



# A Sweet Tasting Fruit: Solving the Riddle of Livelihood Needs, Biodiversity Conservation and Indigenous Practices



Published by

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

The Manobo indigenous people of the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary have been living in harmony with their environment for centuries.



Katmon and Libas seedlings

They were living on the food the forest provided and using it as a natural source for medicine. Recent years have seen external influences putting pressure on this way of living. Not only agricultural development relying on more lucrative but environmentally-disruptive practices, but also new settlements of migrants are making it more and more difficult to sustain it as the forests are disappearing.

However, the community has found new ways of re-enacting their indigenous practices placing economic value in biodiversity conservation. These practices are bridging the divide between the community's livelihood needs, biodiversity conservation and indigenous culture. The fruits of endemic trees, like the libas and the katmon, can be processed into jam. By starting a jam-making venture, many members of the Manobo indigenous community have been able to diversify their income sources and, most importantly, been reminded of the importance of conservation.



Marylin Trasmil, Chairwoman of the Indigenous People Loreto-Agusan Marsh Sectoral Association (IP-LORAMSECA).

**// Of course we could not immediately convince people to stop cutting trees. There will naturally be some resistance. So what we did was we gave value back into the trees. //**

Marylin Trasmil

This successful case of addressing the challenges of bringing together livelihood needs, biodiversity conservation and indigenous culture, was made possible by action-oriented research, business development trainings, market matching and dedicated individuals from the community.



Peeled Katmon

The Indigenous Practices for Conservation of Biodiversity (IP4Biodiv) Module of the GIZ-implemented Conflict-Sensitive Resource and Asset Management Programme (COSERAM) began its intervention by supporting a group of local researchers. Marilyn Trasmil and four fellow Manobos were documenting indigenous practices, when they began to realize how ongoing developments were threatening their way of life and negating their roots. Introduced seed varieties, for instance, became popular because they appeared to produce more harvest. Through the research it became evident that the benefits were short term compared to the well adapted endemic species, which were more resistant and needed less farm inputs.

While doing our research, we realized that our ancestors took pains in taking care of our land. Now, it's very easy for some to take this for granted. It made us ask ourselves, why don't we go back to our roots to help conserve nature?

Marylin Trasmil

So, they founded the Indigenous People Loreto-Agusan Marsh Sectoral Association (IP-LORAMSECA). It was this organization that with the technical and financial support of GIZ kick-started the jam-making enterprise. Seeing the project's initial success and realizing its potential, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) boosted the Association by linking the small business to more customers and helping the group market their products regionally.



**Nilda Havana,**  
Vice Chairwoman of IP-LORAMSECA



Katmon jam



Armando Cerna, IP farmer

**“ We don’t cut the katmon and libas trees anymore, because now we know we can make money from them. ”**

Armando Cerna

COSERAM’s intervention helped the Manobos in Loreto, Agusan del Sur rediscover the value of the endemic Libas and Katmon trees, that were once considered worthless. Having this economic opportunity at hand, many members

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of the community have put in more effort to replant trees and take care of the environment. To a degree, that DENR has adopted the indigenous reforestation practices into their National Greening Program. Apart from the positive effects on biodiversity conservation, members of the community have additional income to spend on food and school supplies for their children.

This successful experience of the Manobos in Loreto shows that it is indeed possible to solve the riddle of livelihood needs, biodiversity conservation and indigenous practices. Looking beyond conventional sources of income, applying local knowledge and engaging with dedicated community individuals, were key success factors.

**“ We never would have thought that the DENR and other government agencies would be amazed at what we do. Conducting research led to a renewed promotion of our indigenous practices, and gave value to the environment we live in, like our ancestors once did.**

Marylin Tramsil



COSERAM is a joint undertaking of the Philippine and German Governments, implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) together with five Philippine government agencies: the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).



Aside from jams, IP-LORAMSECA also has cookies flavored with katmon and libas fruits

## SUMMARY

*Ang Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary usa ka protected area nga makita sa Agusan del Sur. Pinakadaghan namuyo dinhi mga miyembro sa Manobo nga tribu, usa sa mga napihig nga grupo sa katawhan sa atong nasud Pilipinas. Ang Conflict Sensitive Resource and Asset Management (COSERAM) nga programa sa Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) ang usa sa mga nagtabang sa tribu para molambo ang ilang kinabuhi.*

*Pinaagi sa COSERAM, gihatagan ug training sa paghimo ug jam ang mga Manobo IP researchers ug mga kaubang. Ang jam naga gamit sa mga prutas nga daghan sa ilang lugar, sama sa libas ug katmon.*

*Nakatabang pud ang paghimo ug jam para mahatagan ug bili ang punuan ug dili na putlon. Karon, dili lang sa panginabuhi nakatabang ang paghimo ug jam, kundi nakatabang pud sa pagkonserbar sa Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary.*

