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**DECODING THE WBG'S
SPLIT PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES:**

RESISTING AGRARIAN INJUSTICE



Decoding the WBG's SPLIT
Project in the Philippines:
Resisting Agrarian Injustice

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Cover Art by Sama-samang Artista para sa Kilusang Agraryo (SAKA)

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Acronyms

ARBs	Agrarian reform beneficiaries
AVAs	Agribusiness venture agreements
AMMBU	Asosasyon ng mga Magagmay nga Mangunguma kag Mamumugon sa Brgy. Orong (<i>Association of Small Farmers and Farmworkers in Brgy. Orong</i>)
AMMACAN	Asosasyon ng mga Mangunguma kag mamumugon sa Cantaghap (<i>Association of Farmers and Farmworkers in Sitio Cantaghap</i>)
BAKAS	Buhi nga Aksyon para sa Kauswagan kag pag Amlig sa Seguridad sang Mangunguma kag Mamumugon (<i>Active/Proactive Action for Development that Ensure the Rights of Farmers and Farmworkers</i>)
CLOA	Certificate of Land Ownership Award
CARP	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme
CARPER	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms
DAR	Department of Agrarian Reform
MALR	Market assisted land reform
NTF-ELCAC	National Task Force to End the Local Communist Armed Conflict
SPLIT	Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling
KABUHI-AN	Kauswagan sang Bino para sa Buhi kag Hilway nga Palangabuhian (<i>Hacienda Bino Farmers' Development for Productive Livelihood</i>)
KASMMABI	Kauswagan sang Mamumugon, Mangunguma sa Bino (<i>Development for Farmers and Farmworkers in Hacienda Bino</i>)
KMP	Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas
PDG	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group

Introduction

In 2020, the Philippines’s Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) initiated a World Bank Group (WBG) funded project titled ‘Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling’, abbreviated as ‘SPLIT’. The project subdivides collectively held land titles into individual ones, with the stated aim of improving land tenure security and stabilizing property rights. In reality, however, it is just the latest in a long line of market-led agrarian reforms in the Philippines, which have concentrated land in the hands of powerful economic elites.

This primer on SPLIT gives an overview of key elements of the project and details the risks it poses to peasants’ rights — in both its design and its implementation. Specifically, it shares the findings of research conducted with five local peasant organizations in Negros Occidental province in late August 2023. Focus group discussions with 70 members of these organizations highlighted a range of concerns about the militarized implementation of SPLIT in their communities and its detrimental impacts on their lives and livelihoods. Negros Occidental offers an illustrative case study of the realities of SPLIT implementation in a context of oligarchy, struggles against landed elites, and state violence.

The primer ends with a call to action to replace SPLIT with genuine agrarian reform, in line with peasants’ right to effective control of land. This right is essential for advancing food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture, and collective farming practices.

1. What is a rights-based approach to agrarian reform?

Land plays an essential role in the realization of a range of human rights enshrined in the international treaties that the Philippines has ratified, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The United Nations body mandated to oversee this Covenant has stated that, for peasants “access to land and other productive resources is so important for the realization of most rights under the Covenant that it implies for them a right to land”¹. Articles 5 and 17 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, adopted by the Human Rights Council in 2018, similarly recognizes the right to land for peasants and other people working in rural areas, in order to enjoy adequate living conditions.

To guarantee this right, the State has a duty to ensure that access to, use of, and control over, this productive resource is fairly distributed. This includes taking appropriate measures to carry out agrarian reforms. Such reforms should “limit excessive concentration and control of land, taking into account its social function”². Article XIII of the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines similarly obligates the State to: undertake an agrarian reform program that facilitates the “just distribution” of agricultural lands “founded on the right of farmers and regular farmworkers, who are landless, to own directly or collectively the lands they till or, in the case of other farmworkers, to receive a just share of the fruits thereof.”

Agrarian reform programs should be designed and implemented in a manner that respects, protects, and fulfills peasants’ right to land:³

- Respecting rights: prohibits States from interfering with peasants’ legitimate tenure

1 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General comment No. 26 (2022) on land and economic, social and cultural rights

2 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General comment No. 26 (2022) on land and economic, social and cultural rights

3 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General comment No. 26 (2022) on land and economic, social and cultural rights

rights and with the “decisions of concerned communities to manage their lands”. This includes a duty to ensure land tenure administration is non-discriminatory and free from corruption.

- Protecting rights: requires States to adopt measures to prevent any person or entity from interfering with peasants’ access to, use of, and control over, their land. This includes adopting safeguards against risks from large-scale land investments.
- Fulfilling rights: requires that States introduce policies, including land distribution schemes, to support peasants. Such schemes should ensure beneficiaries receive proper support to enhance their capacity to use land productively and to engage in sustainable agricultural practices in order to maintain the productivity of the land. They should also be formulated in a way that enables beneficiaries to benefit from the land they acquire and avoids incentives to sell the land to support their minimum needs.⁴

In its Environmental and Social Framework, the World Bank undertakes to support its member countries as they strive to progressively achieve their human rights obligations and to avoid actions that would have “adverse impacts” on people’s rights.⁵

These obligations give us a benchmark against which to judge market-based land reform in the Philippines, which the World Bank has promoted for decades. They also help us in ‘decoding’ the injustice of the SPLIT project.

4 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General comment No. 26 (2022) on land and economic, social and cultural rights

5 <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/837721522762050108-0290022018/original/ESFFramework.pdf>

2. What role has the World Bank played in market-assisted agrarian reform in the Philippines?

Social movements and civil society have long criticized the World Bank's promotion of policies that subsume global South countries under a world economic system dominated by big business and elites in the global North. Loan conditions have been a lever to promote neoliberal policies, such as the privatization of social services, the liberalization of economies for capital, and deregulation of economic activities to encourage investors. These allowed free rein for profit-oriented activities in the global South and consolidated the State's roles as facilitators of profit, at the expense of peoples' rights and ecological sustainability.

The Philippines was an early member of the World Bank, starting in 1945, and among the top borrowers from the Bank by 2021⁶. Agriculture has been a key area of Bank interventions. It provided funding and technical assistance to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP), for example. Established in 1988, CARP aimed to redistribute agricultural land — typically owned by large landowners and corporations — to qualifying agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), such as landless farmers and farmworkers. ARBs were granted Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs). But, they were required to pay for the land they received through installment payments over an extended period.

In 1998, ten years into CARP, the World Bank criticized the programme, but blamed its shortcomings on state inefficiency. In its assessment, the state-led land reform was costly in having to compensate landowners; bogged down by slow implementation; facing landowners' resistance. It described the government's land reform as being “undermined by disputes, delays and inefficiencies”.⁷

In line with the Bank's ideological belief in state inefficiency and market efficiency, it promoted market-assisted land reform (MALR), which “aims to encourage willing buyers to negotiate deals [and land prices] with willing sellers.” This replaces a state-led expropriative land reform process with a transactional one — with the government's role

6 <https://finances.worldbank.org/Loans-and-Credits/IBRD-Country-wise-Loan-summary/5xqk-t59j/data>

7 Labiste and Wright. *Stories of Struggle*. 2018.

reduced to “facilitating the process through grants and other supportive measures”.⁸

But the argument for the leasing and sale of awarded lands in a so-called vibrant and “free” land market disregards the reality of land monopoly. More than half (52%) of the total area of farmlands are in the hands of just 11% of owners.⁹

The real shortcomings of CARP are that it exempted large landholdings from redistribution; avoided actual land redistribution, by offering shares of stock in landlords’ corporations; and increasing corporatisation, by converting agricultural land through commercial use and agri-business venture arrangements. Government data reveals that between 1980 and 2012, the percentage of farmholdings “fully-owned” by its operators dropped from 58% to 46%, decreasing by 12%¹⁰. By 2021, 540,000 hectares covered by CARP remain undistributed.¹¹ Several studies, including ones commissioned or undertaken by the World Bank, DAR, and Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) admit that the program has had, at most, “muted”¹² and “modest”¹³ achievements, and was “not fully successful.”¹⁴

The Philippines is a country with a history of agrarian unrest and land monopolies, which has shaped the political economy of agrarian reform up to the present. Landed elites still either hold influence or are directly in power. For social movements such as the Peasant Movement of the Philippines (Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas), whose origins and long-standing demands revolve around the peasant struggle for land, agrarian reform has failed to break up land monopolies and rein in the vested interests behind large landholdings. As a result, it has failed to address socio-economic inequalities, advance social justice, and to defend peasant rights. Land reform struggles have also been marked by state violence.

The SPLIT project needs to be looked at in this context. It is also part of a bigger wave of policies that facilitate expanded land markets and increase the “ease of doing business” in agriculture, especially export-oriented agriculture. This includes the recently passed New Agrarian Emancipation Act and the proposed National Land Use Act, among others. The direction it sets is likely to intensify the concentration of land into the landed and moneyed few.

8 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/708351468740977892/text/multi0page.txt>

9 Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). (1960-2012). Census on Agriculture and Fisheries.

10 <https://peasantmovementph.com/2023/06/10/35-years-of-deception-and-disgrace-whither-to-after-carp/>

11 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/marcos-jr-sona-2022-agrarian-reform-beneficiaries-debt-promise-limits/>

12 Ballesteros, M. M., Ancheta, J., & Ramos, T. (2017, December). The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program after 30 Years: Accomplishments and Forward Options. Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).

13 World Bank. (2009, --). Land Reform, Rural Development, and Poverty in the Philippines : Revisiting the Agenda. Open Knowledge Repository. Retrieved June 7, 2023, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/18545>

14 IBRD. (2020, June 5). Project Appraisal Document on SPLIT.

3. What is the SPLIT project?

The Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) is a project of the World Bank Group and the Philippines' Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). It was introduced in 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to improve land tenure security and stabilize the property rights of ARBs. It does this by subdividing collective CLOAs into individual titles.¹⁵ These are property instruments “that clearly show their absolute ownership”¹⁶.

According to the DAR, the project addresses issues that have arisen in collective CLOAs. These include “boundary conflicts, susceptibility to encroachment by non-beneficiaries, impediments in land amortization payments”. These issues negatively impact ARBs' ownership of their awarded lands. They eventually hold “insecure and unstable property rights” as a result.¹⁷

Concurring, the World Bank has declared that “[the] insecurity of property rights... is the natural consequence of lack of individual land titles”¹⁸. By issuing individual titles, it expects ARBs to have greater access to credit, because they can use their titled land as collateral; be able to sell or lease the land after full payment of amortization; and possibly enjoy higher foreign investment in agriculture. This, in turn, will supposedly provide ARBs with funds to increase productivity through mechanization, use of hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers, crop diversification, and additional on-farm activities, among others. The government is also meant to benefit from streamlined amortization payments and taxes from increased importation of agricultural inputs.

SPLIT aims to parcelize around 139,000 collective CLOAs between 2020 and 2024. These encompass 1.4 million hectares and 1.1 million ARBs across 77 provinces.¹⁹ Nearly half of the area covered is in four regions: Eastern Visayas (15%), Western Visayas (13%), Soccsksargen in central Mindanao (11%), and Zamboanga Peninsula (8%).

Not all collective CLOAs are covered by SPLIT. Of the total 2.25 million hectares under collective CLOAs, the DAR exempted 608,586 hectares, which were already parcelized by 2018; another 126,975 hectares located inside forests, roads, or watersheds; and another 135,505 hectares where “co-owners [opted] to remain in collective CLOAs”.²⁰

15 DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA).

16 DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF).

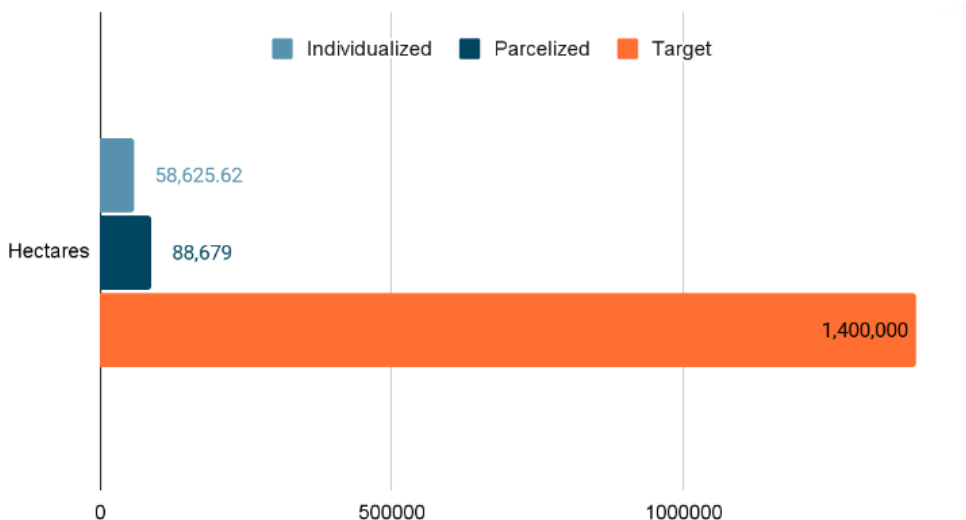
17 DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA).

18 IBRD. (2020, June 5). Project Appraisal Document on SPLIT.

19 Due to ongoing validation processes, the exact number of hectares, ARBs, and CCLOAs covered by SPLIT has been changing. The figures used here are the most consistent estimates.

20 DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA).

SPLIT status in hectares



The primary legal basis of the project is Republic Act No. 9700, known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms (CARPER). This Act was signed into law by former President Gloria Arroyo in 2009. It amends Section 25 of RA 6657 or CARP. Specifically, it says that, in general, land awarded to an ARB “should be in the form of an individual title”. It also provides that the DAR should “immediately undertake the parcelization” of existing collective CLOAs, “particularly those that do not exhibit the conditions for collective ownership”.

The DAR proposed a USD 473 million total budget for the project, with 78% coming from a World Bank loan and the remaining 22% from the Philippine government.²¹ In June 2020, the World Bank approved the loan, amounting to USD 370 million, payable in 29 to 39.5 years.

²¹ DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA).

Box 1. The steps in the SPLIT process

The project is being implemented in five steps, namely:

1. *Inventory* – Initial gathering of data regarding the scope and status of collective CLOAs which SPLIT can cover is undertaken as the first step.
2. *Field validation* – This information is then validated in the field by DAR personnel by undertaking meetings/consultations with affected ARBs.
3. *Firming up of lists* – This involves deliberating upon petitions for inclusion/exclusion as ARBs and confirming those included in the collective CLOA.
4. *Parcelization* – ARBs included in the “firmed up” list are then once again consulted during which the parcelization process and lot allocation is deliberated. After this, the collective CLOA is parcelized and canceled.
5. *Individualization* – Individual electronic CLOAs are then generated and issued for ARBs.
6. *Updating of information* – The last step is the generation/updating of the ARBs’ information schedule regarding amortization payment.

Box 2. Fast facts: SPLIT status

SPLIT has been slow in its ultimate goal of parcelization. As of August 2023, the DAR reported that it had issued 42,733 individual e-titles covering 58,625.62 hectares (4% of the target) for 38,424 ARBs. This came from 10,267 collective CLOAs (7%) covering 88,679 hectares (6%) already parcelized during the same period.²²

In a separate document, DAR is said to have validated 53,966 collective CLOAs (39%), for 263,214 ARBs; and has informed about the parcelization process an additional 366,444 ARBs (32%) as of May 2023.²³

Meanwhile, USD 132,604,800.17 (28%) of the World Bank loan has been released to the DAR as of September 30, 2023.²⁴ As early as March 2023, an internal memorandum order revealed DAR's intent and efforts toward requesting an extension for the project, which it claimed will not constitute a new loan.²⁵

22 DAR. (2023, May 30). Project SPLIT - Presentation to Committee on Agrarian Reform [Powerpoint presentation.].

23 World Bank. (2023, August 3). SPLIT Implementation Status & Results Report.

24 World Bank. (2020, - -). Development Projects : Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) Project - P172399. World Bank Project. Retrieved September 19, 2023, from <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P172399>

25 DAR. (2023, September 21). Questions Raised During the Committee on Appropriations Budget Hearing.

4. What are the dangers of SPLIT to peasants' rights?

Founded on the fundamental flaws of the Philippine government's agrarian reform programme, SPLIT is only set to worsen the problems it professes it aims to resolve.

DAR's insistence on the superiority of individual CLOAs rests upon contradicting data. It cites a 2015 survey which indicated that collective CLOAs are more susceptible to illicit transfers and land-use conversion than individual ones. But the same survey revealed that those under collective CLOAs had higher average farm and total household incomes than those under individual ones. These numbers fail to consider the impact of onerous AVAs on ARBs under collective CLOAs, and suggest a negative relationship between ownership and economic goals, among others.^{26, 27}

The assurance of ARBs' land rights has not been fully guaranteed only by CLOAs - regardless if they are collective or individual. In fact there have been cases when collective CLOAs have been used to undermine peasant control of the land, particularly through onerous agribusiness contracts imposed upon the beneficiaries.²⁸ For such cases, SPLIT remains inconsequential as it exempts corporate farms. Ultimately, CLOAs carry with them the fundamental flaws of CARP.

Further, there are serious doubts about the supposedly voluntary nature of SPLIT. The World Bank's project document states that "ARBs wishing to continue to farm their land in a communal manner can opt out of the parcelization process". However, the same document categorizes the project as having a "high" environmental and social risk, including the displacement of occupants, land boundary disputes, contested inheritances, and the sale of awarded lands.²⁹

The DAR claims that "there has been no instance, [for] almost 25 years, [where]

26 DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF).

27 Galang, I. M. R. (2020, December). Boosting Agricultural Productivity through Parcelization of Collective Certificate of Land Ownership Awards. Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). Funded by DAR and IFAD, this study was unable to definitively show individual CLOAs as superior to collective ones, admitting that "the analysis cannot strongly conclude that individual CLOA households enjoy higher income due to the fact that they received individual CLOAs rather than CCLOAs." It also cited the more robust 2015 survey by DAR.

28 Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA). (2016). Lapanday Issue Profile. <https://umapilipinas.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/lapanday-issue-profile.pdf>

29 World Bank. (2019, November 15). SPLIT Project Information Document.

parcelization of [collective] CLOAs resulted to any kind of displacement, much less eviction, of non-beneficiary occupants”³⁰. This is a blatant falsehood. Dispossession occurred both during parcelization^{31, 32} and after individualization³³ in Hacienda Luisita, the country’s most infamous agrarian case.

In compliance with the World Bank’s Environment and Social Framework, the DAR prepared risk management and mitigation options, including a resettlement policy framework and a stakeholder engagement plan.³⁴ These documents laid down guidelines in facing some identified risks, most notably advising to defer the parcelization of contested collective CLOAs, and allocating resettlement and compensation for affected ARBs. It also designed a Grievance and Redress Mechanism to accept and respond to grievances exclusively about the implementation of SPLIT. The effectiveness of these documents can only be measured in real world cases.

Overall, SPLIT fails to respect, protect, and fulfill peasants’ rights. It poses a range of harms, including compulsory parcelization of land, worsening militarisation, more disputes among the ranks of peasants, land reconcentration, and detrimental national debt burdens.

a. Compulsary parcelization

The SPLIT steps outlined in *Box 1* do not contain sufficient procedural safeguards to ensure that ARBs are able to give informed consent and undermines the voluntary nature of SPLIT:

At the inventory stage, all collective CLOAs under DAR’s records were by default covered, prior to informing or taking the consent of all ARBs involved. This automatic inclusion

30 DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA).

31 Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA). (2016). New Luisita land reform swindle, more reason to jail BS Aquino after term ends. <https://umapilipinas.wordpress.com/2016/01/06/new-luisita-land-reform-swindle-more-reason-to-jail-bs-aquino-after-term-ends/>

32 Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA). (2021). AMBALA Members in Hacienda Luisita Hand Over Petition to DAR, Blast Said Agency for Excluding Majority of Original Petitioners from List of Agrarian Beneficiaries in TADECO land. <https://umapilipinas.wordpress.com/2021/11/29/ambala-members-in-hacienda-luisita-hand-over-petition-to-dar-blast-said-agency-for-excluding-majority-of-original-petitionersfrom-list-of-agrarian-beneficiaries-in-tadeco-land/>

33 DAR. (2017, April 24). Mariano declares null and void lands leased or sold by ARBs in Hacienda Luisita. Department of Agrarian Reform. Retrieved September 20, 2023, from <https://www.dar.gov.ph/articles/news/100556>

34 DAR. (2020, February). SPLIT Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). Taking effect only in October 2018, the ESF requires borrowers, in this case the Philippine government, to meet particular environmental and social standards adhering to the World Bank’s “commitment to sustainable development.”



FGD with AMMBO members.

(with the exemptions noted above) undermines the optional nature of parcelization. At the field validation stage, “Requests to Parcelize” are meant to be collected from ARBs in consultation meetings.³⁵ DAR personnel are supposed to “discuss the parcelization process, schedule of activities, and documentary requirements” for SPLIT. However, there is no requirement that they inform ARBs of their freedom to choose or explain the costs and benefits between collective and individual CLOAs.

At the stage of firming up the list of collective CLOAs to be parcelized, the meaningful consent of ARBs is sidelined. Even if only some of the beneficiaries of a collective CLOA supposedly agree to, or file a petition on, parcelization, their whole landholding will be covered, even of the ARBs who want to retain a collective CLOA.

At the parcelization stage, a 2020 DAR administrative order (No. 2 series of 2020) required a Deed of Parcelization to be signed by the involved ARBs before a collective CLOA could be canceled and individual CLOAs issued. But if ARBs refuse to sign, the DAR could simply issue an Order of Parcelization to enforce the process. However, a later DAR order (No. 1, series of 2021) removed the Deed requirement altogether.

³⁵ DAR. (2021, February 26). Administrative Order No. 1 Series of 2021 [Revised Guidelines and Procedures on the Parcelization of Landholdings with Collective Certificates of Land Ownership Award].

b. Heightening militarization

SPLIT is being implemented within a context of heightened militarization in response to peasant resistance. Because SPLIT is, in effect, compulsory, it is likely to deepen this even further. This brings with it increasing threats to peasants' civil and political rights, as well as to the safety of their communities.

Militarized “assistance” has been historically part of CARP implementation, as outlined in memorandums of agreement between the DAR, the Philippine National Police, the Department of Defense, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.³⁶ Poor peasants have been victimized as a result. Various agrarian disputes have led to state agents arbitrarily arresting or firing upon ARBs or farmer-claimants asserting their right to land.^{37, 38}

Following the presidential Executive Order 70 of 2018, a “whole-of-nation approach” and National Task Force to End the Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) have been instituted, subsuming civilian agencies under military objectives. The NTF-ELCAC has been its main implementing body, of which the DAR Secretary is a member. The NTF-ELCAC has engaged in repression via fear-mongering about alleged communists — combining red-tagging, terrorist-labeling, and state violence. Groups and individuals criticizing policies and officials, or forwarding reforms and alternatives, have been maligned and vilified. Consequently, the state agrarian reform’s “counter-insurgency” function has been amplified, with CARP being used for fake and forced surrenders of those the state brands communist guerrillas.^{39, 40}

SPLIT includes a “protocol for the use of local police or military” in its Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). It indicated, among others, that police and military assistance “shall always exercise utmost impartiality and neutrality in effecting its role”, stressing that they “shall be limited to the maintenance of peace and order, crowd control, and the security of [DAR personnel]” and that “[in] no case shall PNP members participate in the implementation of the decision/order/resolution or in the conduct of any of the preliminary agrarian activities, which shall be undertaken by the duly authorized officer of the DAR”. The Philippine government’s security forces are however not known for abiding by human rights standards and protocols.^{41, 42}

36 DAR-DILG-DND. (2002). Joint Circular No. 05 on Law Enforcement of Agrarian Reform Laws and Programs.

37 See <https://www.tanggolmagsasaka.com/>

38 <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/massacre-hacienda-luisita-i>

39 <https://www.dar.gov.ph/articles/dar-in-the-news/102497>

40 KMP. (2018). The Real Face of Terror: Unmasking Duterte’s Martial Law in Mindanao.

41 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/united-nations-special-rapporteur-extrajudicial-executions-finds-military>

42 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/13/international-criminal-courts-philippines-investigation>

c. Splitting peasants' collective practices

SPLIT serves to reinforce a pro-landlord bias. In effect, the project only targets the collective CLOAs of small scale farmers and farms managed by peasant organizations, leaving out corporate farms. Under Section 10 of CARPER, collective CLOAs must meet the following conditions: (a) individual farming is inappropriate for the current farm management system; (b) the farm labor system is specialized; (c) there is collective farming of large contiguous areas; and (d) multiple crops are being farmed in an integrated manner or the farm includes non-crop production areas (e.g. packing plants, storage areas). Typically, only commercial farms can meet these conditions.

SPLIT will undermine the ability of ARBs holding collective CLOAs to practice collective farming independent of corporate players. Commonly led by local peasant organizations, these practices include mutual aid, labor exchange, allotment of communal lots, and community-level employment system of “work points”, among others. CARPER does not recognize such community initiatives as viable, efficient, or modern. Unlike corporate farms, these local efforts are not exempted from SPLIT. In communities where such practices do not exist yet, SPLIT poses an additional obstacle to cooperativization.

Further, the parcelization of land among beneficiaries, threatens to flare up old and ignite new agrarian disputes. It opens the door for landlord-driven schemes to exclude legitimate farmer-tillers as beneficiaries and evict them from their lands. Examples include adding “dummy beneficiaries” when lists are firmed up and applications for landlord retention,⁴³ among others.



An FGD participant preparing to present.

⁴³ Under CARP, landowners and their heirs are entitled to retain up to five hectares of land.

d. Reconcentrating land

As outlined above, a goal of SPLIT is to make CLOAs collateralizable and eligible for lease or sale. This entices further corporate and feudal encroachment over awarded lands — both through legal arrangements or illicit deals.

Poverty and persecution have compelled ARBs to put their CLOAs under various illicit arrangements such as aryendo (land lease), prenda (land pawning), or an outright sale.⁴⁴ Landed interests and their agents have taken advantage of this desperation to reconcentrate land. A 1995 DAR survey in selected provinces revealed that an average of 26.5% of ARBs have engaged in illicit land sales and/or leases.⁴⁵ Similarly, a 2017 study revealed that 83% of ARBs in Hacienda Luisita no longer have control of their awarded lands.^{46, 47}

CARP's various corporatization schemes have also exacerbated the problem.⁴⁸ These include Agribusiness Venture Arrangements (AVAs) and sugarcane block farming, wherein CLOA-holding farmers are grouped into one agricultural operation under a corporate entity. The DAR has celebrated these schemes, despite the prevalence of ARBs being coerced into one-sided contracts.⁴⁹

SPLIT does nothing to address this problem. Instead, it encourages it. Individual titles put greater pressure upon ARBs to let go of their land rights in exchange for some cash, some one-sided contract, or the promise of peace, amid poverty and harassment.

Ultimately, SPLIT is at odds with genuine rights-based agrarian reform. It disregards

44 Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA). (2019). Imperialist Plunder of Philippine Agriculture: A Research on the Expansion of Plantations Through Agribusiness Venture Arrangement (AVAs) in Mindanao. Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura.

45 Ballesteros, M., & Cortez, F. (2008, February). CARP Institutional Assessment in a Post- 2008 Transition Scenario: Implications for Land Administration and Management.PIDS.

46 DAR. (2017, April 24). Mariano declares null and void lands leased or sold by ARBs in Hacienda Luisita. Department of Agrarian Reform. Retrieved September 20, 2023, from <https://www.dar.gov.ph/articles/news/100556>

47 Despite provisions under CARP, DAR has failed to set up a Performance Beneficiaries Monitoring and Evaluation system for beneficiaries as late as 2017. As such, the regular monitoring and validation of the beneficiaries' tenure status, income levels, and productivity, among others, is not undertaken. (Pantoja et al., 2017)

48 Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA). (June 2019). Primer on Agribusiness Venture Arrangements and the Expansion of Plantations in Mindanao and the Philippines.

49 Pantoja, B. R., Alvarez, J. V., & Sanchez, F. A. (2017, December). Assessment of Agribusiness Venture Arrangements and Sugarcane Block Farming for the Modernization of Agriculture. Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). Quoting from this study: "...with the status of majority of the ARBs and farmers' organizations in the cases that were analyzed hardly improving, the AVAs did not seem to help increase income of farmers and Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Organizations (ARBOs). The question of who really benefits in such an arrangement came to fore."

the persistent need for a new legal framework to abolish the country's land monopolies; distribute land to tillers for free; encourage cooperativization; ensure support services; and pave the way for rural development.

e. Detrimental debt

Aside from its direct impacts on ARBs, SPLIT constitutes an additional and counter-productive foreign debt burden on the Filipino people. In the first place, nothing is stopping the DAR from implementing optional parcelization at the initiative of ARBs. The foreign loan only becomes necessary because parcelization has been effectively made compulsory — making the project more costly to implement.

5. How has the implementation of SPLIT in Negros Occidental violated peasants' rights?

Negros Occidental is located in Western Visayas, the latter comprising 13% of SPLIT-covered land nationwide. Negros Occidental province is key in the type of export-oriented commercial agriculture supported by the World Bank and the Philippine government. This makes it an illustrative context for understanding the political economy in which SPLIT is being implemented.

Against a backdrop of land monopolies and state violence, peasant organizations across Negros Occidental are asserting their right to land. Five organizations in Kabankalan participated in the research for this primer.⁵⁸ Many are composed of former sugar farmworkers, who organized themselves to assert their right to land. Through militant

⁵⁸ This study was able to interact and intends to reflect the realities of the following local organisations: Kauswagan sang Bino para sa Buhi kag Hilway nga Palangabuhi-an (KABUHI-AN), Kauswagan sang Mamumugon, Mangunguma sa Bino (KASMMABI), Buhi nga Aksyon para sa Kauswagan kag pag Amlig sa Seguridad sang Mangunguma kag Mamumugon (BAKAS), and Asosasyon sg mga Magagmay nga Mangunguma kag Mamumugon sa Brgy. Orong (AMMBO) all in Barangay Orong; and Asosasyon sg mga mangunguma kag mamumugon sa Cantaghap (AMMACAN) in Barangay Oringao. (See Appendix for more information on data collection)

collective struggle, all the organizations interviewed were able to attain collective CLOAs for up to 310.9 hectares. The lands now enjoyed by AMMBO, KABUHI-AN, and AMAKAN were acquired through land occupation actions by the then-claimant farmworkers.

Land right assertions also take the form of a peasant-led land redistribution program. All organizations interviewed have their own systems of individual allotments and collective farming. Incomes from communal farms are used for the benefit of their members (e.g. relief in times of calamity, in the case of AMAKAN). Farmer organizations also implement restrictions and regulations on the sale or lease of land they control, to prevent dispossession. The organizations have implemented these kinds of land-to-the-tiller programs on the basis of peasant unity and regardless of the legal status of land.

Generally, the peasant organizations oppose the SPLIT project as it threatens their right to collective ownership and effective control over their lands, and its detrimental impacts on their organization's dynamics, their collective practices, including peasant-led land redistribution among their members, and communal farming.

The researchers conducted fieldwork in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental, from August 29 to September 2, 2023, in collaboration with the local civil society organization Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group (PDG). The team verified

Box 3. Amid plenty: Hunger, violence in Negros Occidental

Negros Island is an enduring bastion of land monopoly, at the center of the Philippine archipelago. Land reform efforts have largely failed. By 2019, over 98,000 hectares, 57% of the total agricultural land in the province,⁵⁰ were still awaiting redistribution, including colonial era haciendas that employ indentured farmworkers (sacadas).

As the country's so-called "sugar bowl", the province was estimated to have produced almost two-thirds of the country's sugar in 2022.⁵¹ There is a concentration of sugarcane plantations across the province, which is also home to 12 of the country's 27 operational mills. Today, at least 62% of the province's land is dedicated to sugarcane, atop the backs of more than 380,000 farmworkers.

Rural peoples of Negros Occidental face cycles of abject poverty. Conservative government estimates show that at least 22% of its population

are poor, above the 18% national average.⁵⁰ Farmworkers earn around USD 20-30 a week, with some taking home as little as USD 1 (PHP 43.50) a week, after deductions.⁵¹ Backbreaking, precarious work exemplifies a mamumugon's (laborer's) day in the months of sugar production. In lean times, known as tiempo muerto or dead season between May and September, farmworkers struggle to survive.

Decades-long promises of land distribution have fueled land occupations,⁵² landlord manipulation and harassment,⁵³ and human rights violations. Today, Negros Occidental continues to be one of the most militarized areas in the Philippines, as counter-insurgency and “counter-terror” operations continue.⁵⁴ Residents of Himamaylan City experienced forced evacuations in October 2022; military operations in early 2023 that forced thousands of residents to evacuate; and, more recently, killings in June 2023.⁵⁵ In Kabankalan City, the municipal government has been constructing and operating urban-commercial establishments, with the aim of making it a government and economic center for the province.^{56, 57} This, in turn, has encouraged further land grabbing, land-use conversion, land banking, and speculation in the city. Landed interests have been eyeing farmers' lands for “development” since the 2010s.

50 Philippine Statistics Office (PSA). Full Year Official Poverty Statistics.

51 PDG interview.

52 Lopez Gonzaga. Agrarian Reform in Negros Occidental. Jstor.org. Published 1988. Accessed October 1, 2023. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633114>

53 Karl Hapal, Hannah Gante, Yanna Ibarra, and Patricia Rombaon. Protecting land activists from state violence: the case of NFSW and KMP in Negros, the Philippines. Accessed October 1, 2023.

54 Executive Order 23 (Series of 2018) ordered the “immediate deployment of additional forces of the AFP and PNP to suppress lawless violence and acts of terror in Samar, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental, and the Bicol Region.”

55 <https://iboninternational.org/2023/07/24/intl-solidarity-chips-away-at-impunity-support-peoples-calls-for-intl-probe-on-victims-of-counterinsurgency-in-ph/>

56 <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/160288/kabankalan-mayor-nir-abolition-wont-hamper-city-devt>

57 <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/53238/kabankalan-poised-to-become-economic-center-of-region-18>

reports regarding the militarized implementation of SPLIT and its adverse effects on peasant rights and welfare. Focus group discussions were conducted with five farmers' associations: KABUHI-AN, KASMMABI, AMMBU, BAKAS, and AMMACAN. These discussions centered on SPLIT's implementation process, prior consultations, social impacts, and the socioeconomic situation of the communities, including their livelihood sources and land struggle history. Key informant interviews were also conducted with organization leaders and local DAR officials. Research findings are summarized below.

a. Compulsory: Disregarding local peasant opposition

None of the local organizations were properly consulted about SPLIT. All of the peasant organizations shared experiences wherein authorities, including local DAR officials and the military, dismissed their opposition to, and concerns about, the project.

AMMACAN reported that in April 2019 they were summoned by local DAR officials for a meeting. A few weeks later, they received notices informing them of parcelization details for their collective CLOA. They were surprised that their signatures, for what they thought was an attendance sheet for a meeting, were used to show that they consent to parcelization. In response, they filed a petition to express opposition to parcelization. AMMACAN also



Group photo of researchers with AMMAKAN members.

shared that the DAR tried to entice them to agree to parcelization through promises of provision of social services.

KABUHI-AN and KASMMABI learned about SPLIT in June 2020 during a meeting set by a local government official with the local DAR and the military. During the meeting, farmers asserted that their collective ownership of the land protected their rights. They expressed concerns that individual ownership could facilitate land dispossession, as current conditions force farmers to sell their parcels of land in times of need. According to KABUHI-AN and KASMMABI, authorities dismissed their concerns and insisted that SPLIT is a national project and will be implemented regardless.

Similarly, DAR disregarded AMMBO's preference for collective land ownership in their CLOA petition, distributing individual CLOAs instead. Only 26 of the original 71 beneficiaries on the collective CLOA held by AMMBO were granted individual titles. Farmers reported that those who were included were selected alphabetically from the list they submitted, arbitrarily excluding others.

Notably, PDG reported that they only learned about the project's grievance mechanism through their own study of SPLIT documents online - not from DAR's consultation meetings.

b. Militarized: Armed forces' pressure

The local DAR works closely with the military, police, and the NTF-ELCAC in implementing SPLIT. All organizations reported military presence in all steps of the SPLIT process — even at the initial “consultation meeting” held by DAR with affected ARBs, before any resistance to SPLIT had been expressed.

All organizations interviewed reported that soldiers — sometimes accompanied by DAR and village officials, sometimes by themselves — had engaged in house-to-house visits to “persuade” ARBs to abide by the SPLIT project. Leaders of the organizations were particularly targeted — receiving repeated visits. In interviews, the farmers described the visits as part of counter-insurgency operations and characterized by intimidation. Armed state agents have urged some peasant-leaders to surrender or “return to the fold of the law” as supposed communist guerrilla rebels or, worse, terrorists, for their mere affiliation to PDG and KMP. This violates DAR's own guidelines for police and military assistance under its ESMF.

Peasant leaders of AMMBO were asked to submit the membership list and organizational documents, such as official registration and minutes of meetings to the military. Based on the malicious state narrative that critical social movements are armed communists, KABUHI-AN and KASMMABI leaders have been compelled by soldiers to sign a declaration that the Communist Party of the Philippines, its armed New People’s Army, and “Leftist” organizations as persona non grata, or unwelcome persons, in their localities.

Interviews with local officials show contradictory claims on militarization. One municipal-level DAR officer denied police or military assistance in implementing SPLIT. But this is contrary to the admission of a provincial-level DAR official that police and military assistance have been normal in their work.⁵⁹ The testimonies and photographs shared by farmers also dispute this claim.

c. Divisive: Sowing disunity, disrupting local peasant assertions

The combination of the one-sided discussion about parcelization by civilian agencies, along with military harassment, have compelled some members of the organizations and unorganized farmers to “agree” to SPLIT. This, in turn, has fanned local disputes, and sowed new divisions.

The focus group discussions with KABUHI-AN, KASMMABI, BAKAS, and AMMBO, revealed that the military backed the creation of the Victory Hills Farmers’ Association in Barangay Orong. It grouped together peasants who broke away from their local organizations. AMMBO members shared that the military threatened to disqualify farmers critical of the SPLIT project as ARBs, and to replace them with members of Victory Hills.

AMMACAN members shared that, in land disputes, DAR personnel and soldiers sided with “dummy” agrarian reform beneficiaries with close ties to the Zayco clan, a local landowning family.⁶⁰ The members were also told to agree with a redivision of land allotments, from an existing 70-30% in their favor, to 60-40%. BAKAS shared an experience of how SPLIT divided peasants’ ranks: 26 of their members initially signed agreements to split their collective CLOA into individual titles for land parcelization. BAKAS collectively

⁵⁹ Key interview with DAR Provincial Office - South Negros Occidental.

⁶⁰ The Zayco clan are among the wealthiest families in Kabankalan since the American colonial period. (<https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1810627/bacolod/local-news/pedro-zayco-still-the-richest-negros-occidental-board-member>) and the most powerful (<https://digicastnegros.com/zayco-nothing-last-forever-support-new-administration/>)



Three women leaders of KABUHIAN known as “Tres Marias”.

decided to reject the implementation of SPLIT over their land and stalled the processing of the individual titles.

All organizations expressed concerns that the very existence of their cooperative practices is ultimately threatened. Systems and programs designed and implemented by peasant organizations are disrupted by SPLIT. The organizations’ communal lots are under threat of erasure. Individual allotments decided upon by members will be disregarded. Prohibitions and regulations on aryendo (land lease) and prenda (land pawning) are limited as both, and even land sale, are encouraged under SPLIT.

d. Reconcentrating land: SPLIT deepens land reform loopholes

SPLIT creates conditions for land reconcentration to large landowners. The FGDs revealed how the entire SPLIT process, particularly field validation and firming up the list of beneficiaries, is being used to reduce local farmers’ allocation of land and increase control of landowners, such as the Zayco and Starke families.

All five organizations describe how former landowners had used SPLIT to apply or

reapply to regain control over areas distributed to peasants. In Kabankalan, BAKAS and AMACAN were told that through SPLIT, some areas of land that were already distributed would be allotted in line with CARP's retention provisions. AMACAN shared an experience where a local DAR official and military forces visited their community to claim the retention of land of former landowner Zayco. In a separate case⁶¹ in Bago City, Negros Occidental, a 136-hectare landholding is applying for up to 70 hectares of land retention, for the 21 surviving heirs of landowner Primitivo Elezalde. If approved, the Elezalde clan will effectively retake more than half of the lands "awarded" to beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, the lands tilled by KABUHI-AN and KASMMABI have been under threat of conversion to non-agricultural use even before SPLIT. PDG and KABUHI-AN discussed that since 2018, Propton Realty has declared ownership of at least 87 hectares in Brgy. Orong, to be used for the development of an island-wide government center. With SPLIT in the picture, the private real estate and construction firms have become more brazen in harassing farmers into compliance.

Overall, the implementation of SPLIT in the communities in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental has intensified militarization and violence against peasants and their organizations, and violated their socioeconomic and civil-political rights. Peasant organizations view SPLIT as a means to facilitate land acquisition and land reconcentration for development projects in service of corporate and elite interests.

6. How should we face SPLIT? A call to action

The way SPLIT has been designed and the way it is being implemented fails to respect, protect, and fulfill peasants' rights of access to, use of, and control over, their land. It must be abolished.

Awareness-raising and advocacy at the national level, among the ranks of ARBs, peasants, and the Filipino people, is crucial. The unity of the local farmers' organizations is of decisive importance to firmly face SPLIT, and to resist compulsory parcelization that attempts to take away land in effective control of peasants and ARBs. Even in contexts

⁶¹ Interview with Sandungaw Farmers and Farmworkers Association. This was undertaken after the research team dispatched some members to Bacolod City after learning of a dialogue between farmers facing SPLIT and the DAR Provincial Office.

where compulsory parcelization has been implemented, farmers associations can still work to advance collective farming based on their organized strength.

Peasant-led initiatives in collective land cultivation should be recognized as legitimate pathways to raising farmers' standard of living and developing the countryside. These efforts should be supported foremost through public investments in the form of production aid and subsidies. Interviewed farmers have commonly expressed that instead of taking a loan to force parcelization, allocations for such agricultural support would have been more productive.

International solidarity for common struggles

Peasant organizations, social movements, and civil society around the world are in a position to express solidarity with Philippine farmers' organizations opposing SPLIT, as they face common struggles. Rural communities around the world face the World Bank's projects and agricultural priorities that erode farmers' practices, are incoherent with food sovereignty, and only serve corporate interests in export-oriented agriculture. Big businesses' overall drive to further expand profit margins, amid multiple and worsening crises, is the bedrock of the dominant economic system. It is a system that affects national contexts differently, but with the same drive of resource extraction and plunder in agriculture.

Land concentration and state violence against advocates for land rights are issues faced in common by peasants, Indigenous Peoples, and other rural communities especially in the global South. Recent data show that Brazil, Mexico, Honduras and the Philippines remain the worst countries for activists defending land, resources, and the environment⁶²—all being countries where market-assisted land reform have been attempted.⁶³

Genuine agrarian reform and economic redistribution

Social and economic inequalities are growing in the era of multiple crises. At its root, wealth and resources are concentrated among a few, at the expense of the majority of the world. A genuine agrarian reform, as advocated by peasant organizations in the Philippines, aims to redistribute a crucial productive resource—land—to the effective control of farmers.

62 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/13/environmental-activists-killed-at-a-rate-of-one-every-other-day-in-2022-global-witness-report-aoe>

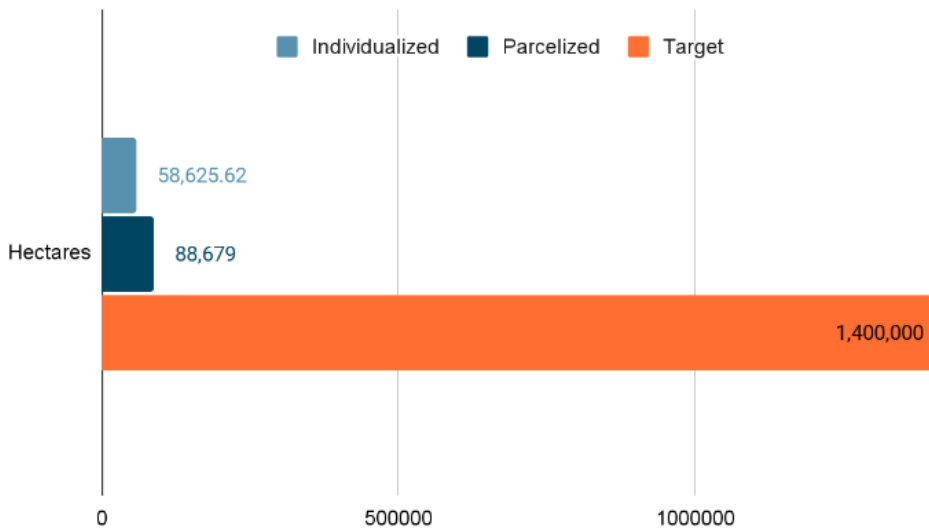
63 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264837719309949>

Economic redistribution of productive resources in the global South, starting with land, entails weakening the power of landed and corporate interests that obstruct peoples' right to food, land, and resources. Shifts towards such a genuine agrarian reform would create possibilities to advance food sovereignty and security, sustainable agriculture, and peasant organizations' collective practices. It is part of immediate measures, such as canceling debts, progressive taxation, investment regulation, that could contribute to stemming neoliberal norms and monopoly capitalist wealth extraction towards long-term social transformation.

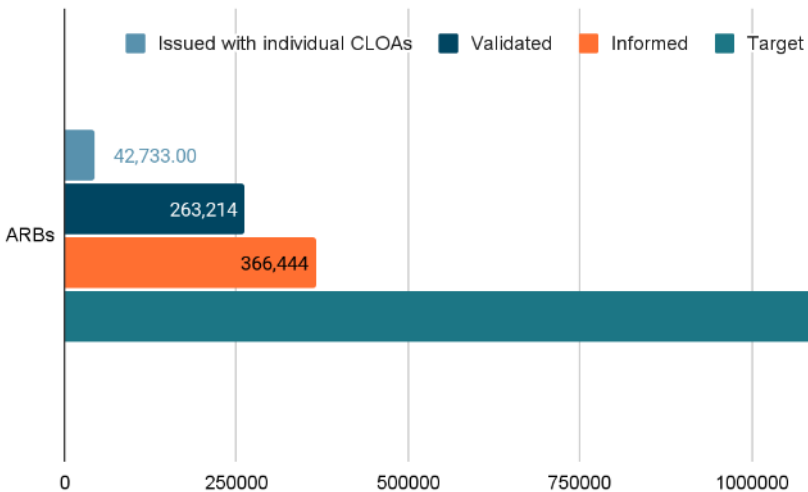
Appendices

SPLIT STATUS IN CHARTS

SPLIT status in hectares



SPLIT status by ARBs



FIELDWORK CONDUCT

The researchers conducted field work in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental between August 29 to September 2, 2023 to verify reports by local peasant organizations to Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines) about the militarized implementation of SPLIT in their communities, and on its detrimental impacts on their rights and welfare. The researchers closely collaborated with local civil society organization Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group (PNG) to conduct the field work.

The researchers conducted focus group discussions with five farmers' associations: Kauswagan sang Bino para sa Buhi kag Hilway nga Palangabuhi-an (KABUHI-AN), Kauswagan sang Mamumugon, Mangunguma sa Bino (KASMMABI), Asosasyon sg mga Magagmay nga Mangunguma kag Mamumugon sa Brgy. Orong (AMMBU), Buhi nga Aksyon para sa Kauswagan kag pag Amlig sa Seguridad sang Mangunguma kag Mamumugon (BAKAS), and Asosasyon sg mga mangunguma kag mamumugon sa Cantaghap (AMMACAN). The discussions focused on the process of the SPLIT implementation in their communities, including consultations about the project and its social impacts prior to its implementation. The researchers also looked into the socioeconomic situation, including sources of livelihood, of the communities, and the history of their organizations and land struggle.

The researchers also conducted key informant interviews with organization leaders and local officials of the Department of Agrarian Reform.

The field work was disrupted by various forms of interference by the military. The researchers and their local partners noted four incidents:

- On August 30, military forces present at the office of the village chief (barangay hall) took photos of the researchers and their local partners.
- On August 30, the chairperson of KASMMABI was visited by state forces after participating in a focus group discussion.
- During the course of the field work, the vice-chairperson of KABUHI-AN was visited by state forces and forced to sign a document that declared “leftist” organizations persona non grata in their community.
- On September 1, the researchers and their local partners experienced tailing and surveillance by identified intelligence officers after conducting a focus group discussion with AMMACAN.

PROFILE OF ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY

KABUHI-AN

The Kabuhi-an Association was formally established in 1996 by farmworkers who worked the fields of former Negros congresswoman Hortensia L. Starke, Hacienda Bino, in Kabankalan Negros. Like the situation of many farmworkers who perform seasonal contract labor, living in the plantation is difficult and marked by poverty. “Tiempo Muerto” or the dead season, referring to the gap between planting and harvesting sugarcane, is a time of great hunger among farmworkers who are not engaged in wage labor. During these lean months, Starke, through management, reportedly lends rice to farmworkers which they are forced to repay by staying in the plantation during this season.

In 1995, Hacienda Bino was placed under the CARP where farmworkers were identified and registered as beneficiaries. Following this, the farmworkers organized themselves into the Kabuhi-an Association, in which the Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group (PDG) had supported. It was through the efforts of PDG to consolidate and educate the farmworkers of their right to the land they till which brought this significant development. In 1998, the collective Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) was released. This was strongly resisted and opposed by Starke and criminal charges were brought upon the leaders.

Initially, while the farmworkers took hold of their CLOA, their production was inhibited by financial issues. Through coordination with PDG, the farmers organized a livelihood and financial program within the association. This included collective cultivation of the land, program of work, and a PDG-led skills building and finance training workshops.

BAKAS Association

The BAKAS Association currently collectively cultivates and owns 49.9 hectares of land, which is covered by three collective CLOAs covering 20.9

hectares, 17 hectares, and 11.1 hectares respectively. It was established in 1994 and is currently organizationally led by children and kin of its founding members. PDG assisted the farmworkers' self-organization for their struggle for land, the area being foreclosed lands. It initially had 160 members but turbulent times reduced membership. By 1996, there were only 36 remaining, who nevertheless asserted their claim on the land, collectively cultivating 49 hectares of the sugar and ipil-ipil (river tamarind) plantations for their collective cultivation from 1996 to 1997. It covers areas of two barangays ('villages') Brgy. Orong and Cansi.

From 1996-1997, the lands were collectively managed. By 1997, the association determined individual lots temporarily for its members at almost 1 hectare per member. By 2008, CLOAs were already signed by the DAR, save for one (17 hectares) that lacks the signature of the regional geodetic engineer, but it was not until 2011 were these awarded to the farmers.

AMMBO Association

The AMMBO Association is a more recently established association composed of farm workers who organized themselves in 2013. It collectively cultivates 24 hectares of land. Their first collective cultivation campaign was in 2018 but the farmers were dispersed and intimidated. By 2019, the farmworkers returned to place their claim on the land as part of CARP coverage and planted bananas and corn. The farmworkers were able to cultivate corn in 9 hectares while 15 hectares remained under the control of local landlord clan Zayco.

By early April 2021, a CLOA was issued covering the land but the association was barred by DAR from installing themselves. The Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer advised the farmers to wait for the official release of the CLOA before cultivating the land, allowing Zayco to continue his cultivation of the 15 hectares. Due to the consolidated efforts and high level of organization among farmworkers, they were able to secure dialogues with the DAR provincial office which already started building fences around their land in September 2021, with security from the Philippine military.

Due to continued pressure from the farmworkers and their collective cultivation campaign, their individual CLOAs were officially released in November 2022. Despite their land struggle being collectively waged, their members received individualized CLOAs. They also told stories of questionable practices in land redistribution, where DAR had farmer beneficiaries randomly pick from a jar to distribute plots of land.

At present, the association continues to struggle for other parcels of land for CARP coverage and strengthening their collective organization.

AMACAN Association

As early as 1983, the farmworkers of AMACAN Association faced threats and intimidation from state forces. They faced labor charges and were directed to leave the plantation. They were shortly introduced to former PDG lawyer and founder Atty. Benjamin Ramos who advised the association that their case can be settled under the principles of CARP. By 2004, the farmworkers received their long-struggled CLOA covering 108 hectares, then only awaiting their installation. In 2006, the landlord Zayco sent military and police forces to harass and intimidate the farmers after receipt of their CLOA. This military-led harassment continues at present, mostly without DAR personnel to accompany them, in connection to implementing the SPLIT program among farmers with collective CLOAs.

Today, the association is a stronghold evinced by the expressed militant resistance of farmerworkers against military presence and coercion from DAR.

FURTHER NOTES ON RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

Negros Occidental has been increasingly militarized in line with the national government's counterinsurgency program. The 2018 Memorandum Order 32 (MO 32) by former president Rodrigo Duterte has deployed additional police and military forces in the province along with the provinces of Negros Oriental, Samar, and the Bicol region.

The Negros provinces are the major sugar producers and exporters of the country. Peasants and farmworkers are exploited in conditions akin to a feudal system (see *Box 3* on Page 18). The provinces are also known for vibrant peasant struggles, including collective occupation and cultivation or *bungkalan* of unproductive agricultural lands. State forces have violently repressed peasants' assertions for land rights. In June 2023, a peasant family, including two minors, were killed by military forces in Himamaylan, Negros Occidental province in central Philippines. Before the killings, the couple, Emelda and Bill Fausto, were branded by state actors as supporters of the revolutionary guerilla group New People's Army, and experienced extensive harassment from the military. In the same month, the chairperson of the peasant organization to which the Fausto couple belonged, Susan Medes of the Baclayan, Bito, Cabagal Farmers and Farmworkers Association (BABICAFA), was arrested on trumped-up charges.

Prior to the Fausto family's massacre, joint police and military operations have killed multiple peasant activists and advocates in at least three cases, such as in Guihulngan in 2017, Sagay in 2018, and in the towns of Canlaon, Manjuyod, and Sta. Catalina in 2019.

This primer examines the World Bank's SPLIT project in the Philippines as another iteration of a market-assisted land reform program. The project's implications on peasant's rights is explored, especially in the face of widespread peasant landlessness in the Philippines.

A case study on SPLIT's implementation in the sugar capital, Negros Occidental, exposes bitter realities amid lofty promises. The need for a peasant-led genuine agrarian reform program has only become more imperative.

Read the full primer here:



<https://peasantmovementph.com/2023/10/04/wb-split-injustice>