

A sad tale of landgrabbing

Rose Jean Pasagde



For Juanito Cantos, the land bequeathed to him by his parents is important because it is a means of livelihood. However, little did he know that the land no longer belongs to his family.

Juanito's family previously owned land in the Quarry Relocation Site, which was later grabbed by a wealthy outsider. "They had the land surveyed without our permission and had it titled before we could protest," Juanito narrates.

According to Juanito, his family has been tilling the land for 18 years. They were informed that the land needed to be surveyed for a title to be issued to them, but they did not have the money to pay for it.

Despite their difficult situation, Juanito's family filed a case in court, but the new owner already transferred the lands under the name of his children, and it would be quite an uphill battle.

Even with only a photocopy of the deed of transfer, Juanito is confident that they will win the case in court, even if they are financially hard-up to even hire a lawyer.

The entry of the project "Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines," which helps farmers in their area with land tenure issues, gives Juanito and other families confronting the same situation renewed hope that the land which has been theirs for generations will be returned to them.

The project, through the enumeration process, was able to document details and other relevant information related to households that are actual occupants or tillers of land, including Juanito's farmland in conflict. Moreover, the Certificate of Customary Land Occupancy (CCLO) recorded the house lot and family details of Juanito only. ■