

'Reading' songs and nurturing culture in the Philippines

March 10 2017



Ata children and elders inside a nipa hut during a workshop where bamboo musical instruments were used as percussion. Credit: Maria Christine Muyco

Preserving cultural heritage, including access to and use of ancestral lands, can be a real challenge for indigenous communities. A range of cultural memory recall and music workshops with the indigenous Ata of the Philippines aims to empower communities and validate legal claims related to the Indigenous People's Rights Act.

The Ata, a coastal people living on the Boracay Island of Visayas in the Philippines, have long sought to validate their ancestral land claims. Even though the Certificate for Ancestral Domain Title was provided by the government, some individuals and businesses continue to claim the Ata land as their own. To support this legal challenge and simultaneously document the Ata's language and cultural practices, Dr Maria Christine Muyco is conducting participatory action research that emphasizes collective inquiry and experimentation grounded in experience and social history.

Muyco uses cultural memory recall and music workshops to record indigenous practices. People are encouraged to share their culture through storytelling as well as playing musical instruments. In addition to providing a valuable cultural record, this process also serves to pass on local knowledge and practices to members of the community.

It is not only historical knowledge being preserved. New talent is also nurtured as members from across the community are encouraged to compose new music, all of which is professionally recorded and subsequently distributed to villages for communal use and public listening.

Muyco hopes that the stories and songs will serve as "voices of cultural value and in some ways [provide an opportunity to] protest against injustice" to help ensure their cultural self-definition, identity and ultimate survival.

Provided by University of the Philippines Diliman

Citation: 'Reading' songs and nurturing culture in the Philippines (2017, March 10) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-03-songs-nurturing-culture-philippines.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.