



Cultivating Experiential Learning of Rural Youth:

A Compilation of Field Stories from Local Enumerators in Bukidnon, Philippines





The **Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)** is a regional coalition of national and regional CSOs in Asia actively engaged in promoting food sovereignty, land rights and agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance, and rural development.

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Cultivating Experiential Learning of Rural Youth:

**A Compilation of Field Stories from Local
Enumerators in Bukidnon, Philippines**

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Foreword

The participation of the rural youth as enumerators in the project “*Enhancing Land Tenure Security of Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines*” has not only facilitated the attainment of its objectives but formed land advocates towards a more inclusive development.

Their engagement has broadened their perspective on the importance of land in satisfying their basic needs and in living their lives, the social injustice on how their ancestors lost control over their resources and enhanced their motivation to work for a better future.

This is of utmost importance today as globalization and commercialization of agriculture threaten the survival of indigenous peoples. And yet, their indigenous knowledge system and practices (IKSPs) have been a bedrock for inclusive development and their relationship with the forests a saving grace for the survival of humanity. And who will take on this advocacy in this fast-changing world? There is no better group than the rural youth themselves (IPs and migrants) who own this culture and yet can connect with the ways of the modern world.

The appreciation that land is an essential aspect of their lives is voiced by many of these enumerators. They now realize that it supplies them with their basic needs – food, shelter, livelihoods – and that

their survival depends on these resources. They acknowledge that it is not a commodity that they can let go, a realization highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic when hunger became a daily household reality.

The interviews with community members have dawned on them that they once owned vast tracts of land but were lost through selling, illegal maneuvering, or land grabbing. They felt the social injustice done to their elders and yet there is nothing much they can do about it. Whatever land is left, are prone to intrusions, squatting (sometimes with landowner's consent at the start), boundary disputes, overlapping claims and conflicts.

The project, however, provided them with a better understanding of the current challenges and taught them new land tools and techniques in protecting whatever is left of these resources. They have been trained to delineate land properties, conduct mapping and generate certificates of land occupancy. They are appreciative of the new technologies that can facilitate these intents with the hope that the incoming generations will inherit a better future.

With all these learnings and encouragements, these young leaders can serve as guardians of the community in protecting their lands and ancestral domain. With the support from partners through formation, organization and communication, these communities hopefully will prosper as one.

As part of this project, the sharing of the enumerators' experience through this publication, *Cultivating Experiential Learning of Rural Youth: A Compilation of Field Stories from Local Enumerators in Bukidnon, Philippines* is a joint collaboration of the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) and the Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF).

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Turning enumerators into storytellers: The SALaR experience

Gerard Jerome C. Dumlao



The Secure Access to Land and Resources (SALaR) project engaged the active participation of the youth in its activities, most notably as data-gatherers on land information using participatory enumeration and the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM).

While the project offered members of the partner communities the opportunity to become enumerators, regardless of gender and age, most of those who answered the call belong to the 15 to 24 age group. In most circumstances,

community members applied for the position. Others were willfully engaged by their respective *sitio* or community leaders and IP organizations through their Elders to represent the groups.

Most of the local youth enumerators were either in-between jobs, on break from school, or just out for the experience. Some are young mothers who saw the opportunity to be able to help their families economically.

The project primarily counted on literate individuals. Regardless of education, background, or experience, one can be an enumerator inasmuch as s/he is driven, willing to be trained, and is

inclined to share her/his determination and commitment.

As part of the initiative, the local enumerators completed a three-day training-workshop on basic mapping and GIS survey; encoding and data analysis; STDM and handheld devices; and narrative writing prior to field deployment. Coaching and mentoring played an integral part throughout the duration of the project. As such,

What does it take to be an enumerator?

An enumerator's typical workday is not always an easy victory – every workday is different. Some days are ordinary, while other days would take them to toil harder.

“Wala’y tao ang mga balay unya kapoy pa gyud kaayo kay init. Naa pu’y mga panahon nga galisod mi og enumerate ug survey kay sayo pa kaayo, ga-ulan na.” (We would walk in scorching hot weather only to find empty houses. Sometimes, heavy rain falls early in the morning that makes it more difficult for us to conduct surveys.) - Ann-Ann Tandejon, 18 years old

An enumerator would require patience to deal with cultural differences; perseverance to walk for long periods of time on steep slopes and vast land areas; flexibility to stay over distant communities for several days; and commitment to the team so as to embrace collaboration especially with the shared vision in achieving a land tenure secured community.

“Mas naingganyo sa pagpadayon isip usa ka enumerator kay nakita nako og unsa ka importante ang proyekto sa mga tao, labi na sa mga farmers ug sa mga kabatan-onan. Base sa mga training nga akong naapilan ug mga katigulangan nga akong naka-istorya, nakita nako ug unsa jud ka importante ang papel sa proyekto nga akong giapilan para sa kaseguruhan sa mga luna.” (I became more engaged as an enumerator realizing how important the project is for the people, especially for the farmers and the youth. With the training courses provided, and for having been able to converse with the elders, I learned about the indispensable role we play in attaining a secured land tenure.) – Jerlyn Pedieras, 18 years old

“Isip usa ka enumerator, dako akong pasalamat niining proyekto tungod kay gihatagan ug bili ang mga kabatan-onan sa nagkain-lain nga sityo nga mo apil niining kalihukan ilabi na alang kini sa kaayuhan sa mga katawhan kung diin adunay nagkalain-laing problema diha sa ilang yutang gikuptan. Matod pa, aduna’y nahitabong gubot ug wala pagtingganay tungod sa yuta. Tungod niini, ako mapasagarbuhon nga isip usa ka batan-on, nakatabang ko kanila.” (I am filled with gratitude for this project, especially for providing such opportunity for the youth who come from different *sitios* or villages to take part in this initiative, aiming to address various land tenure issues and challenges. There have had been conflicting claims over land and being able to contribute in resolving such adversities gives me a strong sense of fulfillment.) – Fatima Redido, 26 years old

the project team established weekly monitoring and field evaluation to provide guidance to the enumerators as well as to address emerging problems accordingly.

On the average, each enumerator was able to cover 50 households in a week depending on the residents' availability, number of lots owned per household, land slopes and distances, and weather condition. In such short period of time, the enumerators were remarkably able to collectively enumerate a total of 1,572 households.

The idea for engaging the youth to write about the project using a “feature story” or anecdotal point of view actually started during the first phase. During the interviews for the publication *“Stories of Hope from Mt. Kalatungan: The Manobo and Talaandig experience in defending and conserving their ancestral lands,”* the interviewers noted that the youth of the communities had a lot of stories to tell — not only about their experiences in the field, but also their realizations and insights into their community's tenurial situation.

During the course of the enumeration, the young people most notably became more aware of land issues, in particular tenure security, ownership concerns, competing land claims, land use, and even conflicting laws and policies. They began to realize that what they thought was just a consequence of history

“... the youth of the communities had a lot of stories to tell — not only about their experiences in the field, but also their realizations and insights into their community's tenurial situation.”

was in fact brought about by various injustices levied upon their community throughout the years.

Thus, ANGOC and XSF decided that the youth will be the ones who will share their stories in the publication of case studies for the second phase of the project.

A virtual training on spotting the story and basic writing skills was conducted for the youth enumerators. After which, they were let loose and required to submit one story each. Fifteen enumerators submitted their work, which were fine-tuned by the designated editor, ANGOC, and XSF.

The stories in this book may be simply written, but are compelling in their rawness and honesty. It is hoped that this work will inspire more rural and indigenous youth to find their stories, because only in actively looking for stories in everyday occurrences can enlightened future thinkers be produced. And enlightenment is one of the tools against poverty. ■

Inheritance disputes

Jessibelle Alsola



Early planning can address issues like bequeathing property after parents die. It is important to have a will and testament that specifies which sibling receives what property. Misunderstanding over inheritance can cause bad blood within the family, which can persist for a long time.

Problems may be minimized through education about family life – explaining that disputes between relatives are at times unavoidable and teaching people how to communicate about sensitive

issues and how to see things from another person's point of view.

Not all family relationships are good. In my respondent's case, he inherited a

titled area that has to be divided equally by two. An heir can buy out his sibling's portion of the property and thus remove him from any claim to the land. But in this scenario one heir wants to sell his share, but not to his brother.

Joseph and Rolando Batausa are brothers. Their father, Basilio Batausa, bequeathed to them one titled property. In the letter of instruction which accompanies Basilio's will, it was specified that the land be divided into two parts.

Unfortunately, Joseph wanted to sell his share to Danilo Sumalo without consulting his brother. Rolando felt insulted because the property has not yet been divided and his brother already wanted to sell his share. Rolando also feels that Joseph's actions belittles the effort of their father and insults his memory.

Joseph wants to sell his portion for personal reasons, saying that "no one can stop me from doing what I want with my share because it is already mine."

On the other hand, Rolando wants to preserve their parent's legacy and in turn, bequeath it to the next generation. Rolando opposes Joseph's decision to sell the land to other people. He says that if his brother wants to sell his portion, then he would happily buy it.

The dispute was eventually elevated to the Department of Agrarian Reform

(DAR).¹ On 21 November 2020, the DAR handed out its decision. It set the price of Joseph's portion at 600,000 pesos and gave his brother the first option to buy it in cash. If Rolando cannot buy the land, then it can be offered to other people. They both agreed with the decision.

The best solution for inheritance disputes is preventing them altogether. Frequent communication within the family is key. Parents usually know whether their children are likely to fight over their inheritance and should take action to prevent conflicts after their death. Parents should review their inheritance plans and their accompanying instructions from time to time. Feelings among siblings and circumstances can change, and plans should therefore be flexible.

Most importantly, parents should teach their children to value the legacy of their ancestors and utilize it to the highest extent of its worth, because they, in turn, owe it to future generations. ■

¹ The dispute was raised to DAR prior to the implementation of the "Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines." The respondents did not disclose whether the land in question has been covered by the agrarian reform program, which could explain why the DAR was instrumental in the resolution of the conflict.

When illegal settlers sell land to the real landowners

Marife Ayuda



Every person, rich or poor, has the right to own land. More often than not, land is vital to survival. One cannot plant nor live on air. That is why it is important that children cherish the lands they inherited from their parents.

But sometimes, land is grabbed from the rightful owners. Either through neglect or misdirected kindness, those that the rightful owners allowed to temporarily use their land sometimes have the gall to claim the land as their

own. Sometimes, those provided with favors eventually end up owning the land.

It all boils down to proper documentation. If the rightful heirs

possess the documents proving that they indeed own the land, then they can contest the landgrab by whatever legal means necessary.

Such is the case of David Balao, one of the respondents to the survey conducted as part of the project “Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines.”

According to David, the case happened in their former home in Tikalaan, Talakag, Bukidnon. For years, he and his family lived and worked on land he inherited from his father. Out of the goodness of his heart, he allowed some relatives to live and farm on his land.

Sometime later, David heard talk that his relatives were claiming that the land actually belonged to their father. David ignored such talk because he knew that the land was his father’s and is now rightfully his.

Two months later, his relative’s grumbling was too much for David to bear. They were insistent that they owned the land. The informal settlers even threatened to take the land from David because they really believed it was theirs. They even enlisted the help of the village authorities in order to come to an agreement. David refused. The irate relative vowed to hold on to the property at all costs. The situation was rapidly escalating.

To avert violence, David decided to just leave the land he called home for many years. That was why he and his family came to settle in *Barangay* Nabaliwa. To find work and hopefully get a fresh start. The situation was now reversed as a kind family gave David and his family permission to use their land for his house and farm.

The respondent expressed that despite not being able to reclaim his land, still in some way, he has earned a sense of fulfillment. Land disputes as what he had encountered will hopefully no longer be experienced by others.

David’s story is not unique. Squatting is a real problem on indigenous peoples’ land. In most situations, people assume that since the owner has more land than he can use or develop, and that since they are the ones that make it productive, then they de facto own the land. Many situations are resolved through dialogue brokered by the Indigenous Peoples’ Organization or by the local government unit. However, some go to the courts, which can be a tedious and expensive process.

As for David, even if he left his land, he did it to avert bloodshed. He is still confident that he can get his land back when the situation inevitably cools down. After all, he says he has the documents to prove it. ■

Land conflict in the family

Vincent Baldelovar



From the ancient myths, we know that in the beginning, people lived happily together in simple harmony. However, this golden age of peaceful coexistence sadly did not last. As time passed, people divided the land among them, and rendered it into private property, which they continue to fight over with another to this day.

In one of my encounters as a local enumerator in *Barangay* Nabaliwa, I witnessed that even though people belong to the same bloodline, they still argue and fight over pieces of land.

The elder sibling, who is my respondent, has a conflict with his siblings due to overlapping and false claims. The younger siblings claim that the boundaries of their elder siblings overlap with theirs. According to my respondent “That is not true. They are the ones who trespassed even when our parents were still alive. We divided the eight-hectare lot into two hectares for each sibling.”

The elder sibling has claims of more or less two hectares over their inherited eight hectares. However, he did not till his share because he works in Cagayan de Oro City. When he eventually returned home and decided to engage in farming, a feud with his siblings over land ensued.

He wanted to hire a land surveyor way back in 2005 to at least know if his share is really two hectares, but he hesitated because his younger siblings might disagree. For many years, their relationship changed. He wants to assert what is right, but he does not want to end up being the bad guy.

In 2020, a solution was offered with the help of our team of local enumerators from Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF). As part of the project “Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines,” together with my fellow enumerators, we surveyed their land using the techniques that



we learned. Aided by technology, a more accurate reading of the size of the area was generated. We have recorded pertinent information through enumeration process, validated the data we gathered with support from the family members and their respective neighbors. Eventually, the conflict was resolved given the processes we went through.

Thus, the siblings are thankful for XSF and the local enumerators as their relationships improved.

Land conflicts are indeed a widespread phenomenon, and can occur at any time or place. Greed and fear makes things worse. But the important thing we should remember is that disputes over land or any other property should not be allowed to damage relationships.

In the end, we cannot bring our property to the next life. ■

Defending land rights from a mother's perspective

Ditchie Batausa



A boundary dispute arises between owners or actual occupants of neighboring properties. Such disputes are often very difficult to deal with as it involves the contending parties' homes and farms, both very dear to the parties, making resolution seem impossible.

A boundary is typically determined by reviewing documents such as the title or deed to the properties, as well as old photographs and witness statements. Without all the evidence, both parties may not come to an agreement.

It is often believed that the true owner has complete documents, while the poseur only has an agreement handwritten on a piece of paper (*kasulatan*).

Ownership of land changes as a time goes by. While ancestral lands of the indigenous peoples (IPs) are owned by the tribe, the Americans instituted land titles as proof of peoples' ownership over land in the 1940s. These land titles covered IP lands. Therefore, land titles as an instrument of ownership over IP lands in Mindanao was a fairly recent instrument.

Land "ownership" by way of a title can be traced to the parents of today's IP generation around Mt. Kalatungan. Their parents' rights are contained in the original title of ownership over a piece of land. This document traces the origin of the property – a link to what is now called the ancestral lot.

As time goes by and ownership changes hands from parents to their children through various transactions, such as gift deeds, inheritance, and so forth, transfer documents become requisite.

Parents will do everything to protect the lands that they worked hard for, in order

to properly bequeath said properties to their children. In agricultural societies, land is the most important thing that parents have, and it should be the children who will take charge of the land so that the next generation or the grandchildren will have land of their own.

In *Purok 1*, Bacusanon, the enumerators witnessed how a mother staunchly fought for her right to land. She decried how one of her children gave away his land to a neighbor just to keep the peace. The conflict began when the neighbor claimed the land. With the neighbor being influential and quite feared in the community, the rightful owners did not contest.

But the mother was not easily swayed. She protested the landgrab and produced all the pertinent documents to prove their family's ownership over the land.

The neighbor, true to his nature, used every trick in the book to dispute the mother's claim. He said that under the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration, all land in the area was public land, virtually dismissing the validity of the documents in the mother's possession.

Even during the survey conducted under the "Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines" project, the "new" owner was very vocal about his ownership.



Boundaries also are important for maintaining harmonious relationships between neighbors. Without clear boundaries, we may feel resentful or feel like we are taken advantage of.

Clear boundaries allow us to remain connected to our neighbors in a good way. Honoring boundaries between neighbors shows mutual respect. ■

The case is now under arbitration and, while the lawyers said that the “new” owner does not have the valid documents to prove ownership, he still claims that the land is public land and it is his to own because he can make it productive and is part of his property to begin with. Despite the ongoing dispute, the mother expressed that she still, in some way, was able to regain her sense of ownership of the land. What is important is that boundaries of both parties had been clearly identified and depicted on the certificates issued under the project.

Boundaries, that may be depicted by markers, identify the edge of your borders with your neighbor’s and marks the end or limit of both your lands. Without established boundaries, conflicts may arise between neighbors, and this may even lead to violence.

Will we appreciate the importance of land when it is no longer ours?

Relvin Roy Dumpasan



Indigenous peoples (IPs) believe land tenure security to be an inherent right. But in today's world where proof of ownership (like land titles, tax declaration certificates) is the rule, a number of IPs concede that any piece of paper that proves their right to their ancestral lands is important.

Land is important to IPs because it is their source of sustenance and livelihood, and because it anchors their culture and traditions.

Majority of upland dwellers in the province of Bukidnon are IPs. History reveals that they have been easily disenfranchised over their lands, oftentimes out of pity for others whom

they deem need the land more than they do. This attitude is grounded on their indigenous, knowledge, system and practices (IKSP).

During the government's resettlement campaign of the 1950s, migrants from Luzon and the Visayas flocked to Mindanao where it was widely believed that land is plentiful. While there were large swathes of land seemingly waiting for the taking, these were ancestral lands of IPs – lands that have belonged to the tribe generations long before colonizers came.

However, since recognition of IP ownership over their ancestral lands was not a concept back then, the migrants simply occupied whatever “idle” land they found. The IPs, seeing that the newcomers needed land for their homesteads and farms, allowed them to use the land as long as they made them productive.

With the passing of time, the “users” came to regard the land as their own, even going so far as to have them titled. Thus, it came to pass that the IPs lost their land right under their noses.

One of the more documented cases in *Sitio Megbadiang, Barangay Bacusanon, Pangantucan, Bukidnon* is that of a local tribal chieftain, *Datu “Abayan” Isabelo Tandejon*. *Datu Abayan*, 47 years old, is the tribal leader of *Sitio Megbadiang*, the third largest *sitio* of the village.

He is one of the leaders of the *Nagkahiusang Manobong Manununod sa Yutang Kabilin, Inc.* (NAMAMAYUK), one of the partner IP organizations of the project “Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines.”

The Tandejon family was one of those who lent their land to migrants during the resettlement period. According to *Datu Abayan*, his grandfather lent their land to the newcomers because their IKSP decrees that land is owned by the supreme spirit *Magbabaya* and people are only stewards of the land.

Thus, when somebody needs the land to be able to survive, the IPs as responsible stewards should gladly lend the land to them.

Their IKSP also declares that land should not be sold because the right to land inherited from their ancestors will extend to their heirs. However, little did they know that the land was sold by one of *Datu Abayan’s* uncles in 1988 to the migrant family occupying the said land, without permission from the clan or worse, the tribe. The new owner subsequently had the land titled under his name.

Datu Abayan called all concerned for a dialogue, and asked the assistance of the *Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU)*, to settle the dispute. In March 2018, the dispute had been resolved with the support of the BLGU



and Council of Elders. Our IPO Leaders witnessed, supported, and imparted potent advice in the dispute resolution processes.

After much back and forth between the contending parties, and with the intervention of the said project, an agreement was reached: two hectares of the land will revert back to *Datu Abayan's* family, while the buyer retains three hectares.

The project was instrumental in settling disputes over land, mostly involving disagreements over boundaries. Survey

activities utilizing technology such as Global Positioning System (GPS), and respondent interviews established clear and agreed-upon boundaries between landowners.

Also as a result of the mapping activities, Certificates of Customary Land Occupancy were generated and issued to landowners, giving them much-needed proof that the land is theirs. ■

Significance of tenurial security to the indigenous community

Dan Patrick Libog



In the southern part of Bukidnon, particularly in *Barangay* Nabaliwa, Municipality of Pangantucan, hundreds of indigenous peoples and migrant settlers will receive Certificates of Customary Land Occupancy that leads to land conflict resolution, adds security to use and occupancy rights, and cultural land preservation.

“Land is the most important asset to us IPs. Most of us established homes in forest areas and we depend on the natural resources that surround us as these supply our daily needs. Hunting, gathering of forest products and establishment of small gardens are our type of livelihoods. We are interrelated with the land and all things that are found there. We consider our land as sacred as shown by our rituals that are connected to it. To lose our land means to lose everything – our identity, integrity, customs and traditions, rituals, and self-determination. That is why what is more significant to us IPs is the protection, sustainability, control, and responsible use of the natural resources rather than the direct ownership of the land itself. Yet to guarantee access to these resources, land ownership is a must,” stated 71-year old tribal woman-elder *Bae*¹ Saturnina M. Daculay.

Tenurial security is important to IPs to maintain self-governance. The tribal elders see to it that their descendants can till their land independently to ensure that everyone has their own agricultural farm and home lots so that families can build their communities without worrying about securing their landholdings. Tenurial security leads to stabilization of social and good relationships among members of the community.

“When land is secured and if there is peace and unity, preservation of cultural

beliefs and preservation of cultural land is strengthened,” *Bae Daculay* added.

Cultural beliefs and practices such as rituals, community sharing, and even conflict resolutions are tied to land, and encapsulated in the essence of land as viewed by the IPs. Their indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices (IKSPs) will thus continue for generations if there is security over their land.

Nowadays, preservation of ancestral land is even more important to the indigenous peoples because of increasing population. Distribution of lands, even in small sizes, to family members is a challenge. But no matter how small, owning land guarantees a means for growing her or his own food, and selling the excess for income.

“Even though we only have cassava, sweet potato and corn planted in small-sized farms, we are content with it because we can peacefully earn a living. Being a recipient of agricultural assistance from the government agency is less important to us IPs even though we need it,” *Bae Daculay* lamented.

The project “Enhancing Tenurial Security for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines” gave them access to land use and established a conflict resolution mechanism through installation of accurate landmark boundaries and the provision of Certificates of Customary Land Occupancy.

¹ Female tribal leader



Land rights are often a vital element for cultural communities to balance their capabilities and assets and determine their resulting plans to cope with their daily production and food security requirements.

Knowing the respective land boundaries of every household contributes to the mitigation of future conflicts. Through the training courses offered by the project, such as the Landscape Governance, the community learned that belongingness is an important part of a greater landscape.

Land is not just a source of economic production but is also a basis of social relationships and cultural values. It is a source of prestige and often power. Social relationships are important assets in ensuring sustainability of livelihoods of the cultural community.

Land tenure is important in cultural communities in terms of food security, conflict resolution, and poverty alleviation. This initiative introduced plans and strategies to help in building assets and promote self-reliance to cultural communities. The project increased the community's awareness to protect and enhance their natural resource base. ■

Land tenure insecurity due to overlapping land claims

Bryan Narabe



“I am very worried because I can lose my lot any time,” Juan (not his real name), one of the survey respondents shared.

As one of the enumerators in *Barangay Nabaliwa* Mindanao, Philippines,” I had many encounters with issues of tenurial security conflict and one of these caught my attention. Juan and his

siblings have been anxious for a long time because of another family that claims 300 hectares of land, including their 10 hectares.

I gathered data and facts in the neighborhood to prove if that certain family really has a legitimate claim to the 300 hectares. Six out of 10 people I interviewed said that it is true and that the said family acquired the land through informal agreements such as through a “barter” system or other transactions that never underwent legal processes. Furthermore, the land under conflict is inside the forest area. Juan’s family is not the only one that is involved, but seven other clans as well.

However, Republic Act 6657 also known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, states under Section 6 that: “... upon the effectivity of this Act, any sale, disposition, lease, management, contract or transfer of possession of private lands executed by the original land owner in violation of this Act shall be null and void: provided, however, that those executed prior to this Act shall be valid only when registered with register of deeds within a period of three months after the effectivity of this Act. Thereafter all register of deeds shall inform the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) within 30 days of any transaction involving agricultural lands more than five hectares.”

I asked Juan how their family acquired their land. He said that they purchased

it from an indigenous tribe following a formal agreement countersigned by a *Datu*. They paid in cash and in kind. This is the same method used by the other seven clans.

As of now, their lands are covered by a stewardship agreement awarded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), proving that their family are authorized to cultivate the land. But still, they have this uncertain feeling because they already face a court case against the family with a 300-hectare claim.

Juan’s and the other seven families fear losing their domain even though they have this stewardship document because according to them, that certain family has many connections in government and has the means to win in and outside the court.

I sense that Juan and his family have renewed hope of their tenurial security because of the project, giving them recognition of their occupancy and stewardship over the land they are cultivating.

Indeed, this initiative played a vital role in my community of *Barangay Nabaliwa*. I am honored to be part of this project. ■

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. ■

Land use in *Barangay Bacusanon*

Jerlyn Pedieras



Barangay Bacusanon is one of the biggest villages in Pangantucan, Bukidnon, both in terms of land area and population. Based on the 2016 Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), the *barangay* had 1,193 households.

Bacusanon is the northernmost village of Pangantucan, located 21 kilometers from the town center. It bathes in the grandeur of Mt. Kalatungan. It enjoys warm sunshine in the daytime and cool breezes at night. The village

can be reached either through the 174-kilometer national highway traversing the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Malaybalay, and Valencia, or the shorter 61-kilometer route via Talakag towards Dominorog highway.

The village's main source of livelihood is agriculture, with its farms producing bananas, sugar cane, rice, vegetables, as well as raising livestock.

Most of the structures in the village are made of concrete and wood. However, the CBMS data also showed that 423 households (35.5%) live in makeshift housing units.

Health of the residents is being looked after by its Health and Birthing Center, managed by two midwives and assisted by the 28 Barangay Health Workers. They provide the following health services to the *barangay's* 1,193 households: immunization, counseling, first aid, health life, tuberculosis treatment, pre-natal check-ups, and normal birthing.

Councilor Jessie P. Arroyo describes the socio-economic status of the *barangay* as “competitive and caters to the needs of its residents and provides the necessary commodities to the community.”

Everyone can make their land more productive as a source of food and means of livelihood. Even the youth have opportunities in the village as sometimes land is already transferred to them at a young age and it is up to them to make it productive using the latest farming innovations and techniques.

A number of landowners leased their land to the Bukidnon Plantation Service

Cooperative (BPSC), from which they receive monthly rental payments.

A huge chunk of the village's land is also leased to Sumifru Philippines, one of the country's biggest producer of bananas.

Bacusanon villagers are mostly indigenous peoples, belonging to the Manobo tribe, and some parts of the village still closely adhere to the indigenous traditions. In the *sitio* of San Guinto, visitors still need the permission of the tribe's council of elders for tours and such.

For a community in which land is very important, it is not surprising that most inter-village conflicts arise from it. The most common cause of conflict are boundary disputes or encroachment. Some lands have been abandoned or neglected by their owners.

The Barangay Local Council solves these problems mostly through dialogue. A number of cases, unfortunately, cannot be settled through dialogue and reach the judicial courts.

However, *Kagawad* Jessie Arroyo emphasized that land disputes and conflicts have been thoroughly resolved through the support of the Council of Elders as “natives of the land” who are more acquainted with the history of the land as well as the rightful owners of the lots and parcels in the community.

The Council of Elders share a crucial role in the decision-making processes. Especially on instances of overlapping claims in the ancestral domain, our elders are able to communicate more effectively with the IP claimants using their language.

Furthermore, in *Kagawad Arroyo's* words, *“Nakatabang ang proyekto pinaagi pud sa Landscape Governance Training para sa comprehensive land use plan sa among lungsod. Napasabot saamo ang importansya og saktong pag gamit sa mga kayutaan labi na para sa mga umaabot nga panahon. Dapat pud aduna’y pagsinabtanay ug koneksyon ang matag-usa sa kinatibuk-an.”*

(The project, through the Landscape Governance Training contributed relevant knowledge as for the community’s land use plan. We also gained a better understanding and awareness on the importance of the proper use of land resources most especially for the coming years - and that requires collective action).



Government agencies such as the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) provide support to farmers in the community through livelihood programs, animal dispersal, and fish culture. Non-government organizations such as Xavier Science Foundation Inc. (XSF) help the community in land mapping and tenurial concerns. ■

Why landlessness persists in *Barangay Bacusanon*

Marlon Polinda



Many residents of *Barangay Bacusanon* do not own land. As an enumerator for the project “Enhancing Land Tenure Security of Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines,” I became aware of how important land is to the life of indigenous peoples (IPs).

Over two months of going around the *barangay* and asking questions only reinforced this fact. One of the respondents said, “it is hard to work on

someone else’s land because you are limited on what you can do and can plant.”

But how did this come to be?

It depends whom you ask: indigenous peoples or migrants.

For IPs, the overwhelming answer is that their lands were sold by their ancestors to lowlanders. This began during the days when the government resettled people from Luzon and the Visayas to Mindanao.

The settlers needed land and the IPs had an abundance of it. There was little in the way of IP recognition and support in those days and the IPs were only willing to part with their lands whenever they needed cash – a parcel here and there – until they were left with nothing.

It was also around this time that the IPs were relocated to the town centers and “forced” to live with the newcomers, a sort of forced integration.

The logging boom of the 1970s and 1980s in this part of the Kalatungan mountain range also led to the displacement of IPs from their lands, as big logging concessions, with active support from the government, needed more land for their operations.

“It was very hard for us to be told to leave our lands. Land is our life. But we had no choice,” shared one of the respondents.

Indeed, land is a very complicated issue. It is a limited resource valuable

for livelihood, so much so that it leads to misunderstanding and sometimes to violence.

Thus, it is quite understandable that the present-day inhabitants of *Barangay Bacusanon* blame their ancestors for the loss of their lands. However, it should be noted that their ancestors were living in a different time and had different motivations.

Also, recognition of and support to IPs was virtually non-existent then. Nobody advised them that their lands are sacred legacies that should not and could not be sold.

For now, most landless residents work as laborers on other farms, or work in the towns and cities and laborers and professionals, send their children to school, and hope that they can be prosperous enough in the future to be able to buy land which they can own.

For migrants, especially those who came to the village after the resettlement years, landlessness is a function of economics. They simply do not have enough money to buy land.

Far from the prospectors of the resettlement years, these recent migrants came to *Barangay Bacusanon* because they had no lands to farm in their places of origin.

They heard that there were vast tracts of land in Bukidnon that they could

farm, not realizing that said lands were already owned by someone else. Thus, just like the IPs, they became farm laborers and did other work just to be able to eke out a living for their families.

And just like the IPs, they work hard, send their children to school, in the hope that one day, they too will be prosperous enough to be able to buy land.

In hindsight, it is really important to note that land is a valuable asset and should not be sold just because an offer came, or a need arose. This is especially true for IPs because land is a legacy handed down from the beginning of time. For IPs, land is not just a means of production, it is their link to their culture, to their ancestors. It is their reason for being.

The collaborative initiative of the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) and the Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF), through the support from the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), has made considerable strides in making the communities aware of the importance of land, settling disputes, and giving them a means to verify and certify land ownership.

Unfazed by the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic (when all activities ground to a halt), the seeds of hope have been planted, which replaced the long-standing despair of IPs and migrant settlers.

For my part, I am really glad and grateful to be a part of this project because of the knowledge that I learned. As part of the young generation of IPs, it is up to me and my colleagues to ensure that land will retain the importance it deserves. We owe it not only to our ancestors, but to the succeeding generations as well. ■

Indigenous neighborhood's food insecurity

Melvin Pongautan



It was a cold and foggy morning as I passed by our beloved *Barangay* Bacusanon, a one-hour *habal-habal*¹ ride on muddy and bumpy roads going to *Sitio* Mahusay from my home of *Sitio* San Guinto.

¹ *Habal-habal* is a motorcycle with wooden plank at its back so that two to three passengers can sit close to each other.

Located in the western foothills of Mt. Kalatungan in Bukidnon, the *barangay* is part of an indigenous community conserved area (ICCA)² where the two tribes of Bukidnon – the Talaandig and the Manobo – live peacefully.

The two tribes respect each other by showing support in the performance of rituals and in decision-making. They continue to perform their indigenous knowledge system and practices (IKSPs) to show young people how to be proud of their traditions. This is one reason why, despite widespread poverty and harsh living conditions, the ambiance of the community is very relaxing and breathtaking.

Ninety percent of the community's population are indigenous peoples (IPs), while the remainder are migrants who married into the community. Majority of community members are experiencing a lack of livelihood and food – the biggest problem that the community is facing today.

While many families are beneficiaries of the government's *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps), this is not enough to sustain them, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Robert M. Salang, 44, *Sitio Mahusay* Chairman, is teary-eyed as he narrates

the dismal situation of the community. As a leader he struggles with seeing his community suffering from lack of food. Before the pandemic, the said community abounds in food and farm products. Their food supplies can sustain the whole community for many months; they have access to markets where they can deliver their vegetables and root crops. In fact, prior to the pandemic, the demand for their products was so high that they sold out almost immediately.

When the pandemic hit, their feeling of confidence was immediately replaced by fear and shock. Helplessness set in as the local authorities declared a one-month lockdown from March to April 2020 in *Barangay Bacusanon*. They had no choice but to follow the government's health and safety protocols during the pandemic.

They strictly implemented border controls, denying entry of visitors and tourists to the *barangay*. At first, the villagers panicked because they did not know what to do. As a good leader, their Chairman helped them calm down by instituting concrete and doable activities like scheduling a meeting to ensure availability of food that can sustain them during the lockdown period.

When the lockdown ended in April 2020, the country was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), which is no better than the

² Refers to "natural and modified ecosystems containing significant biodiversity values, ecological services and cultural values voluntarily conserved by indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples and local communities, and governed through customary laws or other effective means"

total lockdown as far as the community is concerned. They were allowed to go back to their farms and the forest but they could not sell their root crops and vegetables because the markets were still closed. The food stocks of the villagers were running severely low because they could not buy from the market.



Several buyers were willing to purchase vegetables directly from them, but the presence of checkpoints were a major deterrent. In the end, the villagers were left with no choice but to eat their own produce, lest these spoil and to fend off starvation.

Since they could not go out of the community, the villagers decided to just plant on their farms and forage in the nearby forest. They consoled themselves that at least they were safe from the pandemic and still had food to eat. However, after some time they ran out of fertilizers and seeds.

They were able to get support from the government, in the form of foodstuffs and rice, which they used to supplement the ones they harvested and gathered.

But even before COVID-19, the community has faced threats of hunger, mostly due to landlessness. Almost 90 percent of their land is under a contract-

growing arrangement with Sumifru, Philippines, one of the largest banana producers in the country.

Villagers who had landholdings willingly went into contract-growing arrangements with Sumifru because it was easy money – the company paid a handsome rent, gave incentives, provided all the inputs, and even hired them as laborers.

However, they could not plant anything else and had to buy their food from the market or gather them in the forest. Effectively, the land was no longer theirs for 25 years, which was the usual length of such arrangements.

And those were the lucky ones. Many villagers do not even have land to call their own. These people had work as laborers – doing back-breaking work for a measly pay of 200 pesos a day, or

plant on their neighbor's farms, and of course, scrounge for food in the forests. But how did these indigenous peoples, who supposedly owned these native lands since time immemorial, end up being landless? The simple answer is apparently, they "sold" their lands some time ago.

Datu "Abayan" Isabelo L. Tandejon, 44 years old, and a resident in *Sitio* Megbadiang, Bacusanon, Pangantucan, Bukidnon, is the tribal chieftain of Bacusanon and a sub-leader of their people's organization, Nagkahiusang Manobong Manununod sa Yutang Kabilin, Inc. (NAMAMAYUK).

He is one of those whose family's lands were sold a long time ago. For the longest time, he took it as fact that the land is no longer theirs, although he still felt a pang of regret. Until such time that he began to question the deal.

"One day, it occurred to me that if the lands were sold by my parents, then how come we could not find one single document that proves it? There was not a single document with my father's signature on it showing that they indeed sold the land," *Datu* Abayan explains.

Armed with this realization, *Datu* Abayan talked to other people in the same situation. Lo and behold, not a single document which bears the signatures of their forefathers proves that their lands were sold.

If such a document existed, it was in the form of a "Deed of Donation," under which the land was "donated" for a measly sum of 500 pesos per hectare.

Datu Abayan became intrigued. What really went down during those said purchases? He decided to talk to the families who bought the lands, hoping that they could shed more light on the matter. It turned out that even the buyers do not possess signed documents consummating the sale.

In the end, the families who "purchased" the lands in question agreed to give back half of their lands to the heirs of those who sold it.

Aside from contract-growing and bogus sales, other threats to land in and around the village are the boundary disputes between the municipalities of Pangantucan and Kalilangan, and the Army Reservation Area (ARA) declared on some parts of it since the 1980s.

Henien Lauron, 18 years old, is a resident in *Sitio* Pud-ong. The *sitio* is located at the southern area of Bacusanon which is a contested area between Kalilangan and Pangantucan. It is also within the ARA. Henien has taken over the task of farming from her father.

While she has her own land, she also works on her neighbor's land, for which she is paid in rice and dried fish. Henian's life is difficult to say the least, but she has no choice because she

married early (at age 16) and has children to feed.

Working on other people's land meant that she cannot pay attention to her children's daily needs, as well as their farm. There have been times when neglect has led to losing their crops to pests.

"It is so hard to work on two farms and still pay attention to the needs of our families," Henian shares. "We also need to rest but we will not eat if we just depend on our own farms," she adds.

The COVID-19 pandemic has especially been brutal to people like Henian. The restrictions due to lockdowns meant that they cannot go to their places of work, which means they do not have extra income. There were times that they only eat twice a day to prolong their food stocks. This has been especially hard for the children.

Fortunately for Henian, they live on indigenous land where foraging yields root crops, berries, and other edible plants and where wild game is still available. They just need to know where to look, which is supposedly part of their indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs).



However, Henian admits that their desire to eke out a day-to-day existence has resulted in them forgetting their indigenous ways. With the pandemic, Henian realized that *lumads*³ need not go hungry if they use their IKSPs, if they allow their lands and forests to feed them; and, if they practice traditional food preservation techniques handed down through generations.

While poverty and food insecurity still haunt these IP enclaves, there is hope that going back to their indigenous ways of planting and gathering, food preservation, even land tenure management, will serve them in good stead now and for future generations. ■

³ Cebuano term for indigenous

Land tenure (in)security in *Sitio Quarry*

Fatima Redido



The lack of secure access to land has relevance to socio-economic problems in rural areas, more so on ancestral lands. While generations of indigenous peoples have lived and worked on their native land throughout the years, the growing fear among indigenous peoples that “someday our land will not be ours,” casts a real shadow of vulnerability.

There are some individuals who do not own land, whether IP or migrant settlers, and having a communal or sharing of land is a common practice in rural areas.

For instance, a friend of the landowner farms the land until harvest time, and will give the latter a share commensurate with the agreed sharing scheme in the area. Some would also agree on a different form of sharing by taking the next harvest of the borrower. Few would let the borrowers farm the land for free.

“Land tenure security is really important for the family, and a proper document against land grabbers is essential towards this end,” *Sitio* Quarry leader Jovito Baclaan stresses.

To assess the security of land tenure, the respondents were asked by the following questions:

- How many years are you living in this place? How did you acquire this land?
- Are there any problems/challenges that you have encountered in acquiring this land?
- What is the land area of your property?
- How important are the documents of land in your life?
- What are your dreams/aspirations/recommendations in owning the land?

In *Sitio* Quarry, *Barangay* Bacusanon, Pangantucan, Bukidnon, assessment had shown that half of the land area (seven hectares) of the *sitio* (hamlet) is owned by a single person, Primitivo Corugda, who is an absentee landowner. However, the property was only acquired by Corugda’s family by grabbing it from an IP family – the Salang family – by having the land title processed without the knowledge of the latter.

Over time, two hectares of Corugda’s property has been returned to the community through a deed of sale.

The lack of legal documentation over land ownership is a real cause for concern in the community. During one of the interviews, Mrs. Letecia Biangos, who is a migrant settler, expressed her fears. She bought land from Danilo Polinda, but only a private document was used to cover the terms between them.

Without a public document such as a land title, Biangos fears that the sale will be declared null and void in the future and her children will not benefit from it. Polinda was the first person who bought land from Corugda.

This apprehension is shared by almost all members of the community. Some people are optimistic that the project will help assuage their fears and that through it the local government will intervene.

To realize the hopes of the community in *Sitio Quarry* and ensure land tenure security, they have recommended the following:

- Enumerate landless families and available public land and create a system of land classification to reduce complexities and problems in the area;
- Assess landholdings and give access to land documentation for rural communities and individuals;
- Ensure mapping programs are efficient and affordable and encourage local participation in mapping activities;
- Advocate land reforms in non-conflict and post-conflict geographic areas and provide education to resolve disputes and improve public awareness about land rights, especially those displaced and resettled individuals;
- Formalize and legalize customary community land rights, i.e., the rights to forest land where localities are in current use to verify community-led rights conforming with demarcation of boundaries around ethnic areas;
- Suggest to local government units to amend laws against compulsory land acquisition such as land grabbing and low compensation to both small and big landowners. and offer free and accessible legal assistance to vulnerable individuals; and,

- Strengthen the system for local land administration and local community access to land mapping, dispute, and documentation in order to ensure public awareness, transparency, and accountability.

Through the project “Enhancing Tenurial Security of Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines” implemented by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) and Xavier Science Foundation Inc. (XFS), in partnership with the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), the fears and doubts of the *Sitio Quarry* community have been replaced by hope and assurance.

The initiative has contributed in reducing such vulnerability by accurately pinpointing landholdings and other natural resources vital to the people in its project sites through a stringent process of land enumeration and assessment.

Although the process takes time and effort, the project has maximized the resources available to help the whole community and for the security of land tenure. ■

Land tenure security for the next generation

Romerey Suclatan



Why do indigenous peoples (IPs) need to fight for their rights over ancestral lands? This is an age-old question that besets IPs and has resulted in conflicts over lands that have been handed to them over generations.

Maybe the simple answer is that IPs need to fight for their lands because they owe it to succeeding generations.

Pangantucan, Province of Bukidnon in Mindanao, Philippines have been fighting to reclaim their ancestral land.

For thirty years, farmers and their families from *Sitio* Dagtan, *Barangay* Bacusanon, Municipality of

This story is about a 10-hectare land holding originally belonging to Rufinito Tumopas. The land is adjacent to the

landholding of his neighbor, Juan Atunay. The two farmers planted their crops side by side for many years, with Rufinito even sub-leasing portions of his land to Juan from time-to-time as Juan is more well-to-do and had capital to plant more crops.

In 2012, the landmark which serves as the boundary between the land holdings of Rufinito and Juan mysteriously vanished, giving Juan – who already uses around three hectares of Rufinito’s land – a reason to claim that said portion is within his land as well.

This was exacerbated when Sumifru Corporation, which exports bananas, came to Pangantucan and subleased land in and around Bacusanon. Juan’s landholding, which now includes three hectares of Rufinito’s land, was one of the many farms subleased to the corporation.

This development made Rufinito even more hopeless that he can recover the three hectares taken from him by his erstwhile trusted neighbor.

The issue of encroachment was one of many issues related to land tenurial security confronted by the project “Enhancing Tenurial Security of Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines” implemented by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) and Xavier Science Foundation Inc. (XFS), in partnership

with the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN).

The project implemented a survey of community members to determine their landholdings and definitively ascertain ownership through the issuance of certificates generated based on data obtained from the survey.

Issues like Rufinito’s frequently cropped up in the course of the data-gathering, which led to dialogues between parties facilitated by the project implementers.

While some issues have been resolved through dialogue between parties, others like Rufinito’s took some time.

In October 2020, Romerey Suclatan, the local youth enumerator facilitated a dialogue between the two parties which resulted to significant progress in the resolution of the long-standing dispute.

Clear boundary indicators were put up to properly delineate the two areas from each other.

Rufinito shared that “I was well informed about the grounds of the project, and that is to identify clear land boundaries between households in the community.” “On our part, we would ensure that the owners of the neighboring land parcels are also informed during the mapping and surveying activities – which is very crucial to prevent contentions,” he adds.



The project was really able to help especially in addressing trespassing incidents – it brought on respect for one another, and most especially, peace in the community.

He added, “Overall, I am grateful to God, the project stakeholders along with the *barangay* officials, and to a large extent, the enumerators who concerted a commendable effort in our area. This land that was still inherited by my father from my grandparents, is very valuable to me – we depend on land to live.”

What has definitely been resolved, however, is that certificates of ownership based on empirical data (generated from the survey and mapping activities), are needed to ascertain ownership over land and lead to tenurial security because the rightful bearers can show proof of ownership to would-be land grabbers. ■

Challenges faced by young farmers

Ann-Ann Tandejon



For farmers, land is the most precious asset. It is their main source of livelihood, and it sustains families. From the land they till, farmers are able to send their children to school.

Some farmers' children are even able to go to college where they are able to earn degrees which, sadly, would wean them away from farming, albeit enabling them to have higher-earning careers.

Thus, it is quite surprising that children of farmers, like Daylen Tandejon (16), get land bequeathed to them at a young age. Daylen hails from *Sitio* (hamlet) Megbadiang, *Barangay* Bacusanon, in

the town of Pangantucan, Bukidnon. Her father decided to bequeath his land as advance inheritance to his children, so that they can get their land ownership certificates while he is still alive.

While the chance of owning one's land is indeed welcome, it makes young people like Daylen a bit apprehensive. For one, most 16-year olds are still in school and tilling the land takes considerable time and effort. Daylen wonders about what she should prioritize: her studies or her land?

The fact that Daylen is a young girl makes the task of farming her own land even more difficult, since the terrain in her area is mountainous, and her patch of land is a considerable hike from their house. When Daylen goes to her land, she has to take someone else with her for safety and security reasons.

Also, going to the farm entails bringing food and other provisions, which is difficult given the poverty that besets the families in the community.

As with other females in the community, Daylen can work the land as well as the men can, but physical attributes simply put women at a disadvantage.

Then there is another not-so-small reason why Daylen is having difficulty in managing her inheritance: farming is not just planting a seed and watching it grow; it entails considerable know-how

often learned from trial and error, by apprenticeship under more experienced farmers, or from formal studies.

For now, Daylen and her family settled on a healthy compromise: her father and older siblings would till the land for her while she continues her studies (she is currently under the Alternative Learning System or ALS program), but she would help tend to her land when school is out.

Daylen's patch of land lies within the heart of their tribe's ancestral domain and is planted with coffee, bamboo, and falcata.

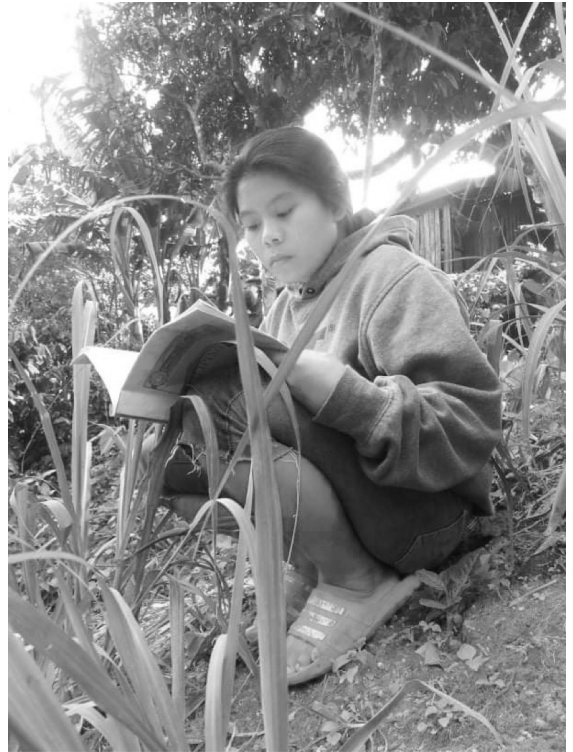
After receiving the Certificate of Customary Occupancy under the SALaR project, Daylen expressed that, "I am very delighted and grateful for the certificate as it helped me gain the sense of ownership and security to land. What is very important to me is to hopefully sow the land someday. I would ensure that even when I depart from this world, this inheritance from my father will also be bequeathed to my children."

Daylen may not be able to reap the full benefits of having her own land right now, but she appreciates what it means and looks forward to the day when she can finally farm it on her own.

She is blessed with the assurance that her family's most precious possession, bequeathed to them by their ancestors,

will remain in their hands. Even if she gets a college degree and has a chance to earn her livelihood through other means, she is determined to maintain her farm.

She will not sell it, she says, because it is her legacy and a way of honoring her parents and ancestors. ■



Travails of an old farmer

Jashmin Tumopas



Pino Damian, from *Barangay* Nabaliwa in Pangantucan, Bukidnon, shares his everyday difficulties in raising a family. One of these is how to put food on the table. Another is how to earn money to buy things that he cannot grow on the land he tills.

For these, Pino believes that security of tenure is the key.

“I believe that it is important to have tenurial security over land because

whatever happens, it (the land) cannot be taken from us. Having secure ownership is a big help to my family,” he said.

He supported his family through the years by cultivating a few crops on land he owns for their own consumption and for sale so that they can buy things that they cannot grow and provide for the children's education.

“As a farmer, it is very important to have my own land because it is a source of my family's livelihood. Farming is hard work but it has been my occupation my whole life because I have not gone to college and this is the only thing that I know how to do,” he shared.

Pino's family has been living in the *barangay* for the past 30 years, where all his children were born, studied, and grew up in. All their joys and sorrows, triumphs and tribulations, have been shared in this patch of earth they call home.

But not all is rosy in this *barangay*. While land is what sustains them, land is also the cause of trouble between inhabitants.

People do not seem to know where the boundaries of their lands are. Thus, encroachment into their neighbors' property often occurs, which leads to petty disputes and bad blood among neighbors.

However, that is not Pino's immediate and most pressing problem. His problem is that he is too old and too tired to farm.



Thus, Pino and his wife just rely on their children's support for their daily needs. This arrangement is quite difficult because their children earn meager incomes and have families to support as well.

“It pains us to rely on our children for support because they have their own families to feed too, but I have no choice but to wait for what they can give me and my wife,” Pino laments.

Pino feels that old people like them have become a burden to their community because, like many small communities in the Philippines, the entire population

pitches in to help those that need it most – people like Pino and his wife that can no longer earn a decent livelihood to sustain themselves.

“As the head of the family, I was used to “fixing” things, to providing for my family. Now that I cannot do that anymore, I feel so useless,” Pino says.

Unfortunately, Pino passed away last December 2020 and was not able to fully enjoy the security of tenure brought by the issuance of the Certificate of Customary Land Occupancy. However, the document was personally delivered to Pino’s wife. ■



Partner People's Organizations



MILALITTRA

The Miarayon Lapok Lirongan Talaandig Tribal Association, Inc. (MILALITTRA) covers four *barangays* in the municipality of Talakag, in the province of Bukidnon, Philippines. The group was awarded a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) for 11,367 hectares in 2003. The group's Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP) is being updated. MILALITTRA is composed of approximately 2,500 households. The community's major source of income is farming. It is estimated that around 1,500 hectares within their ancestral domain are devoted to farming.



NAMAMAYUK

The Nagkahiusang Manobong Manununod sa Yutang Kabilin (NAMAMAYUK) covers *barangays* Bacusanon and Nabaliwa in the municipality of Pangantucan, in the province of Bukidnon, Philippines. NAMAMAYUK has applied for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) for 3,506 hectares and has already formulated its Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP). The community is composed of 208 households. Their livelihoods revolve around farming and other agricultural activities.



PTTA

The Portulin Talaandig Tribal Association, Inc. (PTTA) covers *barangays* Portulin, New Eden, Concepcion, and Dagoelos in the municipality of Pangantucan, in the province of Bukidnon, Philippines. It has 165 family members. PTTA's main goal is to deter illegal logging within the sacred forests of their ancestral domain. It has applied for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title for 6,679.83 hectares and has already completed its Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP). The community's livelihoods involve farming, eco-tourism, and implementing externally funded community development programs.

Project Implementers and Partners



The **Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)** is a regional coalition of national and regional CSOs in Asia actively engaged in promoting food sovereignty, land rights and agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance, and rural development. *For more information, refer to www.angoc.org.*



The **Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF)** is a legal, non-stock, non-profit, non-government organization advocating programs and projects that will alleviate poverty and promote social empowerment. XSF serves as a conduit of funds to support development projects, innovative programs, fora, and dialogues. *For more information, refer to www.xsfoundationinc.org.*



The **United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)** helps the urban poor by transforming cities into safer, healthier, and greener places with better opportunities where everyone can live with dignity. *For more information, refer to www.unhabitat.org.*



The **Global Land Tool Network (GLTN)** is an alliance of global, regional, and national partners contributing to poverty alleviation and the Sustainable Development Goals through increased access to land and tenure security for all. *For more information, refer to www.gltn.net.*



The **German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)** is the primary State development body in Germany. BMZ's governing principle is the protection of human rights, which includes the right to live in peace and freedom, and to help address the poverty issues in the world. *For more information, refer to www.bmz.de.*

The participation of the rural youth as enumerators in the project “Enhancing Land Tenure Security of Smallholder Farmers in Northern Mindanao, Philippines” has not only facilitated the attainment of the project’s objectives, but also allowed for the cultivation of a new generation of advocates of land rights, tenure security, and inclusive development. The engagement of the youth has broadened their perspectives on the importance of land in satisfying basic needs and in daily living especially for indigenous peoples, enlightened them about the social injustices that lead to dispossession and disenfranchisement from land, and enhanced their motivation to work for a better future.

This publication, ***Cultivating Experiential Learning of Rural Youth: A Compilation of Field Stories from Local Enumerators in Bukidnon, Philippines***, contains the stories, reflections, and observations of youth enumerators during their discussions with rural communities in the uplands of Bukidnon, Philippines. Although parts of their narratives reflect the grim reality of insecure land tenure and conflict, hope shines as the youth share anecdotes of success brought on by peaceful methods, the lessons they have learned from fieldwork, and their own recommendations to long-standing issues. This publication is a fresh take on land rights concerns, from the minds and hearts of those who will shape our future.