 7: Comparison of CAR Poverty Incidence Between 1997 and 2003

Province	Poverty Incidence		2003 Hdi Rank
	1997	2003	
Benguet	19.7	12.3	1
Abra	22.0	13.4	22
Ifugao	31.3	10.9	24
Kalinga	16.3	18.5	39
Mt. Province	31.4	33.1	40
Apayao	19.7	1.2	43

Source: NSCB

Kalinga, Isneg, Tingguian, Bontoc, Kankanaey, Ibaloi and Ifugao.

Except for Kalinga and the Mt. Province, all CAR provinces registered an improvement in their respective poverty incidences since 1997. The Human Development Index (HDI), however, varies with Benguet at the top in the national hierarchy, Abra and Ifugao in the upper bracket, and the rest in the middle-lower brackets. In 2000, four—Abra, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mt. Province³⁵—of the five CAR provinces belonged to the 44 poorest provinces in the Philippines. But by 2003, Ifugao had tremendously improved to 54th from 4th in 2000 in the Philippine poverty hierarchy. Mt. Province, however, slipped to 8th in 2003 from 15th in 2000 to represent CAR in the 10 poorest provinces club of the Philippines. The province, together with Biliran

³³ Ibid, page 46.

³⁴ Ibid, page 49.

³⁵ NSCB Social Sectors B Division.

Table 8: Summary of CAR Performance on Health, Hunger, Poverty, Environment and Gender

MDG Indicator	Prevalence (% Of Population)	Rank Nationwide
Poverty (2003)	31.2	11/17
Malnutrition (2003)	16.3	17/17
Maternal Deaths Rate (2005)	0.8	9-11/17
Infants Death Rate (2005)	10.7	5/17
Access to Safe Water (2005)	88.8	5/17

Source: NSCB

(ranked 9th) and Masbate (ranked 3rd), are the only non-Mindanaoan provinces in the 2003 top ten.³⁶

In the regional poverty hierarchy, CAR is ranked 11th among the 17 regions and registered the least malnourishment rate. However, it is within the top 5 in the infant death rate hierarchy and in the middle in the maternal death rate hierarchy. Like its HDI, the Quality of Life Index (QLI) among the CAR provinces also varies, with Benguet in the top 20 (0.81, ranked 8), Abra and Mt. Province in the top 20 (0.726/ranked 21 and 0.691/ranked 26, respectively), Ifugao in the top 30 (0.655, ranked 31), Apayao in the top (0.603, ranked 45), and Kalinga in the top 50 (0.588, ranked 54).³⁷

The varying degrees of the HDI and QLI among the CAR provinces show a skewed distribution of

wealth despite their relative contiguousness. This seems to favor provinces with highly urbanizing centers like Benguet which hosts Baguio City and the center of the region's mining industry. Table 6 shows that poverty increases as one moves from the Benguet gateway into the "inner" provinces.

In terms of natural resources, CAR is one of the richest regions in the Philippines and represents 11 percent of the country's agricultural land which produces 60 percent of the country's temperate vegetables. Around 80 percent of the total Philippine gold production is mined from the region's mighty Cordillera mountain range which also serves as the headwaters of Northern Luzon's major river systems. The potential electrical capacity of these rivers is estimated to be at least 5 million kilowatts or 56 percent of the country's total electric need.

But like Ifugao, CAR has failed to capitalize on those resources. In fact, these resources are being siphoned out—as in the case of the mining companies that are mostly foreign-owned, and the hydroelectric dams that power Luzon's cities and industries— at the cost of the environment and the region's diverse cultural heritage. This irony is illustrated in the region's lofty rank in the poverty index (i.e. the 11th poorest or the 7th richest among the 17 regions) but relatively low ranking of most of its province's in terms of the HDI and QLI. ■

³⁶ NSCB.³⁷ Field Health Service Information System Annual Report 2005.