

# Ifugao Traditional Houses, Philippines: A Springboard for Re-energizing Culture, Preserving Landscape, and Support for Household Resiliency

Ifugao Rice Terraces of the Philippines (Ifugao, Philippines)

## Contact info

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**Geographical/territorial context:** The Ifugao Rice Terraces (IRT) is one of the six UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Philippines and the traditional houses are an integral part of this built landscape. Its preservation and conservation are important and central to maintaining the connectedness of the Ifugao people to their ancestral ethnic heritage which has been passed on through generations.

**Strengths/assets:** While there is a need for the Ifugao community to stand as a collective, there is support from the academic institutions, local government units, line agencies, non-government organizations and institutional partners. There have been collaborations from these stakeholders in the past and these shall serve as the starting point to further the cause of resilience in the Ifugao households and support conservation and preservation of the rice terraces landscape.

**Challenges:** The Ifugao people are faced with the challenge of promoting the Ifugao Rice Terraces (IRT) as a tourism destination on one hand, and the need to sustain household resilience, and cultural and environmental preservation on the other. In terms of household food security and resilience of Ifugao farmer families, almost a third (32.3%) of the people in the province are poor. Farms on the IRT have faced abandonment, ageing farmers, out-migration, limited rice yields, and sometimes pest and disease. There is a need to explore more viable alternative livelihoods and sustainable practices.

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## Identified Stakeholders, Establishment of the Hub



\*Indigenous Peoples Resource Conservation and Community Learning Center located in Hapao, Hungduan, Ifugao.



\* The center features a museum (*Alimaduwan*), and training school on indigenous skills and knowledge, eco-tourism trail project, and a research center on culture.



\* Academe, indigenous communities, youth, local government units and non-government organizations

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## Co-development of the Action Plan



The co-development of the action plan happened through the following workshops:



**Wood Identification:** A tool for the preservation of indigenous architecture of traditional houses in Ifugao, Philippines (2019-2020) - This research provided basic information on the type of wood species used in the construction of the traditional houses. It also included a multi-stakeholder focus-group discussion on the preservation and conservation of the built-heritage of the Ifugao rice terraces .



**Visioning Workshops** (November 22, 2021 to December 13, 2021): These visioning workshops are the first of a series of workshops to assist local government units, line agencies and community elders in the World Heritage towns to envision their community of the future. These visioning workshops are important inputs in the planning workshops to be organized soon in order to layout activities/plans to achieve their visions.

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## Established Action Plan

By engaging with Ifugao youth, community groups, the academe, and other partners who share a common interest in strengthening the Ifugao culture and preserving the rice terraces, we seek to revitalize Ifugao cultural heritage by focusing on preservation of Ifugao traditional houses as an entry point and springboard for community participation and mobilization.

We intend to engage the youth in capacity building opportunities (i.e. knowledge/ awareness, skills building, life-skills trainings) and sensitize the indigenous community in cultural heritage awareness and promotion. At the same time, we aim to generate greater interest and support for skills-building and identifying livelihood options that strengthen the economic resilience of Ifugao households.

### Action AR 17.1 Establishment of a School of Living Traditions

**Specific aim:** To ensure that traditional arts, crafts and skills are passed on to the younger generation in the community.

**Achieved Activities:** Training courses on: native house constructions, stone walling/piling of rice terraces, woodcarving and rattan weaving

### Action AR 17.2: Photo-exhibit of traditional houses and their narratives

**Specific aim:** To raise awareness on the preservation of the traditional houses.

**Achieved Activities:** Photo exhibit of traditional houses in Hungduan and Kiangnan, Ifugao.

### Action AR 17.3: Heritage Appreciation through Stories of Yore

**Specific aim:** To imbibe heritage appreciation in high school learners by sharing stories of the olden days.

**Achieved Activities:** Development of story-telling modules; Story-telling sessions of indigenous tales and myths; Identify the appropriate learning activities and assessment activities for the story-telling sessions.

### Action AR 17.4: Heritage Management of the Ifugao Province World Heritage Towns

**Specific aim:** Envision what their communities will be in 30 to 50 years; Identify programs, projects and activities that have to be done in the short and long term, in order to achieve the identified vision.

**Achieved Activities:** Bring together the stakeholders of the rice terraces and explain the Ifugao Rice Terraces Assessment. Scenario planning is part of the assessment; Discuss the need to envision what the community will be in the future; Identify, discuss and agree on specific actions needed to achieve the vision; Plan for scenario planning workshop in September 2022.

### Action AR 17.5: Preservation of Traditional Ifugao Houses and Biodiversity Conservation

**Specific aim:** To increase community awareness on the importance of the traditional Ifugao houses; To support community activities for biodiversity conservation; To make recommendations for the preservation and conservation of the traditional houses through the participation of multi-stakeholders

**Achieved Activities:** Focus Group Discussion of multi-stakeholders on status and conservation of the traditional house; tree-planting of native trees; establishment of tree nursery in local schools and community; tree walk and mini-landscape activity.



## Sustainability Beyond RURITAGE

- *The Ifugao traditional house as a tangible symbol of indigenous cultural heritage is strengthened and the cultural practices around their construction and use are sustained.*
- *There is a need to establish and support collaboration among stakeholders and partners to nurture and sustain what has been started.*
- *Relationships and enduring collaboration between academics, community and tribal leaders, and active participation of local community are key to the propagation of the value of indigenous knowledge. The focus on the Ifugao traditional house has provided an avenue for participatory discourse from which other indigenous knowledge can be brought to the fore*
- *Technical and indigenous knowledge on traditional houses were enriched and shared with local and international communities to ensure their preservation and conservation.*
- *It is not easy to bring people from different backgrounds together. Creating spaces for collaboration and discussion on heritage-led rural regeneration will be important especially in life skills training and opportunities for youth and livelihood options to ensure a resilient community living in harmony with nature.*

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**Challenges:** The Ifugao people are faced with the challenge of promoting the Ifugao Rice Terraces (IRT) as a tourism destination on one hand, and the need to sustain household resilience, and cultural and environmental preservation on the other. In terms of household food security and resilience of Ifugao farmer families, almost a third of the people in the province are poor. Farms on the IRT have faced abandonment, ageing farmers, out-migration, limited rice yields, and sometimes pest and disease. There is a need to explore more viable alternative livelihoods and sustainable practices.

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- \* Academe, indigenous communities, youth, local government units and line agencies, and non-government organizations

## 2 Co-development of the Action Plan



The co-development of the action plan happened through the following workshops:

- Documentation of Traditional Houses and Wood Identification (2019-2020) - These studies provided basic information on the status of traditional houses in Kiangnan and Hungduan and the type of wood species used in its construction. It also included a multi-stakeholder focus-group discussion on the preservation and conservation of the built-heritage of the Ifugao rice terraces .
- Visioning Workshops (November 22, 2021 to December 13, 2021): These visioning workshops are the first of a series of workshops to assist local government units, line agencies and community elders in the World Heritage towns to envision their communities of the future. These visioning workshops are important inputs in the planning workshops to be organized soon in order to layout activities/plans to achieve their visions.

## 3 Established Action Plan

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- *Technical and indigenous knowledge on traditional houses were enriched and shared with local and international communities to ensure their preservation and conservation.*
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