

we all need water



© 1997 Paul Ohlrogge

Philippines Rice Terraces

The rice terraces of the Philippine Cordillera were first built 2,000 years ago by the Ifugao people, a tribal minority, who still farm and maintain them today. If placed end to end, the terraces would extend for 12,000 miles. Rice is a thirsty crop, so gravity moves water from uphill sources by intricate irrigation systems, from higher to lower terraces. All this is an astounding work of elegant indigenous engineering. It is spectacular and when the terraces are newly planted the green is really beautiful.

The Ifugao live in house-clusters, *sitios*, scattered among their terraces. Farming them is the center of Ifugao life and religion, and a beautiful terrace is a religious act. The Ifugao worship Rice Gods. A series of ceremonies take place that focus on the rice terraces and work to be done in the fields. I lived in a *sitio* with only Hamouen Tuguinay as neighbor, seen here. She is carrying rice seedlings to be transplanted in the terraces. The process to plant takes months. One day I asked her where she'd been all day. She said she'd been in her fields, watching the rice grow. The harvest is the happiest time of the year. Eating newly harvested rice is a treat unlike any other! --Paul Ohlrogge, *Peace Corps/Philippines, 1981-84*

Philippines (Republic of the Philippines)

Capital Manila

Population 97,976,603 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 71.09 years

Literacy 92.6% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Filipino (official), English (official), Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano

Religions Roman Catholic 80.9%, Muslim 5%, other Christian 11.6%

Government republic

Source: *The World Factbook, 2009*

Philippines



This photo appears on the **we all need water** International Poster, produced by the RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009. For more information and to order a complete set of full-size posters, see <http://www.rpcvmadison.org/>