



# Recognizing land rights and enhancing capacities of smallholder farmers in Pangantucan, Bukidnon, Philippines

## REFLECTION PAPER

## Emerging Outcomes from Localizing Land Tools to Enhance Tenurial Security of Smallholder Farmers in Bukidnon, Philippines: Insights of Indigenous Peoples and Migrant Settlers

### Introduction

For the longest time, the indigenous peoples (IP) communities have accepted development intrusions into their ancestral domains. While some have resisted, most have succumbed to these impositions. As such, they have been pushed to the uplands and marginal areas, and lived in languishing poverty.

As part of the initiative of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) on *Secure Access to Land and Resources (SALaR)*, the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) has partnered with the Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF) to increase the tenurial security of IPs and migrant settlers in the municipality of Pangantucan, Bukidnon, southern Philippines.

Over time, the IPs learned about their land rights that were made concrete through the project interventions. This document outlines the improvement of land tenure security and behavioral changes as perceived by the project participants, in particular, the IPs and migrant settlers.

- **Increased tenurial security have motivated communities to protect and sustain their lands**

It is common to encounter land issues and conflicts in the area as experienced by the local enumerators. Boundary issues are common among neighbors and families. Some would claim a

particular area while others insist on their presumed rights. Through the project, these concerns have been addressed. Areas including home lots, gardens, and farm lots have been delineated and mapped; land conflicts cease to occur; and, the fear of eviction or displacement have been reduced because of the given land certificates.

Ernand Cabug-os, *Sitio* Leader of Pud-ong, Bacusanon observed that overlapping boundary issues have already been settled and that even their home lots have been measured and identified. Fatima Redido, youth enumerator from Bacusanon, is assured that they have the security of tenure and that *"cannot be taken from us."*

As farming is the primary backbone to economic and social activity of the smallholder farmer households, improving land access and tenure security is essential. People have the assurance and motivation to work on their respective lands. Furthermore, they are able to assert their legal rights to a more effective and sustainable farm production.

- **Increased youth engagement have renewed their ties with their ancestral lands**

Now more than ever, the security of the future generation is what concerns the IP communities. Tantamount to strengthening the perspective of every household head, is also building the relationship of land and the youth in pursuit of their identity, cultural expression, and security.

Renante Samson, Board of Directors of Catal Lumad Development Association (CALUDA), an affiliate of the Portulin Talaandig Tribal Association (PTTA), shared that one of the improvements brought by the project is “allowing the parents to fully recognize the young adults upon inheriting their land.” It also brought confidence to many that the conflicts resolved under the project will not only be experienced today but it will be felt for the years to come.

- **Enhanced capacities of women and youth motivated active community participation**

The project promoted inclusiveness as women and youth served as key players in this endeavor. At the start, women were perceived as incapable of making decisions and were vulnerable to discrimination. With regard to land, women are typically not considered as landowners or farmers. They are ignored from agricultural support programs which are necessary for effective use of the land. Insecurity of land tenure then is very evident due to direct and indirect discriminatory laws and practices at the national, community, and even at the family level.

Driven by equality and justice, the project recognizes women’s role on sustainable land development. It fulfills the transformative power of women upon accessing, using, inheriting, controlling, and owning a land. Contrary to the usual, rural poor women in the target areas are now empowered and confident to manage their land and are able to exercise their rights. According to Edna Narabe, *Barangay* Nutrition Scholar of Bacusanon, this is believe to be true where:

*“Napakita sa proyekto nga naa diay katungod ang kababaenhan. Pag-gain sa babae og confidence. Na feel nga naay siyay right.” (The project has shown that women have rights and that they have gained the confidence in themselves).*

*“Sumala sa unang panahon, dili ga tahuron ang desisyon. Pero sa pagkakaran, madasigon na nga mag-apil sa desisyon. Karon*

*empowered na mo partisipar” (In the past, women’s decisions are not respected. But now, they are encouraged and empowered to take part in any decision-making activity.)*  
– Angelina Guinto, NAMAMAYUK woman leader of Bacusanon

On the other hand, the youth is also faced with challenges when it comes to land-related endeavors. Their lack of information and participation greatly affects their tenure security both in law and customs. The threats of unequal land rights undermine the future development of youth inclusivity in agriculture.

Putting an end to this proliferating battle, the project has actively engaged the youth in land rights discussion through training-seminars, meetings, and even conflict-resolution sessions. As a result, the youth have gained new perspectives on land management and have likewise learned to appreciate the significance of land and agriculture, thus making them more equipped for the future.

Moreover, throughout the project implementation, local youth enumerators in particular, have been grateful for the improvement of individual capacities brought about by sharing of experiences and stories.

Self-confidence is the utmost result that gives them pride and motivation in dealing with land disputes, social issues, and behavioral changes. Consequently, their confidence allows them to embark on necessary actions while taking into consideration the communication, peace-building, planning, and facilitation skills they have acquired. The trust within themselves is indeed fulfilled.



Jerlyn Pedieras, youth enumerator of Bacusanon expressed that “I have improved my self-confidence. With that, I have discovered a lot.” Bryan Narabe, youth enumerator from Nabaliwa added that for his part:

*“Mas na-enhance akong communication skills. Even though nakahuman mig eskwela, naapil na sa pagteach na dapat confident ka ug sa communication skills, still lahi ra gyud kung ma-enhance na siya through experience... ang peace-making skills. Unsa nimo pagcommunicate sa duha ka silingan na wala nagkasinabot.” (I was able to enhance my communication skills even if I finished my studies; it was complemented through my involvement in the project. I also learned peace-making skills through experience.)*

The youth also gained skills in delineating the land using tools (such as participatory enumeration, Social Tenure Domain Model), equipment, and technology.

*“Dako kaayo og natabang ang project kay nakabalo gyud ko kung unsaon pagbulag-bulag sa homelot, dili diay basta-basta na magbahin sa yuta.” (The project greatly helped me properly delineate homelots.) – Vincent Baldelovar, youth enumerator in Nabaliwa*

- ***Collaborative engagement among local stakeholders in advancing tenure security***

Not only did the project make an impact to the youth and women sector, it also greatly benefitted the local government units (LGUs), which are mandated to address land conflicts and other community problems. Since the problems are identified and verified at the family or up to the hamlet levels, they are no longer elevated to the *barangay* or village level. This in turn, lessens the burden of the *barangay* LGU and in a way allow them to focus on other pressing concerns of the village.

With the project, there is greater awareness among relevant stakeholders on the urgency and importance of the land problems, especially of the IPs. Involvement of the church, cooperatives and other civil society organizations have taken on the challenge and are starting to share experiences and discuss ways for collaboration and addressing land conflicts.

The recognition of the project by the LGUs particularly at the hamlet and village or *barangay* level has been promising.

Even the IP organizations have established community policies to continue and sustain the initiative.

*“Sa NAMAMAYUK, nay polisiya. Unang polisiya, once nay mobaligya sa area o magprenda ba kaha, dili pirmahan sa elders o opisyales sa organization.” (In NAMAMAYUK, there is a policy that once someone sells or rent out the land, the elders and officers will not sign it.) – Albert Salido, BYK in Bacusanon*

Complementary to receiving the land certificates is maintaining hope and security among the communities. Land preparation and production per se, are the things they hope to achieve. The challenge now is to provide more opportunities to scale up.

In addition, for the youth to sustain the significant changes brought to them by the project, a thorough training on technical support, particularly on certificate generation, should be carried out. More than that, efforts should be pursued to create platforms where they can systematically exercise their full potential when it comes to land rights and agricultural development. ■

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Concerns over food insecurity in developing countries are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. Given that land plays an important role in the livelihoods of most people in developing countries, food security and poverty reduction cannot be achieved unless issues of access to land, security of tenure, and the capacity to use land productively and in a sustainable manner are addressed.

Thus, the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) is implementing "Secure Access to Land and Resources (SALaR)" through the support of Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), with the overall goal of improving land and natural resources tenure security of rural smallholder farmers in Uganda, the Philippines, and Laos.

In the Philippines, while a number of land laws are being implemented, several gaps need to be addressed to improve the situation of their intended beneficiaries. Hence, *Recognizing land rights and enhancing capacities of Smallholder Farmers in Pangantucan, Bukidnon, Philippines* aims to contribute to the goal of SALaR. This project is implemented by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) in partnership with Xavier Science Foundation, Inc. (XSF), with technical and financial support from Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and Germany's Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).



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.



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.



The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) helps the urban poor by transforming cities into safer, healthier, greener places with better opportunities where everyone can live in dignity. UN-Habitat works with organizations at every level, including all spheres of government, civil society and the private sector to help build, manage, plan and finance sustainable urban development. Our vision is cities without slums that are liveable places for all, which do not pollute the environment or deplete natural resources.



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. The Network's partnership of organizations is drawn from the rural and urban civil society, international research and training institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and international professional bodies. GLTN takes a more holistic approach on land issues and improves on global land coordination through development, dissemination and implementation of pro-poor and gender responsive land tools. These tools and approaches contribute to land reform, good land governance, inclusive land administration, sustainable land management, and functional land sector coordination.



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 about this project:

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