

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Higher Education in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT Indigenous education in the Philippines is a recent phenomenon, starting only in the past decade. Legislation supporting indigenous peoples, rights as well as giving legitimacy to establish indigenous schools were only authored in the past 8 years. The Asian Council for People's Culture (ACPC) assisted the different indigenous tribes in the country to set up Schools for Indigenous Knowledge and Traditions (SIKAT). The SIKAT programme envisions a system at par with mainstream education and founded on the ways of life, traditions and culture of indigenous peoples. This paper takes a closer look at one of the SIKAT Schools – the Sagu-Ilaw SIKAT of the Bukidnon Tribe in Northern Mindanao. Sagu-Ilaw was set up in 2002 with the assistance of ACPC. Since then, despite the perennial problem of funding, it has been surviving on its own. It was designed as a tertiary type teacher-training school whose students teach the tribe's children in their respective communities. Recent linkages with the Department of Education has caused a conflict over the control of the school, leading the tribe to fear a possible loss of their identity. Other linkages are currently being established for the survival and further development of the school.