

fisherfolk, government employees, youth, academe, church, lawyers and more.

As build up for the October peasant campaign, they have lined up a series of activities such as caravan against landgrabbing and displacement, forums, dialogues with district representatives and more.

Nueva Ecija farmers have embraced the task of being a potent force of the peasant movement in the region. They are considered as major victims of bankrupt government land reform program such as CARP and CARPer. The province' reputation of being the country's rice granary is being transformed by the government's program, thus, farmers are prepared to resist them. They are agents of social reform, pushing for genuine land reform in the province, region and country. Nueva Ecija is indeed a battleground for peasant struggle.

Their call,

RECOGNIZE FARMERS' RIGHT TO TILL LANDS!

STRUGGLE AGAINST LAND GRABBING AND DISPLACEMENT!

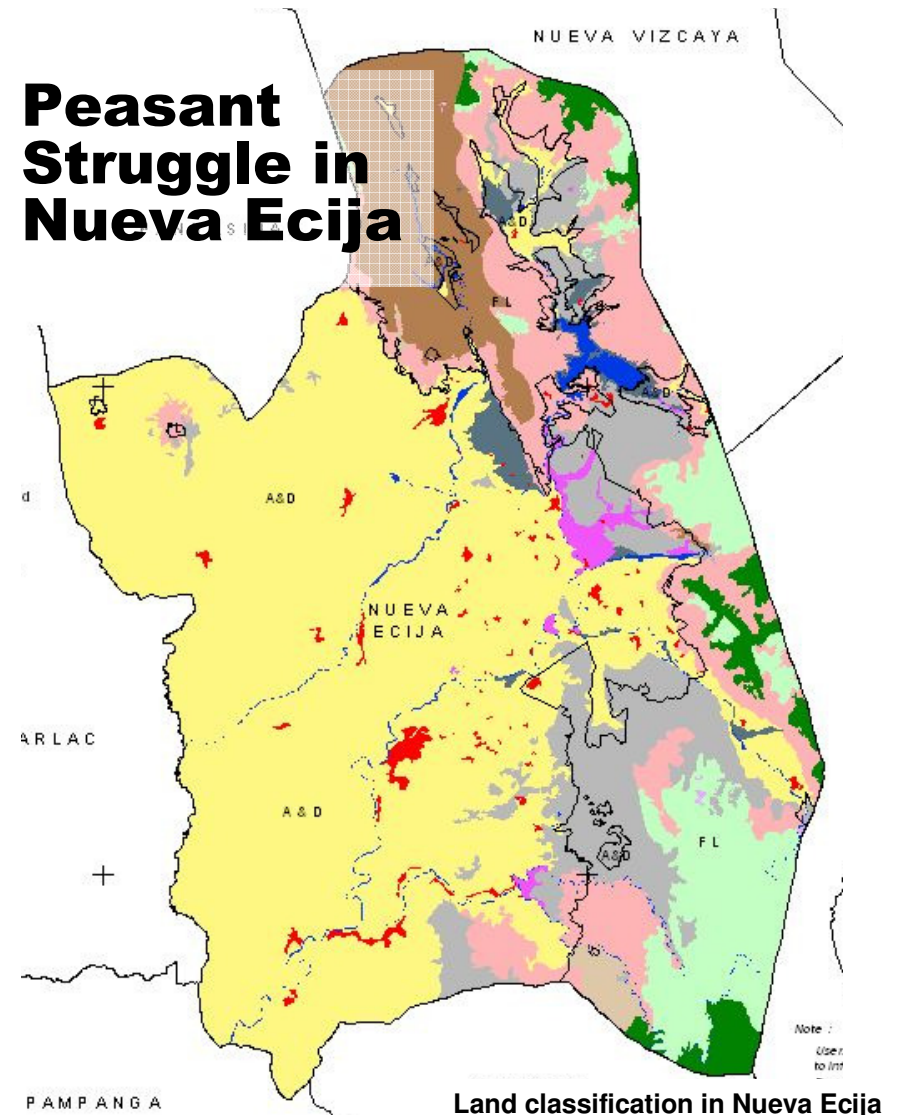
STRUGGLE FOR GENUINE LAND REFORM!

Please support the struggle of Nueva Ecija farmers:

- actively participate on their activities;
- organize exposure, basic masses integration activities in Nueva Ecija;
- organize forums, symposiums and other venues to spread Nueva Ecija farmers' issues;
- donate financial and material support for their activities.

For coordination, please send AMGL a message at amgl.info@gmail.com

Peasant Struggle in Nueva Ecija



Prepared by
Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL, Peasant Alliance in Central Luzon) and AMGL – Nueva Ecija

Significance of Nueva Ecija province

Nueva Ecija is publicly known as the rice-granary of the Philippines. Its vast agricultural lands are cultivated with rice that farmers consider their main source of livelihood. Rice cultivation is also the culture of Nueva Ecija farmers. The province' 158,269-hectare rice lands ranked 2nd in the country, but irrigated lands of 119,459-hectares are the biggest among provinces. It also ranked 2nd in production, harvesting about 560,379 metric tons or 7.29 million sacks of rice, but first in irrigated palay of 462,185 metric tons. Its production compose 9% of the country's total and 43% of the region's total. Irrigated lands compose about 75% of the its total rice lands, thus, it is very clear that agriculture is distinguishedly productive. Rice farms yield about 80 to 100 cavans per hectare with some reaching to 120 cavans. Plain lands in the province are more than half which are of high potential for agricultural production.

Essential to the province' agricultural productivity, are the farmers who sturdily cultivate rice lands that compose about 28% of it total land area of 575,133-hectares. The province' population compose 19% of the region ranking 3rd and its land area 27% being the biggest. Nueva Ecija also composed majority of the farmer-beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Based on its 2010 accomplishment, 95,855 Nueva Ecija farmer-beneficiaries compose 36% of the region's total tilling 169,375-hectares or 42% of the region's total.

Nueva Ecija is totally a significant province in the country, contributing majorly in the country's total rice supply and it is also a model of the bankruptcy of CARP as the government's claimed number of FBs is questionable as farmers are presently facing massive cancellations of Certificate of Land Ownership Awards (CLOA), Certificate of Land Transfer (CLT) and Emancipation Patents (EP). Rice production is also threatened by the government's program that would result vast land use conversion. Nueva Ecija is a potential ground for the struggle for genuine land reform and its farmers a powerful force of the peasant movement.

in the region namely, Masinloc Eco Zone (Zambales), Subic Bay Special Economic Zone and Freeport (Zambales), Bataan Technology Park in Morong, Bataan Export Processing Zone in Mariveles, Clark Special Eco Zone, Hacienda Luisita Eco Zone, Hermosa (Bataan) Eco Zone, Magalang (Pampanga) MADCI, Philippine Jewelry Center in Meycauayan, Bulacan, Gapan, Cabanatuan City and Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija, then towards Baler and Dingalan freeport in Aurora.

In Aliaga town, Nueva Ecija, the municipal government is constructing the 270-hectare agro-industrial estate anticipating the construction of CLEx.

Perspective of the Peasant Movement

Nueva Ecija farmers are determined to struggle for genuine land reform in the region. Even being victims of state terrorism during the implementation of Arroyo government's counter-insurgency program Oplan Bantay Laya, they are still resolute in defending their rights to land and livelihood.

Farmers are on the stage of shaping their provincial peasant alliance, the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon – Nueva Ecija (AMGL-NE, Peasant Alliance in Central Luzon). They are in constant defense of their position on their lands such as the case of Mambayu, Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation, Maluyon in Pantabangan, QLSDA and south NE towns and other areas. They are also challenging various government institution and agencies to recognize their rights to land, such as the LGUs, district representatives, DAR, NCIP and other agencies. AMGL-NE is in close coordination with the regional peasant formation AMGL.

Farmers in the province are supported by various sectors such as the workers, drivers, government employees, church groups and other groups. Their campaigns are also supported by many national organizations and institutions of farmers, indigenous peoples,

5. Metro-Luzon Urban Beltway (MLUB), Land Use Conversion (LUC)

Nueva Ecija is also the site of major projects of the government particularly the Metro-Luzon Urban Beltway (MLUB). MLUB is a component of the “super-regions” program of the hated Arroyo government that is now being promoted by the Aquino government through its Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program.

MLUB is composed of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx), Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway (TPLEx), Central Luzon Expressway (CLEx 1 and 2) and North Luzon East Expressway (NLEx East). Projects that would directly affect the province would be the 63.9-km-CLEx 1 and 2, the 92.1-km- NLEx East and the national road formerly labelled as SCTEx 3.

CLEx 1 would pierce from Tarlac City to Cabanatuan City, then CLEx 2 from Cabanatuan City to San Jose City. CLEx 1 and 2 are estimated to convert about 319.5-hectares of prime agricultural lands and homelots of Nueva Ecija farmers and residents. While NLEx East would pierce from Cabanatuan City, through Sta. Rosa, San Leonardo, Gapan then towards Bulacan province. It would lead to the La Mesa Parkway in San Jose Del Monte City in Bulacan where MRT 7 inter-modal station is also planned to be constructed.

The national road formerly called SCTEx 3 from Sta. Rosa, through Laur, Gabaldon towns have already been constructed and converted productive agricultural lands such as those in the 3,100-hectares in Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation. The road has caused the massive land grabbing by retired military and police officials in Fort Magsaysay. It is also the road that converted the land of Pascual Guevarra, the first peasant victim of extra-judicial killing under the Aquino government. He was killed on July 9, 2010.

The MLUB is patterned with the “W-corridor” based on Aquino’s Central Luzon Development Plan. This plan aims to convert productive agricultural lands into commercial, industrial and residential enclaves. It is pinpointed by eco-zones and industrial hubs

Peasant Struggles in the provinces

Nueva Ecija farmers are struggling for their rights to land, against displacement, landgrabbing and land use conversion. They are organized under the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon – Nueva Ecija (AMGL-NE). As they struggle for land reform, they are struggling for food security, against militarization and environmental destruction. They are agents of social reform in the province, region and in the country.

1. Mambayu

Mambayu stands for Malayang Aniban ng Magsasaka sa Brgy. Manggang Marikit, Bagong Barrio at Yuson, located at Guimba town. Guimba is located at the north-western part of the province and at the boundary of Tarlac province, next to Pura town.



The Mambayu issue involves more than a hundred hectares in Brgy. Manggang Marikit that used to be part of Hacienda Davis. When it was covered by CARP during the 1990s, it was leased by DAR and Land Bank to Philippine Cotton and a Taiwanese agro-corporation. By 1992, the lands were left idle and abandoned, thus, about 150 farmers from the 3 barangays decided to cultivate the lands. The farmers had a dialogue with the former landowner, an elderly Davis in Pasay City and he did not oppose. They planted it with rice and vegetables that served as their main source of livelihood. Their campaign was “bungkalan” that aimed to transform idle lands into productive agricultural lands.

The Mambayu farmers peacefully cultivated from 1992 until the Provincial Agrarian Reform Office (PARO) made up a list called

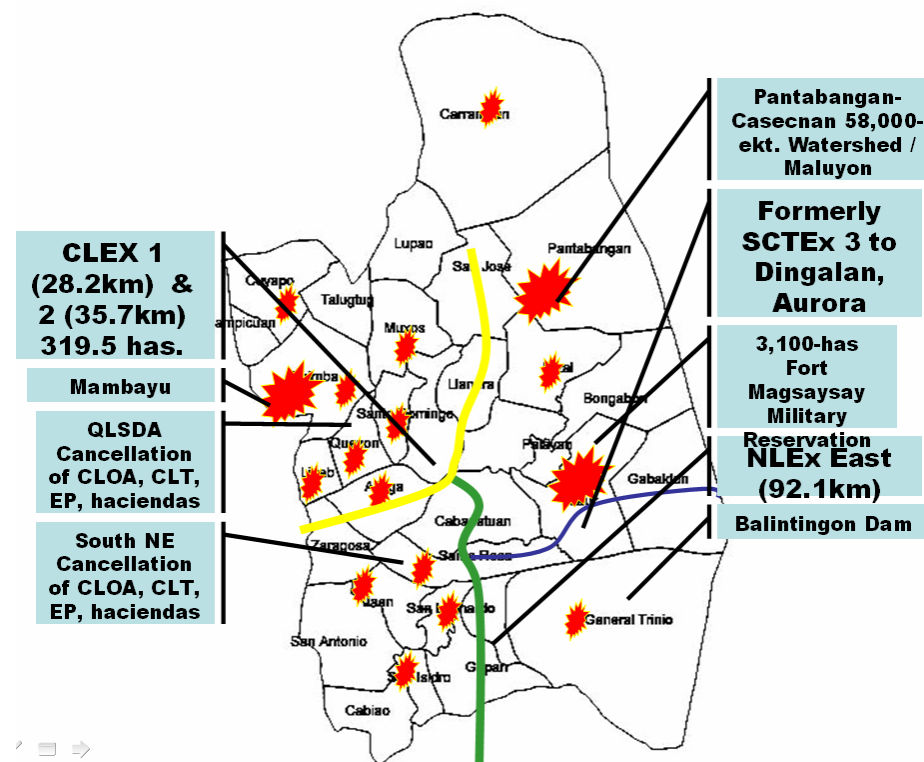
ListaSaka in 2007. It composed illegitimate farmers and individuals involved with interested financiers and speculators. Members of ListaSaka who was able to position to some parts of the land sold them to a religious sect. ListaSaka leaders are also relatives of Guimba police chief. Since ListaSaka was prepared by PARO, they filed ejectment cases against the Mambayu farmers that reached the Court of Appeals in 2010. Decision of some cases are favorable to ListaSaka while some are yet to be decided. Since last year, the PARO, Municipal Agrarian Reform Office (MARO), Guimba and Nueva Ecija PNP and the 81st Infantry Battalion of the Phil. Army, consistently harassed the Mambayu farmers to vacate the lands. From May to present, the ListaSaka members have attempted numerous times to occupy the lands, backed up by police and military and hired mob but Mambayu farmers are able to defend their rights as they are the ones who developed them.

In addition, Mambayu farmers were terrorized by the Oplan Bantay Laya in 2005. They were victimized by extra-judicial killings, abduction and torture. One peasant woman was forced to commit suicide due to constant harassment and his husband suffered a mental breakdown. Until 2007, Mambayu leaders and members were always interrogated and physically harmed by elements of the military. By the beginning of Aquino presidency In 2010, elements of the 81st IBPA transformed the barangay hall of Manggang Marikit as their detachment. They conduct regular military operations to harass the farmers and repress their resistance to the PARO landgrabbing and displacement. Last June 25, the Guimba police chief himself arrested a Mambayu farmer when he was attending his farm and charged with usurpation of real property as complained by ListaSaka leaders.

The numerous attempts of ListaSaka members to occupy the lands were defied by Mambayu farmers and support from AMGL. The dispute was raised to the Dept. of Agrarian Reform – Region 3 office (DAR 3) and DAR Central office. The regional and central office affirmed that the case is an agrarian case and they have jurisdiction, thus, cases filed at criminal courts should not be the key. DAR 3 issued a memorandum to review the list of farmer-beneficiaries, essentially junking the PARO's ListaSaka.

landowners would backtrack into petitioning for their retention targeting the position of farmers. Many farmers who are not able to pay their debt are being ejected by their financiers, grabbing their lands. Farmers believe that landowners are forcing farmers to leave their lands because of the government's "development" plans such as construction of highways that would definitely shoot up the market value of lands.

Agrarian Issues in Nueva Ecija



In Hacienda Rueda in Brgy. San Andres I, Quezon town, 238.34-hectares have been covered by CARP but annually farmers receive notices of foreclosure from Land Bank. Farmers claim that they bear up with the rising costs of farming and the absence of government support, thus they remain indebted and unable to sustain amortization. Some farmers have also their homelot being foreclosed.

In Brgy. Pulang Bahay, Quezon, CARP covered 455.33-hectares but farmers are facing problems caused by inaccuracies within Land Bank. Some farmers who have fully paid amortization still do not have land titles, while some have pending balance as they are in total debt caused by rising costs of farming, usury, absence of government support and rising cost of living.

In Brgy. Bicos, Rizal, CARP-PD 27 covered 412-hectares but farmers are now facing cancellation cases of CLT. Some farmers claim miscalculation of Land Bank, revising the involved lands thus increasing the rate of amortization. The farmers worry that the amount they have paid for decades would go unaccounted. Farmers also complain of rising costs of farming, pushing them to be victims of usury, eventually in deep poverty and indebtedness.

In Brgy. Cacapasan, Cuyapo, the 569.40-hectare Hacienda De Santos are cultivated by about 521 farming households. Farmers endure high costs farming, usury, absence of government support and the increasing cost of living that hinder them to pay amortization. The lands are being foreclosed by Land Bank.

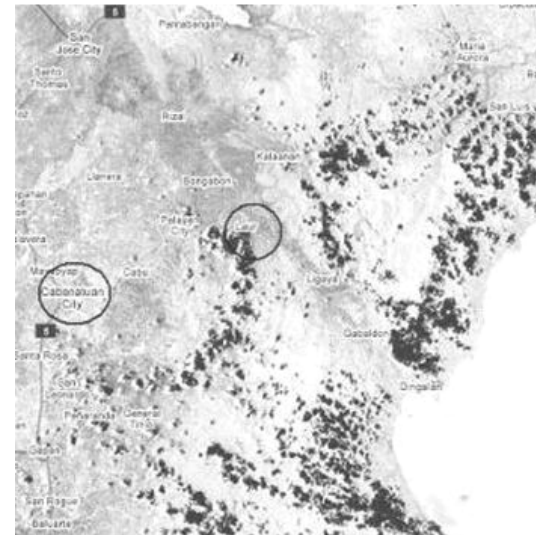
In Brgy. Pacac, Guimba, Hacienda Gabaldon, Hacienda Kilantang and Hacienda Anggara compose the 822-hectares covered by CARP-PD 27 but farmers are now facing cases of cancellation of CLT and EP. They receive annual notices of delayed amortization from Land Bank as only a few could keep up payment.

In Sta. Rosa, Jaen, Cabanatuan City, San Isidro and other southern Nueva Ecija towns, farmers are facing land cases usually ejectment cases filed by landowners. Some already have their EP but

2. 3,100-hectares of Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation (FMMR)

As early as the 1930s, farmers were already cultivating the lands at the area of FMMR. It encompasses 73,000 hectares of land, reaching across Nueva Ecija, Bulacan and Aurora provinces as per Proclamation 207 of President Ramon Magsaysay in 1955. The lands are being used for military exercises, bombing runs and other military activities. The 3,100-hectare land in Laur, Nueva Ecija, supposedly awarded to Mt. Pinatubo victims in 1991, is where the base of the

Philippine Army 7th Infantry Division is located. About 6,000 peasants live and cultivate at the area, farming rice, vegetables and other agricultural products.



3,100-hectares of FMMR in Laur, Nueva Ecija. (encircled left is Cabanatuan City)

With developments of legal battles and private groups and individuals landgrabbing and claiming they own the land, the 3,100 hectares lands were finally decided by the Deed Of Transfer of DND to DAR based on

president Cory Aquino's Executive Order 407 and EO 448 (Series of 1990), signed by then DAR Secretary Benjamin Leong and former DND Secretary Renato de Villa on November 5, 1991.

The Deed Of Transfer mainly discuss about the following:
Identification of the 3,100 hectare which is located at Bgy. San Isidro, Laur town of Nueva Ecija province;

- DAR officials will coordinate with camp officials on surveying the land to define exact location and boundaries;
- A buffer zone of 20 meters around the camp will be set and no permanent structures shall be built for security purposes;
- DAR will be responsible and have jurisdiction on what ever issues that may arise (judicial, quasi-judicial);
- The transfer by DND to DAR will be free, as well as the transfer of lands by DAR to legitimate farmer-beneficiaries

Though the existence of the Deed of Transfer signed by both Department Secretaries, the military, particularly the PA 7th Infantry Division does not recognize such order and continue to pose as the owner or has the right to control over the lands. Commander Maj. Gen. Ralph Villanueva even sent a letter to the Provincial Agrarian Reform Office to cancel all CLOAs involving the 3,100 hectares. On October 10, 2007, DAR Secretary Nasser Pangandaman reminded DND Secretary Gilbert Teodoro that the military could never claim the 3,100 hectare as it was already decided on the Deed of Transfer of the two agencies.

The road of land distribution to farmers were twisted and rough. Different private groups, corporations and individuals have attempted to landgrab the lands that should be given to legitimate farmers, most of them are retired military personnels or private firms with strong connection to the military and police.

On May 30, 2001, elements from Palayan Municipal Police, Provincial Police and 309th Provincial Mobile Group (PMG) led by a goon of landlord Martin Tinio raided houses of farmers, robbed them of their private properties and illegally arrested some of the residents. This is to scare the farmers off the lands to compel them to leave the area. The victims were members of the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association or ARBA. On August 18, 2007, retired Col. Feliciano Sabite, accompanied by armed men, harassed a group of farmers who were preparing their farms. Sabite, armed with M-14 rifle and Cal. 45 handgun, poked at farmers, cursing them and telling them to leave the place that he has already bought the lands. The victims were members of Guardians Brotherhood. The next month, September 27, 2007, about 3pm, Col. Sabite strafed houses of

efforts to defend their rights to land and livelihood. Igorot communities from Pantabanga, Carranglan, Rizal, Bongabon, General Tinio and other towns have united to oppose the Aquino government's program that would infringe their actual cultivation of lands. Aside from Pantabangan energy project, the construction of Balintongan dam in General Tinio is a flagship project of the Aquino government. The project would totally displace Igorot communities along Balintongan river and endanger even other Nueva Ecija towns in case of typhoon as this would eventually release water resulting massive flooding.

4. Massive cancellation of CLOA, CLT and EP, foreclosure and preservation of haciendas

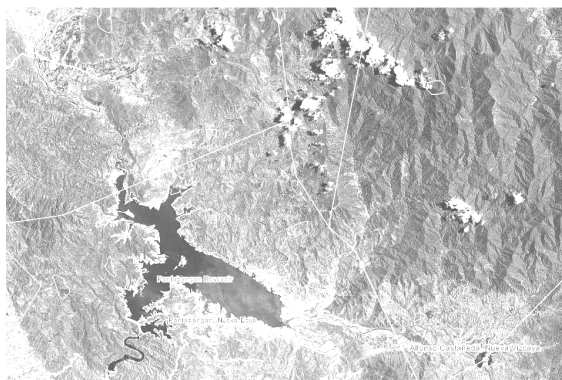
CARP claims that Nueva Ecija compose 36% of the total number of FBs in Central Luzon or about 95,855. DAR recorded that covered lands 169,375-hectares thus averaging the farmsize to 1.77-hectares per FB. The CARP working scope for the province reach to 179,366-hectares hence the program boast of 94% accomplishment.

Many farmers from Quezon-Licab-Sto. Domingo-Aliaga (QLSDA), south Nueva Ecija and other towns are now facing cases of cancellation of CLOA, CLT and EP, foreclosure by Land Bank and direct ejectment of landowners. Haciendas are also preserved that proves that CARP did not realize genuine land reform or breaking up land monopoly and land distribution to the farmers.

The more than 2 decades of CARP and CARPer implementation have not realized fundamental changes on landlessness in the province. The group said that vast haciendas continue to evade land distribution. Hacienda Gabaldon, Kilantang, Anggara in Guimba town, Rueda in Quezon town, De Santos in Guimba, Cuyapo and Nampicuan towns, Tinio in Talavera town, and estates Ilagan, Gonzales, Domingo, Sanggalang, Joson, Angeles, Padre Crisostomo Estate in many towns of the province remain intact and farmers who are CLOA, CLT and EP holders are facing cancellation and foreclosure cases.

to February 2009, massive militarization was implemented in the area, causing mass evacuation, hamletting and human rights abuses. On November 2009, EDC covered 50-hectares of land in Brgy. Villarica as part of their watershed and reforestation program. They are also targeting another 50-hectares where Sitio Maluyon is located, forcing the Igorot community of 34 households to abandon their farms. As they are also victims of military harassment, they transferred their houses to nearby areas but continued to till the lands EDC is targeting. Ernesto Bubod was the only one who did not vacate his house and farm.

In 2010, EDC and NIA formed the pseudo-cooperative Maluyon Indigenous Christian Farmers Association (MICFA) that promised job opportunities to the Igorot farmers who left their houses and lands, but were paid P150 per day of work on the plantation on an irregular basis. Militarization also continued at their area.



57,930-hectares watershed area around Pantabangan and Casecnan multi-purpose dam

From January to March 2011, EDC and NIA continue to deceive the Igorot farmers to leave the lands. On March 22, Ernesto Bubod was arrested by elements of the Charlie Company of the 81st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA). Originally accused of arson but filed with illegal possession of firearms. On March

2011, EDC and NIA approached the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to approve the one-sided Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Igorot farmers, that the latter rejected.

In response to the massive displacement, Igorot communities have organized Timpuyog Kaigorotan – Nueva Ecija (Igorot Alliance in Nueva Ecija). More than 30 chieftains have already signified their

farmers and stolen some of their belongings. The farmers sought the help of the Philippine Army at the camp, who then found Sabite but only talked with him and never arrested him.

On October 25, 2008, about 34 of 36 houses farmers were demolished by the soldiers from PA 7th Infantry Division without warning, not considering the value that farmers invested in building them. This was after they attended the caravan and protest actions against CARP in Manila.

Peasants from the Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation are organized as the ALMANA 3,100 or Alyansa ng Magbubukid na Nagkakaisa sa 3,100 Ektarya ng FMMR (United Peasant Alliance in 3,100 Hectare of Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation). They have already held numerous inter-agency dialogues involving the Department of Agrarian Reform and Department of Environment and Natural Resources. They have always invited the Department of National Defense but always ignored the invitation. It was only in November 17, that the DND accepted the request and the dialogue was held at Camp Aguinaldo. Still, the DND never committed to anything and it was apparent that they do not recognize the Deed of Transfer signed even by the DND Secretary in 1991.

As the experience of the peasants in FMMR with the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program has not been beneficial, their case is a living example of the bankruptcy of CARP. They were legitimate farmer-beneficiaries formed in Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) but still faced with landgrabbers, harassments, military intrusion, fake beneficiaries and more. Though they were given CLOAs, these never guaranteed land distribution. They were only able to keep on working with the lands through their unity and struggle.

In light of their life-long goal to own the lands they have tilled for decades, they fully support the House Bill 3059 or Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB) proposed by Anakpawis Partylist. They believe that this bill would deliver their interest of free land distribution and security from being displaced.

On July 9, 2010, at the beginning of Aquino presidency, Pascual Guevarra, aged 73, a senior leader of ALMANA 3,100 was killed at Brgy. San Isidro. During the attack, his grandson was also wounded.

Until now, ALMANA 3,100 farmers are sustaining their campaign for genuine land reform and justice for victims of rights abuses. Their group is an active member of AMGL – Nueva Ecija.

3. Displacement of Igorot communities at Pantabangan reservoir



Farmers and Igorot communities around Pantabangan dam are being displaced the Energy Development Corp. (EDC), California Energy and National Irrigation Administration (NIA). From 2008 to 2009, EDC

displaced about 40 Igorot families of Sitio Maluyon, Brgy. Villarica of Pantabangan town cultivating about 50 hectares. EDC and NIA are pushing their so-called reforestation project but they are cultivating commercial fruit crops. A vice-tribal chieftain was also arrested on March 22 as he opposed the EDC-NIA project. EDC is owned by the Lopezes and the project was promoted by the Arroyo government that is now being continued by the Aquino government through his Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program and Philippine Energy Plan (PEP).

On May 1966, Philippine congress enacted the Republic Act 5499 or Upper Pampanga River Project that authorized the construction of the Pantabangan Multi-Purpose Dam. On June 11, 1971 to August 1974, the Marcos regime constructed Pantabangan Multi-Purpose Dam and

Hydro-electric Power Plant producing 112 MW of power and irrigates about 77,000-hectares of agricultural lands being the second biggest dam in Asia. It was operated by National Power Corp. (NAPOCOR) and National Irrigation Administration (NIA). About 8,100-hectares of productive lands were submerged and communities or 9 barangays were totally wiped out including the town proper of Pantabangan. Locals were forced to migrate to nearby mountains.

On July 10, 1987, the Cory Aquino government approved the entry of private corporations to the power industry. On July 16, 1990 onwards, the Igorot people from earthquake-hit Cordillera areas migrated in Pantabangan and Carranglan area, increasing the population of indigenous peoples (Igorot, Bugkalot, Aeta) in the area.

On February 1996, The Ramos government commenced with the Casecnan Transbasin Project at Alfonso Castañeda, Nueva Vizcaya that included a 27-km tunnel from the Casecnan river in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija to Pantabangan Lake. The dam and hydro-electric power plant were constructed by California Energy (CalEn) under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) scheme. The project also covered 57,930-hectare watershed program that displaced many Bugkalot communities in Nueva Ecija and Nueva Vizcaya areas.

On December 2001 under the Arroyo government, Casecnan Multi-Purpose Project, Hydro-Electric Power Plant were commissioned generating 140 MW of power operated by CE (CalEn) Casecnan Water and Energy Co.

On May 2006, massive militarization displaced indigenous peoples communities, causing the killing of UCCP Pastor Andy Pawican on May 21 at Brgy. Fatima, the abduction of Rogel Marcial and Miguel Paltin on May 22.

On September 8, 2006 under the Electric Power Industry Act of 2001 (EPIRA), the Pantabangan Multi-Purpose Dam and Hydro-electric Plant was privatized and rewarded to a Lopez-controlled First Gen Hydro Power Corp. On October 15, 2008, the Lopez-controlled Energy Development Corp. (EDC) bought 60% of Pantabangan Multi-Purpose Dam/Hydro-Electric Power Plant from First Gen. On January