



ISSN 1989 – 9572

DOI: 10.47750/jett.2023.14.01.028

## Literacy Program to Improve the Education of the Agta

Gabriel L. Luna<sup>1\*</sup>

Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol. 14 (1)

<https://jett.labosfor.com/>

Date of reception: 25 Sep 2022

Date of revision: 19 Jan 2023

Date of acceptance: 21 Jan 2023

**Gabriel L. Luna (2023). Literacy Program to Improve the Education of the Agta. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol. 14(1). 323-333.**

---

<sup>1</sup>Faculty member, Isabela State University Cauayan City, Isabela Philippines



## **Literacy Program to Improve the Education of the Agta**

**Gabriel L. Luna<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Faculty member, Isabela State University Cauayan City, Isabela Philippines

\*Corresponding Author

Email: gl952738@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

The study sought to identify the cultural profile, beliefs and practices, attitude toward literacy education, and Agta problems and aspirations as an input for the Agta literacy program. Descriptive The profile variables were determined through research as an input to the literacy program to improve Agta's education. According to the findings, the Agta got their name from prominent people, their dialect is Upos, and they live in a simple and temporary shelter. Furthermore, the male Agta served as the family's head and provider, while the female Agta assisted with child rearing and housekeeping. They prefer to eat foods found in their environment and spend their leisure time bonding with their fellow Agta and chewing betel nuts, momma, or nganga. The Agta, on the other hand, have a rich cultural heritage regarding the stages of life such as conception, childbirth, child rearing, courtship, marriage, and death and burial. The majority of Agta are illiterate. They demonstrated a positive and extremely favorable attitude toward literacy education. Agta has concerns and desires, particularly regarding their children's education. It was also discovered that stakeholders and the Local Government Unit support Agta education, so implementing a literacy program for Agta to improve their education is highly recommended.

**Keywords:** Agta, Cultural Profile, Beliefs and Practices, Attitude Towards Literacy Education, Problems and Aspirations

### **INTRODUCTION**

Advocates of the philosophy of Social Reconstructionism as educational theory strongly argue that there is no better way to push a society into a higher class of civilization except through education. Cultural change and development can be brought about due to education. For education is a catalyst of change (De Capia, 2016).

Such a vision can be a dream come true in the case of the Agta at Sitio Diwagden, San Jose, San Mariano, Isabela. In the past years, the Agta of Sitio Diwagden, San Mariano, Isabela, were the sole beneficiaries of the programs of the Plan International along the preservation of natural resources. The indigenous people like the Agta, believed to be the stewards of creation enjoyed the material assistance given them by the Non-government organization which made them solely dependent on the dole out system, that resulted to make them complacent and overdependent. As an effect, the basic education as a right of every Agta was not given importance by the Agta themselves. Formal education was observed to be the Agta's least priority in their existence. The reason is obviously an economic in nature (De Capia, 2016).

Additionally, it is imbedded in the Agta culture, that male children are their priority to send to school rather than the female Agta children because the male Agta is regarded as the bread earner of the family while the woman takes charge of the housekeeping activities (Moralista & Delariante, 2017);(De Capia,2016).

Furthermore, it was also observed from among the Agta cultural minority that instead of the parents directing the attention of their children to education, the parent's guide and train their children to become hunter, a forager or a skilled farmer and fisherman. In relation to this, parents do not show fervent desire and priority, for education of their children due to economic pressures. Hence, informal education takes place anytime, anywhere for those Agta children who have less interest to education. For education takes place when skills are mastered and demonstrated by the Agta adult to their children through learning by doing. Result of an interview revealed that the old usually show how a certain skill can be demonstrated and done, and the young are expected to imitate the skill until mastery is now achieved. With the advent of globalization and fast changing development of Science and Technology, the adult and children Agta as observed are open to these changes (Canay, 2016); (Canay, 2016).

They came with a realization when asked during an interview with them on the importance of education. When called to participate in the literacy classes, the adult and children Agta showed their best interest to learn no matter how hard it may seem for them to do it. Others would reason out and justify why they cannot follow the

task assigned to them by the teacher during literacy classes. Out of frustration, they justify themselves by saying that privilege or opportunity for education would just be given and passed on to their children to alleviate them from severe poverty. As noticed by the IP teacher -implementers, the adult Agta would just be attending literacy classes just for fun without devoting seriously exerting more efforts when attending to it but rather they consider their attendance in the literacy extension classes as a social gathering with the fellow Agta (Magana, 2003).

While it is true that there is a Multi-grade extension classes that was established at Sitio Diwagden within the Agta community, as per result of the collaborative efforts of stakeholders , LGU and DepEd, some Agta children still lose interest in pursuing and continuing their studies until higher grade level for lack of motivation in life or due to migration, severe poverty and social pressures confronting them in the Sitio. Except for some Agta who were so responsive to learn as observed during the conduct of the literacy classes, still the greatest number and the majority of them, especially the adult Agta who are identified as the beneficiaries of the project did not seem to take the literacy classes very seriously to enhance Agta basic literacy skills. This goes to show that education is not indeed a priority for the Adult Agta. They only feel its importance maybe for their children. Thus, the fate of the child is dependent upon the disposition of the parents to influence their children to create a brighter future. In other words, despite the initiative of the government to bring education at their doorsteps, other Agta still lose the opportunities to embrace education since education for the Agta children is not a thing that provides nourishment to their health nor education is like a gold that gives sunshine to their life that elevate their status in life like a king. Generally, the Agta in Sitio Diwagden are illiterate. Very rare are the Agta in Sitio Diwagden at San Jose, particularly the Agta children who study at San Jose Integrated School who are considered literate, that is, they know how to read, write and count. Other Agta children suddenly stopped from their schooling due to financial problem the fact that education is just an obligation which every parent has to provide for children other than meeting the satisfaction of their family's minimum basic needs according to an interview with the School Principal of San Jose Integrated School. Hence, the Literacy Project for the Agta was conceived as appropriate extension activity for the Agta residents in the forest ranges of Sierra Madre Mountains in San Mariano, Isabela, particularly at the sitio of Diwagden, considering that great number of Agta in San Mariano are illiterate. It is for this premise that this study was conducted to assess the literacy skills of Agta indigenous people alongside with the conduct of the literacy outreach extension activities for the Agta (Padilla, 2000); (Magana, 2003).

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The research study generally assessed the cultural profile, beliefs and practices, attitude towards literacy education and Agta problems and aspirations, an input to Agta literacy program. Specifically, the research aimed to answer the following objectives:

1. Assess the cultural profile of the Agta;
2. Determine the attitude of the Agta towards literacy education activities;
3. Determine how responsive are the Agta during literacy classes;
4. Determine the attitude of the Agta towards literacy education;
5. Identify the Agta problems encountered and aspirations in life;
6. Assess how supportive are the stakeholders especially the Local Government Unit of San Mariano in providing the educational needs of the Agta; and
7. Formulate a functional literacy program for the Agta basis in improving the literacy skills of the Agta indigenous tribe in Sitio Diwagden of San Jose, San Mariano, Isabela.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive research methods were used in the study. The study includes twenty participants. The interviews were conducted in the most informal and unobtrusive manner possible in order to obtain reliable verbal responses from the subject, the Agta. The interview results were also validated to ensure the accuracy of the information gathered. The researcher gathered and analyzed cultural profile beliefs and practices, perception on basic education, problems and aspiration as variables in order to come up with an input or policy formulation for the Agta Literacy Program.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Cultural Profile of the Agta**

How Agta got their name becomes the privilege of the parents to assign a name for their Agta child. A name is given only when the child starts to open his eyes. The name chosen by the parent Agta can be taken from their idol or any popular or prominent figure in the place. Usually, a name is only given without a family name. The Agtas do not adhere to family name unless they are being baptized, or registered in the Municipio. The Agta name their child after the name may be of the prominent people like politicians, actors, and influential people who serve as their godparents during baptism. The Agta dialect spoken in the Sierra Madre mountain is called Upos. The term Upos is similar to that of Paranan, the language of the residents in Palanan including the intonation. The Agtas are very flexible. They can comprehend and speak Ibanag, Iloco and Tagalog or Filipino (Bennagen, 1977). The shelter or dwelling of the Agta is a plain and simple temporary house, reflecting they're

being a nomadic culture. When they observe the absence of resources, they move to another place. Thus, they leave their temporary shelter. Some Agtas established their simple house like with a simple nipa hut that do not reach them by the floods of water during typhoons. As regards work activities engaged by male and female Agta, interview revealed that the male or Lallaki Agtas served as the provider of food for the family while the female or Babbi Agta helps in the rearing of their children. the food preferences of the Agta, it can be said that the nomadic nature of the Agtas implies the non-stop looking for food for their subsistence. The Agta, having no agricultural properties to manage have to look elsewhere around his environment.

The educated citizen appeared to have basic components-cultural and gender capital-intertwined in the academic achievement of children. According to the findings of Ocampo and Ocampo (2018), male aetas are regarded as the head of the family, its protector, and the one who does the hard work; female aetas are regarded as the ones caring for the baby, selling products for a living, cooking and cleaning the house; aetas do not want to be left behind in current trends, education, and standard of living; modern aetas become knowledgeable due to education and The major economic activities of the Agta of San Mariano are similar to those of the Aetas of Pudtol, Luna, and Kalinga. According to interviews and observations, negritos have engaged in economic activities to earn a living. They worked in industries that used materials obtained directly from nature, such as foraging, fishing, and hunting. The aetas in Luna, Kalinga, were also involved in basket weaving. Upland farming, weaving, and paid labor (Ocampo, Ronald and Ocampo, Rema, 2018) As a result, rice, cassava, bananas, abong or labong of rattan or uw-way alingo, rambutan are the Agtas' staple foods (Barrows, 1910).

### **Beliefs and Practices of The Agta**

The Agta people who live at Sitio Diwagden in San Jose San Mariano have a rich cultural heritage that includes conception, childbirth, child-rearing, courtship, marriage, death, and burial.

#### **Conception**

Any indigenous ordinary Agta woman understands that conception is likely to occur in the life of an Agta married individual once “kadawyan” (menstruation) ceases after sexual contract. According to Mr. Marciano Beltran, IKSP Coordinator of the NCIP Service Center of San Mariano, Isabela that when he was conducting a census population among the Agta in Sitio Diwagden, he observed, thus that on the average, a 13-14-year-old Agta girl usually enters into marriage and gets pregnant immediately. In the mind of the ordinary Agta, a woman who does not have menstruation anymore for two to three months is understood to get pregnant already, thus, she goes and verifies her situation to a manghihilot or (midwife). If proven that she is conceiving, then she is advised of the measures or instructions that she should take relative to her pregnancy for the safety of the baby in her womb. Therefore, a pregnant woman is prohibited from fasting because she is nourishing a life in her womb. During pregnancy, the couple are extra careful and endure the pain which the pregnant woman feels for the safety of the child especially if it is going to be the first child. An Agta woman by the name Lourdes Gagucas, a mother of four children was not allowed to work and had to stay at home when she was pregnant with her first child. Nestor, her husband saw to it that Lourdes had to be provided with all the things she needed until the day she gave birth. She was nourished with fruits especially banana on the belief that the child would be resistant to sickness just like a banana which after having been cut grows on and on. But her second, third and fourth pregnancies were not taken cared of on the way the first was because of their belief that once first birth had been out of danger, most likely the succeeding conceptions and birth would also be successful. A pregnant Agta is also given more attention. When she craves for fruits or any food, the husband should satisfy her request or readily given her order. Once the fruits are ready, the Agta should carefully pick lest they fall which is a sign of bad omen. Most of the practices and beliefs during conception are domestic in nature. Other practices had been disregarded due to change of time and acculturation.

#### **Childbirth**

Due to lack of knowledge in which the Agta did not go to school, the ordinary Agta of Diwagden do not really know when a pregnant woman gives birth because they are not familiar with its nature. However, they are very sure of one thing, that is, the child is going to be born out of the womb of a mother after nine months of pregnancy. Other Agta especially those not literate ones give birth at any place, anytime wherein their due is on especially the first timers. Normally, according to Mrs. Leni Garcia, an Agta professional working with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples as Office Employee, the Agta mother gives birth at their home. She is being attended by an Agta elder male or a female. While delivering a child, hornbill feathers should be burned near the stairs of the house. They do this burning because they believe it will ease the mother's pain in giving birth. In the absence of a hornbill, the skull or a braided piece of cloth can be burned for the same reason. The Agta do this because they believe that the burned clothe emits smoke which during the first night is believed to protect the child from being taken by the black spirit. At birth, the Agta baby is not given a name. They name the child when he starts to talk and able to walk. Their reason for this may have something to do with high mortality of the Agta new born babies. To name a child is the privilege of the mother. A name is only given when the child starts to open his eyes, that is, after two weeks or (duwa lawas). Usually, a name is only given without the family name. The Agta do not adhere to family name unless they are being baptized in which

case they take the family name of their godfather or godmother. Such name may be based from dramas which they hear from radio or names of their ancestors.

### **Child Rearing of the Agta**

The Agta consider their children as source of their joy. The Agta parents really work hard to provide their children with the basic needs. The Agta father would do everything to ensure the security and brighter future of the child. Similarly, after the mother gives birth, the Agta mother nurtures her child with love and care. In an interview with Mrs. Mariesol Ramirez, Principal at San Jose Integrated School narrated that the Agta mother breastfeeds her baby up to the age the baby refuses to suck milk from his mother's breast or when another baby is delivered. This information was confirmed by the report paper made by Magana (2000) regarding the child rearing of the Agta children that from the period of infancy to childhood, the mother breastfeeds and weaned the baby up to two years old. The child grows daily as tied around her body with a blanket. The child is carried wherever she goes doing domestic chores or gathering activities up to two or three years of age. At the age of four, the child starts to go with other children, for their gathering, both in the forest and in the river. At the age of six, the Agta child starts to learn fishing and hunting techniques and foraging. This will be the child's activity until he becomes a teenager with the father or the grandfather and other men in the band. During these activities, the father or the grandfather orients the male-child about their settlement areas, camp areas, fishing grounds, hunting grounds, place of foraging activities, other land marks and burial grounds for their ancestors (Magana, 2000).

### **Courtship**

The Agta regard courtship as a primordial event in the formation of a family and marriage. Among them, such practices are simple in as much as they display simple way of living. Just like any other Filipino nowadays, a male Agta proposes directly to the girl unlike in the past when parents arrange wedding plans for their children. The boy then shows his love by giving some presents like fruits and a part of hunted animal. Courtship and engagement for the Agta do not take so long and undergo a complicated process. In an interview with an Agta, Lourdes Gagucas is married to Delfin Gagucas. According to her, she was courted when her pubic hair started to appear, an indication that she was already at the right age. Delfin tried to manifest his interest by bringing her some fruits and wild animals almost two times a day. After three weeks he came along with his parents asking Lourdes to marry him. Her parents seemed to like her idea so they approved such without conferring the matter with her. Since Delfin was then known for being industrious, Lourdes manifested likewise her acceptance. For the Agta, courtship and engagement do not take a long time and complicated process. When a man and a woman are seen talking each other and going together constantly, the community will conclude that love springs between the two of them. The young Agta man gives personal accessories like manic and biskal made up of colored rosary-liked beads and colored string for their bracelets and necklaces. He courts the maiden and when the feeling is mutual they can start a relationship. The man talks to the parents of the maiden for the approval of the relationship. If they approve, he starts his serbi by helping the maiden's parents in their economic and domestic activities. But if the parents disapprove, then the relationship terminates.

### **Marriage**

Insofar as Marriage among the Agta, brothers, sisters and cousins are forbidden from courting or marrying a kin as revealed by Mrs. Lenie Garcia, IKSP Coordinator of NCIP Service Center, San Mariano, Isabela in an interview with her about the Agta cultural practices on marriage. The Agta at Sitio Diwagdan, San Jose, San Mariano, Isabela are generally monogamous because of their belief that marriage is sacred, besides, polygamy for them would mean greater financial responsibilities. In the Agta culture, marriage union has three forms (Magana, Delia 2000). The usual socially approved way is for two sets of parents to arrange a marriage between two children. After a period of bride service and a period of trial marriage, there will be a wedding feast. The second way is through elopement. A boy and a girl arrange privately to run away together, and return to their terribly upset parents after several days, who then agree with the marriage most of the times. Furthermore, The third way in which marriage unions are formed among the Agta is through consensus agreement of a couple of two partners that are both (or at least one) widowed from previous marriage and have come to live together.

In this case, there is no wedding feast. The newly wed Agta couple usually establish their own dwelling near their parents or depending on the availability of resources in the settlement, Kanu and Nebleta expressed during an interview with them. In the socially approved way of marriage, the Agta observed the usual way of wedding arrangement. Parents of both parties would do the planning and preparation; Preparation starts with the danun where the man's parents formally ask the consent of the future bride's parents for marriage. During the danun, a few important materials are to be prepared as presents. A betel nut, a piece of cloth, wine, usually gin pambung and money if budget warrants. Both parties give their proposals and acceptance during the danun. Various topics are discussed during the meeting such as the good qualities to be possessed by the nobyo and nobya to make a lifetime relationship, the date of the wedding and the procedure of its celebration. After this agreement, the woman is considered engaged to the man even without her consent. She is then prohibited to entertain other suitors, not get out from the house before the wedding. The case then is brought to the attention of the

community's chieftain, panglakayen, or Tribal Leader who will have to approve such marriage. For the wedding, the girl is usually dressed in glaring color of flower prints and accents and the boy in his best dress, not necessarily native. The couple and some relatives gather with the Panglakayen or Tribal Leader officiating the ceremony. Nowadays, there are other sects that penetrate the settlement of the Agta community and encourage the Agta for their religious ceremonies like the wedding activities. Hence the Agta submit their marriage to their form of marriage rites. The celebration follows with all the participants and guests invited to share with the prepared food for the reception. Prepared food included rice, butchered pig or wild boar then fruits. The food must be tasted first by the couple before the crowd chooses. Following the celebration, the bride and groom spend their first night in the groom's home. The groom's parents will spend the night at their neighbors' house, giving the couple privacy for their honeymoon. The couple moves to their new home a day or two later with some important items that were previously prepared and offered during the danun. Couples look up as rice is sprinkled before entering the house.

Such wedding practices had really been existing in the past and even today as narrated by Kanu Viloría, Mayor of the Agta Sitio Diwagden tribe who had experienced such a Wedding ceremony. Now he has eight grown up children. Nowadays, the Church becomes inclusive and sensitive to the needs of the Indigenous Peoples groups. Hence, the church welcomes the Agta in the Church activities. Thus, Church wedding has slowly come into existence among the Agta culture. The Nuptial of the couple together with baptism is now the highlighting activity during fiestas. Agta couples now agree to be wedded in the Church most especially if some religious sects, private individuals just like the politicians would sponsor the wedding in which case the sponsor's family name will be carried by the couple (Person, et al., 2009).

### **Death and Burial**

Noticeably, if the Agta sick member who could not afford to be hospitalized and no hope for cure, the family could not do some remedies otherwise except to watch their dying love one up to his last breath. Accordingly, the death for the Agta is full of sorrow and grief for the whole community. Upon death, there are much wailing and lamentations and uttering of farewell words to the dead from the family members. The dead is wrapped with blankets and buried the following day. Miss Barbara Garcia, the Provincial Officer of the NCIP Isabela also confirmed the same information as revealed by Neblata and Kanu Viloría to the researcher. Meanwhile, the relatives prepare a coffin or landasan made of bamboo for the cadaver. When the coffin is ready, the men dig a hole as fast as they can. Then they bury the dead to the grave and cover with soil while the corpse of their beloved dead does not decay yet. Then the Agta men construct a lean-to on top of the grave where they can put the personal belongings of the dead. The spear, hook line, bolo and the cooking pot are usually hanged on the lean-tos. Those who attended the burial carefully leave the graveyard. As soon as everything is in place, the last to leave the place is obliged to sweep away all the footprints in the grave. They do this because the Agta believe that footprints will give the spirit of the dead to haunt them. After the burial, all the members of the band will transfer to another area and stay there for about a year and return again to their former settlements (Magana, 2000).

### **Literacy of the Agta**

The Agta children are generally literate, that is, they are already equipped in reading, writing and counting. This claim can be supported by the school record of the School Head indicating that number of Agta children enrolled in San Jose Integrated School increases every School Year.

School Year	SY 2013- 14	SY 2014-15	SY 2016- 17	SY 2017- 18	SY 2018-19	SY 2019-20
Grade 1	0	2	2	5	8	11
Grade 2	1	3	3	1	3	5
Grade 3	2	2	2	2	4	4
Grade 4	3	4	4	2	3	4
Grade 5	1	1	3	3	3	5
Grade 6	0	1	1	1	2	3
Grade 7	0	0	2	2	1	1
Grade 8	0	1	1	2	1	2
Grade 9	0	0	0	1	2	1
Grade 10	0	0	0	1	1	2
Grade 11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>39</b>

However, the adult Agta in Sitio Diwagden are generally illiterate specifically on areas of writing and reading. During the literacy classes, they were just trained to write their name and execute thumb mark to manifest their

identity, for practical reason. Since the Adult Agta were not given the chance and privilege to attend schooling in the basic education, they opined in an interview to just pave the way and pass the opportunity to their children. According to Nebleta Vilorio, they just let their children continue and experience what they themselves did not enjoy when they were a child. What is more important for the adult Agta is that they know how to count money so that they would not be cheated by the Ibay or the business traders when they sell products in exchange of another product or basic commodities. The adult Agta of San Mariano engage in similar major economic activities to earn a living. They worked in industries that used materials obtained directly from nature, such as foraging, fishing, and hunting. Having these kinds of engagement, the Agta felt the need for them to focus on enhancing the skill in counting money. (Ocampo, Ronald and Ocampo, Rema, 2004). 4. Attitude of the Agta Towards Literacy Education Generally, the Agta are basically illiterate. They could hardly recognize letters, words, and numbers. For they are numeracy and literacy challenged, the fact that they have not been to school for formal education. Unlike when the basic literacy education was conducted in 2015, that only very few Agta children are sent to school since the nature of the Agta life depends on hand to mouth existence. It was only when the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Department of Education and other stakeholders like government and non-government organizations extended their full support to the Agta community, then and only then that the Agta tribe were awakened in the significance of Education. Modesty aside, the Agta through their leaders, are willing to be taught how to read, write and compute as evidenced by their number as participants during the implementation of the Basic Literacy Classes conducted and implemented every Saturday from September to December 2015 during the first phase, September to October 2016, second phase and September to October 2017, the third phase, as per request of the NCIP Coordinator, Mr. Samuel Gonzales, of San Mariano Service Area which catered to both Agta the children and adults. In an interview with the adults, youth and children Agta, they showed a very positive attitude during the Literacy classes by having participated actively during their basic education or literacy project conducted with the Agta.

#### **Problems and Aspirations of the Agta**

As a result of an interview with the three Agta teachers and parents, some Agta children suddenly stopped from their studies due to migration. It is the culture of the Agta that they are nomadic and they are tied up from this culture. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples personnel opined in an interview with them since Agta could not be confined in one place, hence, the government ceased from awarding ancestral lands to the Agta indigenous peoples. Hence, the following are the enumerated problems of the Agta which they revealed during an interview conducted with them as follows: Agta do not have residential and agricultural land; Agta do not have a permanent type of house; They have no education; Government could hardly extend basic services to the Agta; They have no electricity; They have a very limited socialization with other people due to insecurity or shyness; They always experience many hardships in life. However, one of their aspirations is to have their own piece of land both residential lot and agricultural land for their livelihood. Agta also aspire to have their permanent-type of house as their protection from floods and typhoons. The children aspire to earn a degree course like teaching. Adult Agta aspire that they should enjoy the different services provided by the government. They also aspire to have electricity. Both children and adult Agta also aspire to have wider social organization and they aspire that literacy education would become continuously implemented so that Diwagden Agta community attains a functionally literate status (Ploeg, Bernardo & Masipiqueña, 2003).

#### **Educational Support of the Stakeholders and Local Government Unit**

After the implementation of the first phase of the Literacy Project in 2014, Ms. Mariesol A. Ramirez, the School Principal, requested ISU Cauayan, attention: the proponent for another activity for the Agta, in coordination with the NCIP San Mariano and the Punong Barangay of San Jose. The School Principal of SJIS and the Punong Barangay called for stakeholders' meeting regarding the treshing out of issues and concerns for the Agta at Sitio Diwagden. As per advice of DepEd to put up extension of classes at Diwagden, the principal sought the support of its stakeholders especially the LGU-San Mariano material support. Championing the interest and appreciation of the Agta parents, the idea of putting up an extension of classes in the Sitio Diwagden was conceived. Mr. Samuel Gonzales, the representative of the NCIP San Mariano, the representative of the Local Government Unit in the person of SB Susan Duca, the School Principal of San Jose Integrated School, Ms Mariesol A. Ramirez, and the representative of the Isabela State University conceived an idea of building a classroom for the Agta in the Sitio and conduct their own classes on a regular basis. Mr. Wilson Sagadan, being the Focal Person, was assigned in Sitio Diwagden Extension classes; Ms. Jenny T. Salvador, was designated to handle the Kinder, Grade 1, 2 and 3 Teacher; and Ms. Jacqueline A. Quedding, being the G 4,5. and G6 Teacher. Attached to extension of classes is the Day Care Center wherein Ms. Dalia B. Antonio was assigned as teacher. The history of putting the extension of classes in Diwagden was created and started when the barangay witnessed the initiative of Ma'am Merlynda Yogyog in the Year 2012, a Day Care Worker and a Born Again Christian leader. Moved with genuine concern and empathy for the Agta, she thought of initiating tutorial services with few numbers of pupils in the area. As time goes by, she noticed that Agta is increasing in number, hence she reported the information to the concerned to her School Head, Ms. Mariesol A. Ramirez and to the Punong Barangay, Hon. Florentino R. Bunao.

At present, the School Head, Ms. Mariesol A. Ramirez still recognizes the expertise and efforts of the Isabela State University as their partner agency in promoting the needs of the Agta Indigenous Peoples inasmuch as the Isabela State University gives importance and recognition to the programs of the national Commission for Indigenous Peoples. The Extension school of San Jose Integrated School at Sitio Diwagden is estimated as seven kilometer walk from Barangay San Jose Integrated School. The Sitio can be reached through barefoot or riding on a carabao. It is only during dry season from March to August that the Agta Indigenous peoples' community can be reached through a single motor. The history of the opening of extension classes started with the initiative of Ma'am Merlynda Yogyog in the Year 2012, a Day Care Worker with few numbers of pupils in the area. Due to an increasing number of the Agta indigenous children in the Sitio who are interested to learn basic knowledge, the LGU sent a Municipal School Board Teacher for two years to educate the Agta children. Having felt the educational needs of the Agta in the locality, the Department of Education DepEd sought assistance from the Local Government Unit of San Mariano, Isabela to open extension classes under the very able leadership of the School Principal of San Jose Integrated School, Mrs, Mariesol A. Ramirez to bring education within the Agta community. At present, the extension school is managed by four (4) teaching staff; one teacher, being its Focal Person and acting as its Teacher-In-Charge, and two (2) Municipal School Board teachers who are from Barangay San Jose. The other teacher of Day Care children is a trained Child Development Teacher under the office of the Municipal Social Welfare & Development who teaches Agta children. The extension school relies on its very limited and meager resources. Its pupils could hardly enjoy educational materials most especially the Information Communication Technology due to absence of electricity in the locality. As per observation during benchmarking, Agta children are deprived of the learning materials, which other regular students enjoy since the primary concern of the Agta individual is to satisfy their minimum basic needs in order to survive.

**Literacy Program for the Agta.**

**Table 1: Literacy Program for the Adult-Agta**

Key Result Area	Objective	Persons Responsible	Expected Output
READING ACTIVITY	To master the reading of alphabets, specifically the consonants and vowels	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Mastered the reading of alphabets, specifically the consonants and vowels
	To recognize the sound in reading the consonant letters and vowel letters of the alphabet	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Recognized the sound in reading the consonant letters and vowel letters of the alphabet
WRITING ACTIVITY	To conduct the alphabet writing exercises of the Agta	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Conducted the alphabet writing exercises for the Agta
	To assist the Agta in writing the consonants and vowels	IP Teachers Implementer	Assisted the Agta in writing the consonants and vowels
	To assist the Agta in writing their names	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Assisted the Agta in writing their names
COUNTING ACTIVITY	To conduct counting numbers from 1 to 100	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Conducted the counting numbers from 1 to 100
	To assist the Agta in counting denominations of money, both coins and bill	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Assisted the Agta in counting denominations of money, both coins and bill

**Table 2: Literacy Program for the In-School-Agta**

Key Result Areas (Kras)	Objective	Persons Responsible	Expected Output
READING AND WRITING	To make every Agta a reader and a write	School Head IP Teachers	Every Agta a reader and a writer

		Implementers	
	To conduct reading exercises among the Agta;	Proponent IP Teachers Implementers	Conducted reading exercises
	To diagnose the reading performance of the Agta;	Proponent IP Teachers Implementers	Diagnosed the Agta reading performance
	To measure the reading performance of the Agta in both English and Filipino languages in oral reading, silent reading and listening comprehension.	Proponent IP Teachers Implementers	Measured the reading performance of the Agta in both English and Filipino languages in oral reading, silent reading and listening comprehension.
READING COMPREHENSION	To determine the learner's independent, instructional and frustration levels	Proponent IP Teachers Implementers	Determined the learner's independent, instructional and frustration levels
	To classify the Agta as syllable reader, word reader, phrase reader or a sentence reader	School Head IP Teachers Master Teacher Implementers	Classified the Agta according to type of reader
COUNTING NUMBERS	To assess the counting ability of the Agta in reading numbers from 1 to 1,000.	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Assessed the counting ability of the Agta
	To recognize and read numbers and the amount of money	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Recognized and read numbers and the amount of money
	To draw and write shapes and figures	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Drew and wrote shapes and figures
	To identify shapes in the given objects	Proponent IP Teachers Implementer	Identified shapes in the given objects
CRITICAL THINKING	To hone the critical thinking skills of the Agta	School Head IP Teachers Master Teacher	Honed the critical thinking skills of the Agta
	To exercise the imaginative skills of the Agta on the object they see around them	School Head IP Teachers Master Teacher	Exercised the imaginative skills of the Agta on the object they see around them
	To illustrate the meaning of 5 W's	School Head IP Teachers Master Teacher	Illustrated the meaning of 5 W's
	To discuss the meaning of thinking and the implication of the word/words uttered	School Head IP Teachers Master Teacher	Discussed the meaning of thinking and the implication of the word/words uttered

	To discuss how the way of thinking is connected to life	School Head IP Teachers Master Teacher	Discussed how the way of thinking is connected to life
--	---	--	--

## CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, the Agta adopted their name from prominent people; the Agta dialect is Upos; they live in a simple and temporary shelter; the male Agta served as the family's head and provider, while the female Agta assisted in child rearing and housekeeping. The Agta prefers to eat foods found in their surroundings. Bonding with their fellow Agta and chewing betel nuts, momma, or nganga are among the Agta's leisure activities. Agta have a rich cultural heritage in terms of the life cycle, including conception, childbirth, child rearing, courtship, marriage, death, and burial. The majority of Agta are illiterate. They demonstrated a positive and extremely favorable attitude toward literacy education. Agta have problems and aspirations, particularly regarding their children's education, and stakeholders and the Local Government Unit are supportive of Agta indigenous people's community education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawn from the conclusions of the study, it can be recommended that literacy classes should be sustained to address the Agta problem on illiteracy, thereby, enhancing the Agta literacy skills; The government though the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples or NCIP should fast track the titling process of the ancestral domain of the Agta and award the same to the Agta, for them to minimize the practice of migration from one place to the other especially when there are resources, which is the very reason of Agta children dropping out from their classes. The government should address the problem of the Agta on their minimum basic needs hence, the Isabela State University and other agencies should conduct educational and livelihood projects to alleviate the Agta from severe poverty. Furthermore, the Local Government Unit through the DSWD and DepEd should address the needs of the Agta particularly on health, education, and social welfare needs or services. Scholarship grants and increased educational assistance be allocated and provided for the Agta children by the government. More Agta parents should become more concerned on the education of their children by enrolling them from basic education to tertiary education and avail the free education to alleviate them from poverty and similar studies should be conducted along this line to explore and include other researchable areas related to the functional literacy of the Agta.

## REFERENCES

1. Barrows, D.P. (1910). The Negrito and allied types in the Philippines. *American Anthropologist* 12:3 (1910): 358-376. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1910.12.3.02a00020>
2. Bennagen, P. (1977). Pagbabago at pag-unlad ng mga Agta sa Palanan, Isabela. *Diwa Dyornal sa Sikolohiya, Agham at Lipunang Pilipino* 6: 1-4.
3. Canay, P. C. (2016). Habermasian Discourse on Bugkalots' Customary Laws on Property and Inheritance. *The CSU Research Journal*.
4. Canay, P. C. (2016). Bugkalots' Communicative Action on Property and Inheritance: A Habermasian Discourse. *JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 23(1). Retrieved from <http://ejournals.ph/form/cite.php?id=12453>
5. De Capia, G. V. (2016). The social life of the Aggays of Tanglagan, Gattaran: Its Implication to Education. *The CSU Research Journal*.
6. Moralista, R. and Delariarte, G. (2017). The Educated Citizen: Cultural and Gender Capital in the Schooling of Aetas' Children in the Municipality of Janiway. Retrieved from <http://apjeas.apjmr.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/APJEAS-2014-1-002.pdf>
7. Magana, D. (2003). The Agta foragers in the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park: ancestral domains in theory and practice. 4th regional conference on environment and development. [https://www.academia.edu/3181262/Material\\_Flow\\_Accounting\\_Of\\_Upland\\_Villages\\_In\\_The](https://www.academia.edu/3181262/Material_Flow_Accounting_Of_Upland_Villages_In_The)
8. Ocampo, R. O. & Ocampo, R. . (2014). The Economic Life of the Negritos of Luna, Apayao. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(1). Retrieved from <http://ejournals.ph/form/cite.php?id=5734>
9. Padilla Jr., S. G.. (2000). Mula sa Viewfinder: Ang Mga Agta ng Silangang Sierra Madre. *The Journal of History*, 46(1 - 4). Retrieved from <http://ejournals.ph/form/cite.php?id=5165>
10. Ploeg, J., Bernardo, E. C., & Masipiqueña, A. B. (2003). *The Sierra Madre Mountain Range: Global Relevance, Local Realities*. Tuguegarao City: Golden Press. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13052>
11. Persoon, G. ,Masipiqueña, A.B. ,Ploeg J, & Masipiqueña, M.D. & van Weerd, Merlijn. (2009). *Crossing Boundaries: celebrating 20 years of environmental research in Cagayan Valley and Sierra Madre*. 228.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28650888\\_Crossing\\_Boundaries\\_celebrating\\_20\\_years\\_of\\_environmental\\_research\\_in\\_Cagayan\\_Valley\\_and\\_Sierra\\_Madre](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28650888_Crossing_Boundaries_celebrating_20_years_of_environmental_research_in_Cagayan_Valley_and_Sierra_Madre)

12. Tamayao, A. (2016). Linguistic capital in Filipino ethnic intermarriage and identity: A Bourdieuan's Analysis. *The CSU Research Journal*.