

# TV UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

## UN in ACTION

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### ANCESTRAL WATERS: PHILIPPINE INDIGENOUS GROUP ASSERTS RIGHT TO SEA AND LAKES

#### VIDEO

SUNSET / BOATS / SEASCAPE

SUNSET OVER SEASCAPE

TRAVELING BOATS

KUDOL ON MOTOR BOAT /  
ISLAND SHOT FROM BOAT

TAGBANUA PEOPLE WALKING  
THROUGH JUNGLE /  
GROUP OF TAGBANUA SEATED IN  
CIRCLE

MORE SHOTS TAGBANUA  
KUDOL WADING ON RAFT

#### AUDIO

#### NARRATION

There are places in the world where the seas are more than a source of sustenance for people, and more than just a mirror of the sky. (9')

They're highways, offering passage to worlds beyond. (4')

Among the 98 islands of the Calamian group in the Philippines, one of the largest is Coron, a natural fortress of sheer limestone cliffs. (10)

It's here that some 2,000 indigenous people known as the Tagbanua of Coron have taken a stand to defend their heritage and their natural environment. (10')

If they succeed they may show they way to the many indigenous people around the

world's coastal areas, who are struggling to survive. (8')

KUDOL ON CAMERA

RODOLFO KUDOL AGUILAR: (Tagalog) **M**  
*"What's most important here are the waters because that was our ancestors' main source of livelihood." (7')*

KUDOL ON HIS BOAT

NARRATION

Rodolfo Aguilar, also known as "Kudol", is the Chairman of the Tagbanua people of this island. For years, he's been arguing that the waters surrounding Corón island, and those of the eleven lakes it contains, are an integral part of the Tagbanua's ancestral territory.(17)

LAKE

KUDOL STANDING IN FRONT OF  
CAVE / DRIVING HIS BOAT

RODOLFO KUDOL AGUILAR: (Tagalog) **M**  
*"This is our heritage. That's why we've asked the government to recognize our title to the waters as well as the land,, so generations to come can live here, just like our ancestors.(17')*

VICTORIA ON CAMERA

VICTORIA TAULI-CORPUZ: (English) **F**  
*"When we think of ancestral domain usually we think of it in terms of land or forests. And in this case, it's waters." (9')*

VICTORIA IN CAR

NARRATION

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz is the head of the United Nations' advisory body on indigenous issues. She says that for the people of

GETTING OUT OF CAR

Corón island, defining their ancestral waters became a crucial challenge. (13')

VICTORIA ON CAMERA

VICTORIA TAULI-CORPUZ: (English) **F**  
*"That is really the area that they have been dependent on their livelihoods from and also that really identifies them as a people." (9')*

KUDOL ON HIS BOAT

NARRATION  
Building a legal basis for this claim wasn't easy, says the leader of a prominent land-rights group in the Philippines, David de Vera. (8')

DE VERA TO CAMERA

DAVID DE VERA: (English) **M**  
*"Suddenly here you have a whole community agitated and telling you ancestral domain isn't complete, their lives weren't complete without the ocean. This whole idea was so new to us, it was so radical in fact, that we hesitated to work with them initially" (16')*

KUDOL ON HIS RAFT WADING HIS RAFT

NARRATION  
But De Vera realized that the Tagbanua of Corón might not survive as a people unless he took action to help them. (7)

MAP BEING PULLED FROM MACHINE

And so the process of translating the indigenous sense of place into something concrete – a map – began. (8')

DE VERA ON CAMERA	<p><u>DAVID DE VERA:</u> (English) <b>M</b> <i>"[Laughs] We asked how does one measure the ocean? Where do you put sticks? So they said, just follow us". (7')</i></p>
KUDOL ON HIS MOTOR BOAT UNDERWATER SHOTS	<p><u>NARRATION:</u> In following Aguilar, de Vera discovered that the Tagbanua's stories about the sacred powers of giant mythical sea creatures are still alive among the native people. (11')</p>
DE VERA ON CAMERA	<p><u>DAVID DE VERA:</u> (English) <b>M</b> <i>We looked for areas where they believed that a giant four-tentacled female octopus stayed. // . It was so difficult to start with but that was how they defined the corners of the ocean."</i></p>
UNDERWATER SHOTS	<p>(7')</p>
UNDERWATER SHOTS	<p><u>NARRATION</u> From stories about 'sacred places' --- places like fish sanctuaries, often linked with coral formations known to them as the 'thrones of the giant octopus' -- a map emerged that was eventually accepted as representing the Tagbanua's ancestral domain...(16.5')</p>
MAP	
GROUP OF TAGBANUA SINGING	<p>They had won their case. (2')</p> <p>And by winning, they opened the doors for other indigenous people around the world, says Tauli-Corpuz. (6')</p>

VICTORIA ON CAMERA	<p><u>VICTORIA TAULI-CORPUZ:</u> (English) <b>F</b> <i>“It’s a success story. Indigenous peoples’ who are always seen as the most marginalized are now able to assert and able to get their rights recognized by the government. (10’)</i></p>
SEASCAPE SCENERY	<p><u>NARRATION</u> For the people of Coron island, this victory finds an echo in the stories about the islands’ cliffs, where the spirit of ancient heroes -- defenders of the Tagbanua against Spanish and Arab invaders -- is said to live on. (10’)</p>
TAGBANUA CLIMBING UP CLIFFS	
TAGBANUA SERVING FOOD	<p>But Despite all this, it’s a meager living the Tagbanua eek out on this island (5’)</p>
KUDOL FEEDING HIS CHILDREN IN CANDLELIGHT	<p>Their chairman, Aguilar, has a difficult time supporting his family of eleven children. Since his wife died two years ago, he’s been forced to take up a job far away, and can rarely come back to the island. (12’)</p>
CLEAR BLUE WATER	<p>While recognition of their waters has earned them an unprecedented legal victory, it has not managed to keep illegal fishermen – like this man, killed by a blast of his own dynamite -- out of their waters. (15’)</p>
PHOTO OF MAN BLOWN UP	
BOATS ON THE WATER	<p>And bigger challenges may still lie ahead, considering the impact of climate change (6’)</p>

VICTORIA ON CAMERA

VICTORIA TAULI-CORPUZ: (English) **F**  
*"In the Philippines, because temperatures are rising // the warming of the waters is causing loss of marine life (9')*

KUDOL WALKING HIS BOAT IN DIRTY WATER

NARRATION

How these changes will affect the native people of Corón island is not yet clear. (5')

TAGBANUA / MORE BOATS

But the Tagbanua of Corón have been able to prevail against overwhelming odds in the past. (6')

BEAUTIFUL WATER SCENES

They have been empowered by their legal status as stewards of their own land and waters.(6')

And they still inhabit one of the best-preserved natural oases in the region. (6')

MORE CRYSTAL CLEAR WATER SHOTS / WOMAN WEAVING BASKET

DAVID DE VERA: (English) **M**

*"It just shows that there should never be a separation between concepts of conservation and indigenous rights and culture. When you respect the rights of people then the environment is taken care of." (13')*

SUNSET PAN OVER ISLANDS

NARRATION

KUDOL WALKING THROUGH THE WATER

Taking care of the environment, and of their identity. That's how the Tagbanua have managed to hang on, and become a model

MORE KUDOL WALKING THROUGH

for others: by just being true to

THE WATER

themselves.(12')

UN LOGO

This report was prepared by Michele  
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