

UN PERMANENT FORUM on INDIGENOUS ISSUES
Sixth Session, May 14-25, 2007
Agenda Item 8: Data Disaggregation and Data Collection
Statement by: Raymond de Chavez, Tebtebba Foundation

Madam Chair, Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum:

In behalf of Tebtebba, I wish to report on our experiences in data disaggregation and make recommendations on this agenda item.

At its 1st and 2nd sessions, the UN Permanent Forum identified inadequate data collection and data disaggregation as a major methodological challenge in its work. On its 2nd session, the Permanent Forum recommended to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) the holding of a workshop on "the collection of data concerning indigenous peoples" as part of the effort in data disaggregation.

In support of this thrust, Tebtebba Foundation proposed to the United Nations Development Program-Regional Indigenous Peoples Program (UNDP-RIPP) the conduct of a research to develop a methodology for data disaggregation. The province of Nueva Vizcaya in northern Philippines was chosen as the study area because of its diverse population that is composed mostly of indigenous groups mixed with a larger group of non-indigenous migrants.

The initial work plan adopted a strategy to pilot household data gathering and survey in three (3) Nueva Vizcaya towns. After which, household data gathering in the remaining twelve (12) towns and survey in three (3) more towns were simultaneously conducted.

The study adopted a framework by which a disaggregated data on indigenous peoples could be used to monitor rights-based indicators of development. Available census records show that the Philippine government's National Statistics Office (NSO) in its surveys uses "mother tongue" to determine a person's ethnicity. In this study, key informants were tapped to identify the ethnicity of households in a village where they are competent to identify. This was later validated by a survey among respondents taken randomly from among the identified indigenous population. The size of the random sample considered a statistically acceptable margin of error.

After the data gathering design was developed, pre-testing of the instruments were done in several villages of the three pilot towns. Enhancements in the instruments, e.g., survey forms and survey guidelines, were adopted before these were used in the pilot towns. After the pilot testing, the recommendation to reduce of the original survey sample size from 1,200 to 600 was formally adopted.

The experiences gained from this initiative suggest that population data disaggregation, especially when it concerns ethnicity, is possible when it starts at the village level where key informants could competently identify the ethnicity of the population. However, this observation does not contradict the internationally accepted definition that ethnicity is "self-ascribed" – where information is best taken through a census.

Although conducted using only a randomly selected sample, the household survey is a significant

validation of the data derived from the key informants and focused group discussions. As ethnicity is viewed by self-ascription or by ascription of others, some people identify themselves differently from what others call them.

Focused group discussions were held to gather deepening insights on how and why indigenous peoples self-identify differently from what others traditionally call them. The discussions also surfaced facts about their history, the present territories, which they now occupy, and the communities where they are now integrated. Facts that could not be extracted from the survey questionnaire were gathered from the discussion groups.

The survey also generated data that approximates the indigenous peoples' level of satisfaction about basic services provided by the government. It also measured political participation and the degree of cultural disintegration among indigenous peoples.

The draft report from this was then presented in a national workshop where government key personnel from relevant agencies, NGOs and indigenous leaders were present and they were asked to critique and validate the findings.

Recommendations:

Based on our experiences in data disaggregation, Tebtebba therefore puts forward the following recommendation:

- 1. There is a need to capacitate local governments to conduct their own census and surveys to annually update regular National Censuses.**
- 2. An advocacy campaign has to be undertaken to ensure that the ethnicity variable is included in future national censuses.**
- 3. Gender balance must be ensured among respondents in future surveys.**
- 4. More pilot studies on data disaggregation should be done by indigenous peoples in cooperation with concerned government agencies and bodies. This is necessary to facilitate advocacy for changes in survey activities in the future. Also, these are important venues to test proposed instruments before these are finalized**
- 5. Considering that the development of survey instruments can often be highly politicized, there is a need to establish guidelines to ensure that data gathering is more culturally sensitive, objective and neutral.**
- 6. Venues for sharing of experiences on data disaggregation must be provided so that both indigenous peoples may be able to learn from them. This is specifically true among indigenous organizations in the developed world who have rich experience in data disaggregation work.**

Thank you, Madam Chair.