

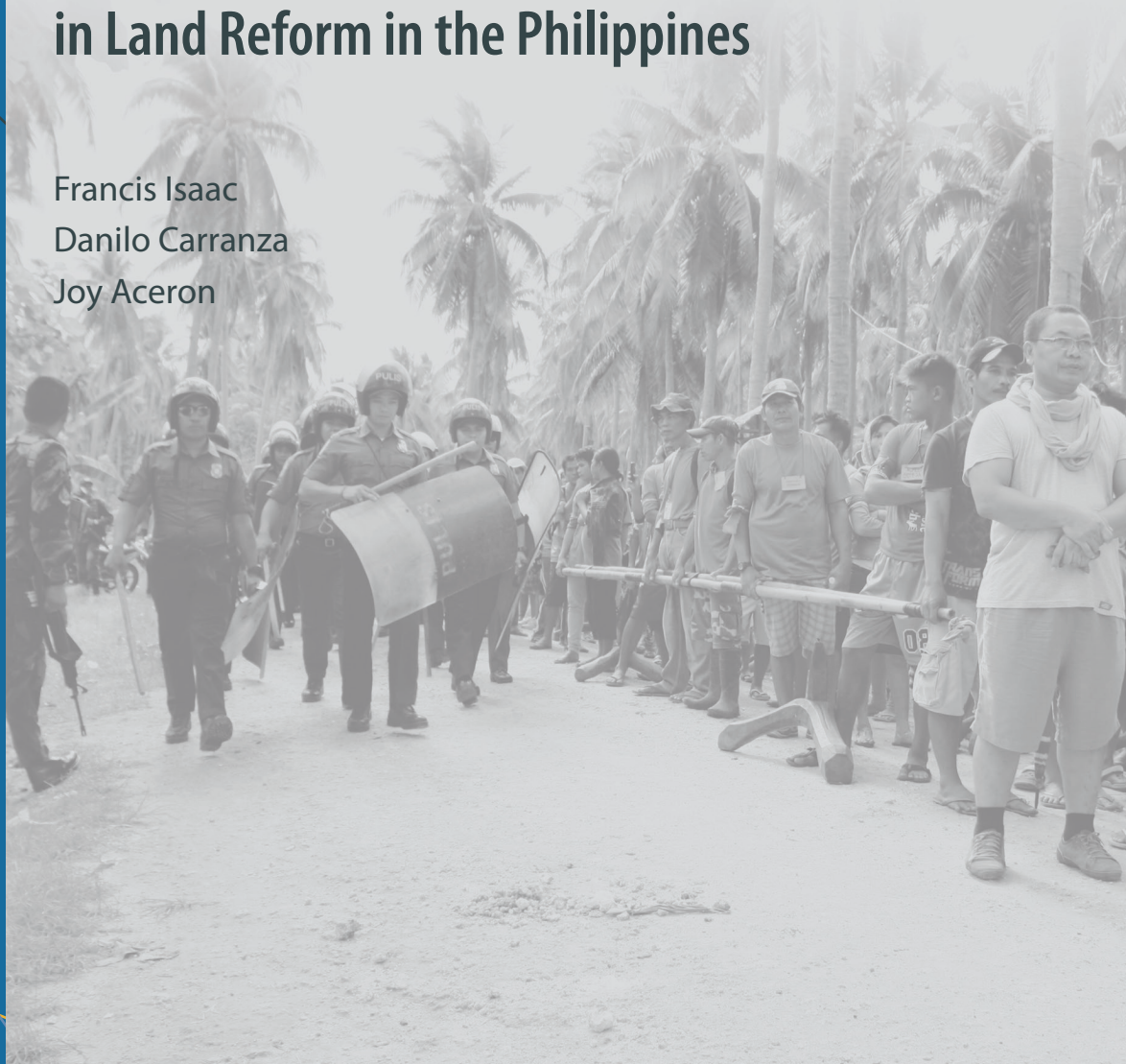
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From the Ground Up: Multi-Level Accountability Politics in Land Reform in the Philippines

Francis Isaac
Danilo Carranza
Joy Aceron



GOVERNMENTWATCH
Citizen Action for Accountability



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About the Authors



Francis Isaac is a researcher at Government Watch (G-Watch), writes on Philippine elections, social movements, human rights, and agrarian reform. He is also involved with various non-government organizations and citizen-led reform campaigns in the Philippines. Francis is currently working towards his masters in International Studies in De La Salle University in Manila.



Danilo Carranza is the National Coordinator of the Rural Poor Institute for Land and Human Rights Services, or RIGHTS Network. He has written various publications while organizing citizen action on agrarian reform and land rights campaigns, making him a pioneer of action research in Philippine civil society.



Joy Aceron is the Convenor-Director of G-Watch and a Research Fellow at the Accountability Research Center (ARC). A graduate of the University of the Philippines with a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in public policy, Joy has 15 years of experience in citizen monitoring, citizenship education, and civil society-government engagement. She has published works on civil society participation, political reform, and vertically integrated citizen-led reform campaigns.

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Summary

In 1988, the Philippines enacted a land redistribution policy known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). After almost three decades of implementation, an estimated 13 percent of the land targeted for redistribution remains in the hands of powerful landlords. This paper investigates the contestation involved in the implementation of agrarian reform through the lens of multi-level accountability politics.

The Philippines' longstanding campaign for agrarian reform has been led mainly by peasant organizations with deep links to the democracy movement. Following the transition from martial law to electoral politics in 1986, a broad coalition was able to secure the legislation of meaningful agrarian reform. Yet landlord power and impunity have managed to slow reform implementation. For decades, the peasant movement has struggled to push the government to implement its own laws, which involves direct conflict with landlords and their allies in government. In contrast to much of the research literature on accountability initiatives, which focuses on public goods and service provision, this study addresses the more openly contested process of implementing redistributive reform.

The case of the Peasant Movement of Bondoc Peninsula (*Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula*, KMBP) sheds light on the contest over implementing land reform in the Philippines. This study narrates the struggle of KMBP through the lens of vertical integration—how campaigns target different levels of governance (village, municipality, national, etc.) to achieve meaningful change. Using vertical integration, the paper uses a new mapping tool to identify the wide variety of actions taken by KMBP and its partners, the level of governance they have targeted, and the level of intensity in which they were pursued.

The Bondoc peasant movement worked to persuade the government to carry out its own land reform commitments, leading to the transfer of 10,000 hectares of land from some of the biggest landlords in the area to 3,800 tillers. This study shows how peasant organizations built their campaign from the ground up, starting around particular villages and landholdings and then building coalitions operating at the municipal, district, and national levels. This has allowed peasants to exert pressure on different levels of government, at times aided by national-level civil society organizations and media coverage.

In a novel approach, the paper also maps the similarly vertically integrated efforts of *anti-accountability* forces—those with a vested interest in blocking reform. Owners of large landholdings have responded with harassment, physical violence, vote buying and political maneuvering to undermine reform implementation. The conventional approach to the study of accountability initiatives either leaves out the opposition or treats it as a mere residual category. The approach developed here, by analyzing the opposition through a multi-level lens, brings the anti-accountability forces and their strategies into the framework. This mapping of *anti-accountability* forces reveals their power to be also vertically integrated. Landlord resistance to policy implementation has been especially intense at the village and municipal levels, but they have also undertaken lobbying at the national level. Their coalition-building strategy even includes unlikely alliances with Maoist rebels, when their interests align.

In addition to spotlighting the central role of peasant mobilization in promoting redistributive policy implementation, this paper's broader takeaway emphasizes the relevance of analyzing accountability initiatives through mapping the varied repertoires of *both* pro- and anti-accountability forces.

Tagalog Summary

Mula sa Baba, Pataas

Ang *Multi-level Accountability Politics* sa Reporma sa Lupa sa Pilipinas

Sinulat nila: Francis Isaac, Danilo Carranza at Joy Aceron

Isinalin ni: Althea Muriel Pineda

Taong 1988 nang maisabatas ang patakaran para sa pamamahagi ng mga lupang sakahan na mas kilala bilang *Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program* (CARP). Makalipas ang halos tatlong dekada, tinatayang 13 porsiyento ng mga lupaing dapat ipamahagi ang nasa kamay pa rin ng mga makapangyarihang panginoong maylupa na pilit tinututulan ang CARP. Layunin ng pag-aaral na ito na suriin ang nagaganap na tunggalian sa pagpapatupad ng repormang agraryo gamit ang lente na kung tawagin ay *multi-level accountability politics*.

Pinamunuan ng mga magbubukid ang matagal nang laban para sa repormang pansakahan, na may malalim ding ugnay sa kilusang anti-diktadura. Matapos mapabagsak ang rehimeng Marcos at mapalitan ito ng sistemang elektoral noong 1986, matagumpay na kumilos ang isang malawak na kowalisyon ng mga mamamayan upang maipasa ang batas para sa makabuluhang repormang agraryo. Sa kabila nito, nagawang mapaganit ng mga panginoong maylupa ang implementasyon ng CARP. Sa loob ng halos tatlong dekada, itinulak ng kilusang magbubukid ang pamahalaan upang mapatupad nito ang sarili nitong batas sa repormang agraryo, kahit manguhulugan ito ng tuwirang pakikipagtunggali sa mga hacendero at sa mga alyado nito sa loob mismo ng gubyerno. Sa kasamaang palad, hindi nabigyan ng diin ang ganitong tunggalian sa mga naging pag-aaral tungkol sa *accountability* o pananagutan, dahil kadalasang nakatutok ang mga ito sa *public goods* at sa paghahatid ng serbisyo (service provision). Sa halip, tinitingnan ng pananaliksik na ito ang proseso ng pagpapatupad ng *redistributive reform* at ang tunggalian na kadalasang kaakibat nito.

Lalo pang nabibigyang liwanag ang ganitong pakikipagtunggali sa kaso ng Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP). Sa pag-aaral na ito, binaybay ang pakikibaka ng KMBP gamit ang lente ng vertical *integration*—kung paano kumilos ang kanilang kampanya sa iba't-ibang antas ng pamamahala (sa lebel ng barangay, munisipyo, pambansa atbp.) upang makakuha ng makabuluhang pagbabago. Sa tulong din ng vertical integration, ginamit din ng pananaliksik na ito ang isang bagong mapping tool upang maitala ang iba't-ibang uri ng pagkilos na isinagawa ng KMBP at ng kanyang mga alyado, kung saang antas ng pamamahala ito isinagawa, at kung gaano kaigting ang bawat isinagawang pagkilos sa bawat lebel.

Sa madaling salita, ipinapakita ng pag-aaral na ito kung paano kumilos ang KMBP sa iba't ibang antas, upang mahimok ang gubyerno na tuparin ang pangako't mandato nito hinggil sa repormang agraryo. Dahil sa kanilang kampanya, naipamahagi ang 10,000 ektarya ng lupain mula sa mga panginoong maylupa tungo sa 3,800 mga magbubungkal. Ayon din sa pananaliksik na ito, binuo ng mga magbubukid ang kanilang kampanya mula sa baba pataas, simula sa ilang mga barangay at lupain hanggang makabuo ng mga kowalisyon sa antas ng munisipyo, distrito at hanggang pambansa. Ito ang nagbigay ng kakayahan sa mga magsasaka upang i-pressure ang iba't-ibang antas ng gubyerno, na minsan ay katuwang ang mga national level civil society organizations gayundin ang media.

Nagpakilala rin ng bagong approach ang pag-aaral na ito sa pamamagitan ng pagmamapa ng mga *vertically-integrated* na pagkilos ng mga *anti-accountability forces*—yaong mga may interes na pigilan ang repormang

agrario. Kadalasan, gumagamit ang mga may-ari ng mga malalaking lupain ng harassment, karahasan, vote buying at maniobrang pulitikal upang mapahina ang CARP. Salungat ang ganitong approach sa mga nakasanayan nang paraan ng pag-aaral ng accountability na kung saan hindi binibigyan ng sapat na pansin ang mga puwersang tutol sa reporma. Dahil sa ginamit nitong approach, naisama ng pananaliksik na ito ang mga anti-accountability forces at ang mga gamit nilang estratehiya sa buong balangkas ng pag-aaral. Naipakita rin ng ginawang mapping ng mga anti-accountability forces na vertically-integrated ang kanilang kapangyarihan. Sa katunayan, lubhang napakaigting ng kanilang kapangyarihan sa lebel ng barangay at munisipyo, subalit kailangan parin nilang makipag-lobby at maghanap ng kakampi sa antas pambansa. Ang ganitong pagkilos ng mga panginoong maylupa ang nagbunsod sa kanila na makipagsabwatan sa mga rebeldeng Maoista sa tuwing nagtatagpo ang mga kanilang interes.

Sa pag-aaral na ito, binigyang-diin ang napakahalagang papel ng pagkilos ng mga magbubukid sa pagtitiyak na mapapatupad ng gubyrno ang sarili nitong redistributive policy. Bukod dito, binigyang halaga din ang pagsasaliksik ng mga accountability initiatives sa pamamagitan ng pagmamapa ng iba't-ibang pagkilos na isinasagawa ng mga pro- at anti-accountability forces.

Bisaya Summary

Gikan sa Ubos, Pataas

Ang *Multi-Level Accountability Politics* nga Reporma sa Yuta sa Pilipinas

Gisulat nila: Francis Isaac, Danilo Carranza ug Joy Acheron

Gihubad ni: Rechie Tugawin

Niadlong tuig 1998 nahimong balaud ang polisiya sa pagbahin-bahin sa mga lupang panguma, pinaagi sa programa nga Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Minglabay na ang tulo ka dekada pero aduna pay 13 porsyento sa mga yuta nga kauban unta sa mga igahin sa mga mag-uuma ang naa pa sa pagpanag-iy sa mga gamhanang landlord. Ang katuyuan ani nga pagtuon mao ang pagsusi sa nahitabong kontrahanay sa pagpatuman sa reporma sa agraryo gamit ang lente na ginatawag na multi-level accountability politics.

Gipanguluhan sa mga grupo sa mag-uuma ang kampanya para sa reporma sa agraryo, silang mga grupo nga dugay ra pod galihok batok sa demokrasya. Kadlong napahawa ang diktadura ni Marcos ug napulihan kini ug sistemang electoral kaniadtong 1986, usa ka lapad nga koalisyon ang nilihok para mapatuman isip usa ka balaud ang makahuluganon nga reporma sa agraryo. Bisan pa niani, nahimo gihapong hinay ang implementasyon sa reporma tungod sa kakusog sa gahum sa mga landlord. Sa sulod sa pila ka dekada, nakigbisog ang mga mag-uuma para mapugos ang gobyerno na i-implementar o ipatuman ang mga balaud alang sa reporma sa agraryo, bisan pa ang mismong mga landlord ug mga kaalyado niini sa gobyerno ang ilang makaatubang o makabangga. Kasagaran, ang mga sebisyo publiko o paghatag ug serbisyo lang ang nahatagan ug pagtagad sa mga pagtuon bahin sa accountability o pagkamay-tulubagon. Kani nga pagtuon o research gahatag ug gibug-aton sa proseso sa pagpatuman sa redistributive reform ug ang mga panagbangi nga uban ani.

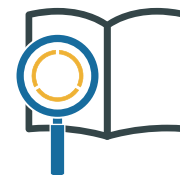
Ang kasinatian sa grupong Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP) mao ang gahatag ug giya sa kung unsa ang panagbangi para sa yuta alang sa mag-uuma. Kani nga research mag-isturya sa pakigbisog sa KBMP gamit ang lente nga vertical integration – kung giunsa pagbuhat sa ilang kampanya sa lain-lain lebel sa pagdumala (different levels of governance – sa barangay, munisipyo hangtod sa nasyunal) para makab-ot ang makahuluganon na pagbag-o. Uban sa vertical integration, mao pod ang paggamit sa bag-o nga mapping tool para makita ang nagkalainlain nga aksyon na gihimo sa KBMP ug mga kaalyado niini, kung unsa nga lebel sa pagdumala ni gihimo, ug kung unsa kakusog ang gihimong aksyon.

Tungod sa kampanya sa mga mag-uuma sa Bondoc peninsula, napugos ang gobyerno na ipatuman ang gipasalig niini nga reporma sa agraryo, ug nahatag ang 10,000 ka ektarya nga yuta gikan sa mga landlord diha sa 3,800 nga mag-uuma. Gipakita ani nga pagtuon o research kung giunsa pagtukod sa mga grupo sa mag-uuma ang ilang kampanya gikan ubos hangtod sa taas, sa lebel sa ilang area sa barangay hangtod nga nahimo ang mga koalisyon sa munisipyo, distrito, ug sa nasyunal. Mao kini ang naghatag sa mga mag-uuma ug paagi para ma-pressure ang lainlain nga lebel sa gobyerno, nga usahay gitabangan sa mga civil society organizations sa nasyunal, ug paghatag ug atensyon sa media.

Karon pa lang pod masulayi ang pagmapa (mapping) sa mga vertically-integrated na aksyon sa mga puwersa nga babag sa accountability o pagkamay-tulubagon – kadlong naay interes nga babagan ang reporma sa agraryo. Kasagaran, mogamit ang mga dagkong landlord ug harassment, violence, vote buying ug political maneuvering

(pagmaniobra) para dili magmalampuson ang CARP. Sa mga niaging pagtuon o research sa accountability, wala nahatagan ug pagtagad ang mga puwersa na supak sa reporma. Tungod sa approach na ginamit ani nga research, nakita pag-apil ang mga accountability forces ug ang mga gamit nila nga estratehiya. Apil pod nga nakita sa research nga vertically-integrated ang gahum nianing mga anti-accountability forces, hilabi na sa lebel barangay ug munisipyo, bisan pa sa taas o sa nasyunal aduna pod silay pag-lobby. Nakita pod nga ang ila pakig-koalisyon aduna nay apil nga mga rebeldeng Maoista kung mag-abot ang ilang mga interes.

Makita ani nga research ang importante kaayo nga papel sa pag-aksyon sa mga mag-uuma para mapatuman ang redistributive policy sa gobyerno. Dugang pa ani, nahatagan ug tukmang atensyon ang mga accountability initiatives sa pagtan-aw sa mga lain-lain nga aksyon nga gihimo sa mga pro- ug anti-accountability forces.



I. Introduction

Agrarian reform is an important measure to advance the land rights of peasants, especially in a predominantly agricultural country like the Philippines. Such reform entails the redistribution of land ownership from large private landowners to landless peasants and agricultural workers. This involves altering the power structure in the countryside by curtailing landlord influence. Agrarian reform is critical for rural development and democratization and necessary for alleviating poverty.

On June 10, 1988, the Philippines enacted a land redistribution policy known as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). After almost three decades of implementation, the results have been uneven. Approximately 13 percent of land targeted by the reform remains in the hands of powerful landlords (Philippine Statistics Authority 2016:2).

This study investigates the contested implementation of agrarian reform through the lens of multi-level accountability politics. It focuses on a specific campaign initiated by the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula* (Peasant Movement of Bondoc Peninsula, KMBP), a provincial farmers' movement in the Philippines, to assert land rights claims. KMBP worked at multiple levels of governance, from the village to the national level, targeting government decision-making to confront and prevail over vested interests that resisted the implementation of agrarian reform. The highly contested nature of agrarian reform in the Philippines is underscored by the fact that significant pressure politics and mass actions were needed to push for implementation of CARP law. The case sheds light on how to promote responsive and accountable policy-making and governance in instances where the state is

not inclined to implement its own laws without direct pressure from citizens.

This study applies a new analytical tool that maps the different actions taken by farmers to build their base and engage with the state at different governance levels (Aceron and Isaac 2016). The goal of this tool is to visually disentangle the diverse repertoire of citizen actions from whether and how they unfold at different scales. The study builds on this approach by mapping the similarly vertically integrated efforts of anti-accountability forces seeking to stop reforms. This highlights the vertically integrated character of landlord power by detailing the various forms of political maneuvering, harassment, and physical violence that *hacienda* owners have used to halt and undermine the implementation of CARP.

By adopting a multi-level approach to examine the opposition to reforms, the paper subjects the anti-accountability forces to a comprehensive analysis. This contrasts with the conventional approach, which implicitly treats opposition forces as a residual category outside the main frame of analysis of accountability initiatives.

Much of the existing research on accountability in development studies involves public goods and the delivery of public services. Agrarian reform, however, is an explicitly redistributive policy, in which the winners and losers are much more visible. Applying analytical tools from the study of accountability to a case of a redistributive reform sheds light on the contestation between pro-accountability forces that aim for a successful policy or program and anti-accountability actors that seek to hinder its implementation. This paper, in other words, aims to bring the opponents more fully into the picture, through the lens of scale, and examine this in the light of success or failure.



II. A Brief History of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines

The struggle for agrarian reform is intimately linked to the history of the Philippines. Driven by land deprivation and a lack of voice among the rural poor, the origins of the calls for land reform date back to the Spanish colonial period. Intent on imposing European-style institutions on their only Asian colony, Spanish authorities introduced the concept of individual land ownership. This led to the “gradual development of a highly skewed distribution of ownership and control” (Franco and Borrás 2005:13). As a result, Spain’s 300-year rule over the Philippines was punctuated by more than a hundred armed uprisings, culminating in the Philippine Revolution of 1896 (Franco 2000; Putzel 1992; Constantino 1975). Though the Filipinos succeeded in dislodging the Spaniards, their victory was short lived due to the United States’ annexation of the Philippines in 1901. To defuse rural unrest, the American colonial government initiated a massive resettlement program, which opened large tracts of land in Northern Luzon and Mindanao for homestead use.¹

Despite these measures, the agrarian issue remained unresolved, even after the Philippines gained formal independence in 1946. Hoping to improve their conditions, thousands of landless peasants in Central Luzon joined the Huk Rebellion,² which sought to overthrow landlord domination. Starting with less than 300 armed combatants in 1942, the Huks grew into a 20,000-strong guerrilla army by the early 1950s. However, at roughly the same time, the government began a series of counter-insurgency operations that broke the back of the rebellion. Outgunned, exhausted, and on the run, the Huk leadership finally capitulated in 1954, ending one of the bloodiest chapters in Philippine history (Kerkvliet 2014; Lanzona 2009).

The end of the Huk uprising did not ease peasant unrest since the problem of landlessness was left practically unaddressed. By the late 1960s, the rural situation had deteriorated so much that the country was on the brink of chaos—with extensive peasant mobilizations in the countryside coupled with massive student demonstrations in the capital. To silence the opposition and pre-

vent the possible outbreak of revolutionary violence, President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law on September 21, 1972. The military then began making numerous arrests, filling their camps with hundreds of political dissidents. A month later, Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 27, subjecting all rice and corn lands to agrarian reform.³

Marcos’ actions did not end rural discontent, but instead further inflamed peasant resistance. This can be seen in the support that the rural population gave to the underground Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Formed in 1968, the CPP saw armed revolution as the only feasible option to end Martial Law and ensure the free distribution of land to the actual tillers. Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) committed to agrarian reform also emerged, including the Philippine Ecumenical Action for Community Empowerment (PEACE), which helped to forge peasant mass movements through organizing, education, and training programs in rural communities. Established in 1977, at the height of Martial Law, PEACE was the forerunner of the RIGHTS Network, the NGO partner of the Bondoc Peninsula peasant organization (KMBP).

Martial Law provoked rural resistance and became the catalyst for the modern peasant movement in the Philippines. This movement is characterized by its:

- National scope (unlike the Huk Rebellion which was largely confined to Central Luzon); and
- Demand for a comprehensive agrarian reform policy that covers all types of landholdings, not only limited to rice and corn lands.

Because of intense repression in the countryside, the campaign for agrarian reform became deeply connected with the struggle for democracy. Peasants not only demanded a more responsive land reform policy, but also campaigned for an end to Martial Law. Unsurprisingly, the agrarian movement’s relationship with the state at that time was largely adversarial, with most

efforts concentrated on grassroots organizing and protest mobilization.

When the People Power movement finally ousted Marcos in February 1986, the peasant movement lost no time in pushing for a law that would ensure meaningful land redistribution. It did so by reminding the newly elected President Corazon Aquino of her earlier campaign pledge to make agrarian reform “the centerpiece program” of her administration.

Despite the transition to democracy, however, landlord interests remained firmly entrenched in the immediate post-Marcos government. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the composition of the House of Representatives: from 1992 to 1995 nearly two thirds of its members came from the landed elite (Coronel et al. 2004; Gutierrez 1994). This included Hortensia Starke—a flamboyant congresswoman and “sugar baroness” from the province of Negros Occidental and a fierce opponent of agrarian reform. Starke told her fellow legislators that, “land is like your most beautiful dress, the one that gives you luck. If someone takes it from you, he only wants to destabilize you, to undress you” (Coronel et al. 2004:36). President Aquino also had a similar background, with her family owning a 6,000-hectare sugar plantation called Hacienda Luisita.

Aware of the formidable forces arrayed against them, the country’s diverse rural movements and their allies banded together to pressure the government to fulfill its pledge to enforce agrarian reform. This led to the establishment of the Congress for a People’s Agrarian Reform (CPAR) in 1987, the “first-ever ideologically and politically broad national coalition of peasant associations in the country’s history” (Borras 2007:106). Composed of 13 major mass membership organizations, together representing more than 2.5 million farmers and fisherfolk, CPAR was the broadest and most politically diverse advocacy coalition at the time. It brought together center-left and far-left political forces that did not necessarily agree on other issues (Timberman 1991).

Shortly after its formation, CPAR began undertaking both community organizing and pressure politics, which was vital to the eventual legislation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) on June 10, 1988. However, this new land reform legislation was essentially a compromise measure. In theory,

it reflected the demands of organized peasants under CPAR, such as the “coverage of all agricultural lands,” but it also accommodated the limits and procedural obstacles set by landowners which allowed them to challenge the law’s implementation every step of the way. For this reason, before most farmer-beneficiaries could gain any land, they had to first assert their rights through formal petitions and persistent claim-making. This meant that the success of agrarian reform depended on whether the obstacles posed by anti-reform actors could be overcome by the capacity of farmers to carry out an effective, vertically integrated, legal-political strategy complemented by the pro-reform actions of state actors.

Despite these limitations, CARP remains the most radical, comprehensive, and thorough agrarian reform initiative in the Philippines to date. It subjects all private and public agricultural lands, regardless of tenurial and productivity conditions, to agrarian reform. It also offers very few exemptions, such as forest reserves, military reservations, and educational and religious sites. To ensure its implementation, the law assigns the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to cover all alienable and disposable public lands while the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is tasked with the redistribution of all private agricultural lands.⁴ It further empowers DAR to redistribute all private landholdings over five hectares through compulsory acquisition, wherein “land is expropriated with or without the landlord’s cooperation” (Borras 2007:108). When it was enacted, CARP covered 10.3 million hectares of farmland, a third of the country’s total land area, and was meant to benefit an estimated four million landless and land-poor peasant households. But its target scope was later reduced to 8.1 million hectares in 1996, due to the “data cleanup” that was undertaken by DAR under then-Secretary Ernesto Garilao (Borras 2007:107). Additional lands were also deducted from the original scope of DENR, leaving CARP with an adjusted coverage of 7.8 million hectares (LBRMO 2014; DAR N.d.b).

CARP data, however, is largely problematic since there has been no effective cadastral survey in the Philippines. As a consequence, the government has no reliable database on land ownership, prompting “different sections of DAR [to] disagree on scope and coverage” (Neame 2008:8). This also makes getting reliable up-to-date information on land redistribution extremely difficult. There are, for example, two official sources of data on

land redistribution, and they are not always in agreement. One source is the DAR website, which shows that the government redistributed 6.9 million hectares of land as of December 31, 2013. The number corresponds to 88 percent of the adjusted CARP target of 7.8 million hectares. This leaves the country with 900,000 hectares of undistributed land or 12 percent of the total target (DAR N.d.b). The website, however, did not further break down numbers by presenting DAR's yearly accomplishments.

Another source is the publication released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2016 entitled *Redistribution of Land*. However, the document does not

include data from DENR and only covered the accomplishments of DAR. To make matters worse, the report also contains data prior to the enactment of CARP, covering the years 1972 to 1987. According to this document, DAR has a working scope of 5,419,834 hectares. From this number, the Department has redistributed 4,718,845 hectares of lands or 87.07 percent of its working scope. This leaves DAR with 700,989 hectares lands for redistribution (which corresponds to 12.93 percent of its working scope). These figures are different from the data found in DAR's website. This is due to the exclusion of DENR data from the report of PSA. Despite their differences, both sources suggest that the country's undistributed land is between 12 and 13 percent.

Table 1. DAR's Land Reform Accomplishments⁵

Year	Size of Redistributed Lands (In Hectares)	Number of Farmer-Beneficiaries
1972-2015	4,718,845	2,783,143
2011	111,889	62,262
2012	100,149	48,806
2013	125,561	87,087
2014	92,199	54,854
2015	27,670	30,107

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority. 2016. *Redistribution of Land*. Quezon City.

In addition to land redistribution, CARP also has a provision declaring all share tenancy arrangements as illegal. They are supposed to be replaced by leasehold in all lands that have yet to be acquired by DAR. Under the old system of share tenancy, a farmer cultivates a portion of land that belongs to a private landowner, often shouldering the entire cost of farm inputs. In exchange, the landowner received between 50 to 80 percent of the harvest as rent payment. Under the new leasehold

arrangement, both landlord and tenant enter into a formal and long-term lease agreement. Under CARP, the tenant pays a much lower rent to the landowner, fixed at 25 percent of the average harvest of the principal crop. As of December 31, 2015, DAR had placed 1.790 million hectares of land under leasehold, 24.9 percent of all arable land in the Philippines. This has benefitted 1.233 million farmer-tenants all over the country (DAR N.d.a).

The *Bibingka* Strategy: Implementing Agrarian Reform Through Mass Struggle

Despite bureaucratic inefficiency and stiff resistance from landlords, the peasantry's active organizing work saw large tracts of land distributed to thousands of CARP beneficiaries. Most of the land redistribution was carried out between 1992 and 1998, during Ernesto Garilao's tenure as DAR Secretary. Garilao brought "several respected NGO activists into key positions in the DAR leadership" and consolidated the ranks of "existing liberal reformers in the bureaucracy and gave some of them more important positions" (Borras and Franco 2007:76). These reforms from above were complemented by independent peasant actions from below, which "resulted in positive and significant gains for poor people on a contentious issue" (Borras and Franco 2008:2).

This approach is often described as the "*bibingka* strategy," a term first used by Saturnino Borras. The strategy asserts that, "the symbiotic interaction between autonomous societal groups from below and strategically placed state reformists from above provides the most promising strategy to offset strong landlord resistance to land reform" (1999:125). As Borras (1999:125) explains in *The Bibingka Strategy for Land Reform Implementation*:

The outcomes of the land reform policy are not determined by either structural or institutional factors alone, or by the actions of state elites alone, but that the political actions and strategies of a wide range of state and societal actors also bear on the outcomes of the reform process.

However, this does not mean that the interests and objectives of the various actors from "above" and "below" are completely complementary. Instead, the strategy assumes that there are potential and actual differences between and among state reformists and autonomous rural movements. By focusing on both government action from "above" and peasant mobilization from "below," the *bibingka* strategy refutes assumptions that dismiss the rural poor as either passive recipients of change or treat them as mere tools of revolutionary forces that reject policy reforms. The approach instead recognizes peasants as autonomous political actors,

Box 1.

Bibingka: A Rice Cake Cooked from Above and Below

The *bibingka* strategy is one of the popular frameworks used by civil society groups in the Philippines to pursue reforms and promote accountability. This strategy assumes that reforms are likely to occur if: 1) there is sustained citizens' pressure from below, and 2) sufficient action by state reformers from above. Pressure from below is generated by civil society organizations clamoring for substantive policy changes or better policy implementation. Action from above, on the other hand, comes from state officials who seek to enhance service-delivery or curb government inefficiency.

The term *bibingka* strategy was coined by Filipino scholar Saturnino Borras in his study of agrarian reform implementation in the Philippines. It comes from the word "*bibingka*"—a type of Filipino rice cake wherein live charcoal are placed simultaneously on top and below the dough during the baking process.

The *bibingka* strategy is largely based on Jonathan Fox's concept of sandwich coalition, which combines pressure from above and below to counteract the forces of anti-accountability.

capable of mobilizing around specific land rights claims while contributing to the overall process of democratization. The approach further maintains that actual reform work occurs at various levels of engagement, with numerous pro-reform actors interacting at each of these levels. Borras (2007:11-12) argues:

The alliance between state reformists and autonomous reformist societal groups can, under certain conditions, surmount obstacles, overcome limits, and harness opportunities to allow a redistributive land reform to occur. This alliance is achieved at various levels of the polity, but in a highly varied and uneven manner, geographically, across crops and farm types, across land reform policy components, and over time.

The *bibingka* strategy became so influential that the term was eventually used both as an analytical approach

and as a framework for action. Practitioners view the *bibingka* strategy as a useful framework for wresting power from the landed elites in favor of the rural poor. Academics see it as an analytical approach to explain the relationship and dynamics of various reform actors from both civil society and the state.

From CARP to CARPER

Under CARP, the government had ten years to redistribute land. Responding to pro-reform advocates, legislators later extended this for another ten years, extending the deadline to 2008. But the government remained slow in fulfilling its reform commitments and, as the 2008 deadline drew closer, thousands of farmer-beneficiaries were still waiting for the government to redistribute more than 1.2 million hectares of agricultural lands. Concerned that the state “would abdicate its role to distribute lands,” peasants began calling for the extension of the program as early as 2006 (Flores-Obanil 2010:2). This led several provincial peasant federations to form the *Kilusan para sa Repormang Agraryo at Katarungang Panlipunan* (Movement for Agrarian Reform and Social Justice, Katarungan) in 2007. A year later, a consortium of 11 locally-based NGOs founded the RIGHTS Network⁶ after several members left PEACE over unresolved differences in strategy and tactics.⁷ These two formations then joined the CARP Extension with Reforms (CARPER) Coalition, an umbrella alliance formed in November 2006 for all those advocating for CARP’s extension. Later renamed as the Reform CARP Movement (RCM), the coalition gained open support from other social movements and from the highly influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

The coalition also included the left-leaning Akbayan Citizens’ Action Party, which had two seats in the 272-member House of Representatives. With inputs from RCM, party representative Risa Hontiveros filed the earliest version of the CARPER Bill on July 24, 2007. A year later, Senator Jinggoy Estrada filed a counterpart version in the Senate.⁸ To pressure Congress, farmers flocked to the *Batasang Pambansa* (legislative building)

on almost a daily basis, filling the session hall as they listened intently to the deliberations. Then, in 2008, several farmers, along with Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo, began a hunger strike to dramatize the call for the passage of the CARPER Bill.

But after a year of continuous lobbying, the protesting farmers became restless with the slow pace of the legislative process. Believing that the deliberations had already reached a stalemate, several peasants (including those from Bondoc Peninsula) stormed the grounds of the legislative complex on June 3, 2009, with the intent of occupying the main building. They were eventually overwhelmed by truncheon-wielding policemen who hauled them off to nearby Camp Karingal.⁹

As the farmers were being brought to the detention center, the CARPER Bill faced its third and final reading by the House of Representatives. It passed with an overwhelming majority, with 211 yeas, 13 nays, and 2 abstentions. Immediately after the vote, the sponsors of the Bill proceeded to Camp Karingal to negotiate for the release of the arrested farmers, who were freed without charge that same night. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo then signed the CARPER law on August 7, 2009, extending the government’s agrarian reform program for another five years—from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2014.

Despite this measure, agrarian reform implementation remains challenging as ever. On the one hand, the official data suggests that only roughly 13 percent of the total CARP target remain undistributed (Philippine Statistics Authority 2016; DAR N.d.b). On the other hand, as the think-tank Focus on the Global South points out, “the remaining lands to be distributed are the most contentious landholdings, the most tedious and difficult to acquire and distribute” since these are the ones under the control of the country’s most influential landowning families (2013:8). This indicates both the persistent political power of these holdouts, as well as the importance of carrying out the law to weaken the social and economic foundations of anti-accountability political power.



III. Examining the Struggle for Agrarian Reform Using Vertical Integration

After almost three decades, the results of the agrarian reform program have been uneven. This paper investigates the contestation involved in the implementation of agrarian reform through the lens of multi-level accountability politics, or vertical integration. Using vertical integration, the paper elucidates the wide variety of actions employed by the farmers of KMBP at different levels of government decision-making to confront and prevail over vested interests resisting the implementation of agrarian reform.

Vertical integration, which was first used by accountability scholar Jonathan Fox, refers to the “systematic coordination of policy monitoring and advocacy between diverse levels of civil society, from local to state, national, and international arenas” (Fox 2001:617). Fox argues that such an approach is necessary since, “the national level policy process is increasingly entangled with multiple levels of authority, both above and below the national arena” (Fox 2007:51). As policies are “produced by vertically integrated authority structures” (2007:344), there is a need to achieve scale to “bolster civil society influence” (2007:343). As he points out, “Not only does scale provide social actors with increased bargaining power, it also provides better information about how state power is actually exercised” (Fox 2007:344).

Since the vertical integration of civil society initiatives generally aims to address state impunity and power imbalances, it can take on the form of contentious politics (Aceron et al. 2016:5). This occurs when public actions demand that governmental authorities act, using a “combination of institutional and extra-institutional routines to advance their claims” (Tilly and Tarrow 2015:7). This study uses the lens of accountability politics to show how organized peasants were able to compel the state to respond to their demands, even though the state was not inclined to implement its own agrarian reform law. As this case shows, pressure politics and mass actions were needed to promote responsive and accountable policymaking and implementation.

Enhanced Scaling Map

The original contribution of this case study is the mapping of vertically integrated efforts of vested interests (or the anti-accountability forces) that tried to prevent the implementation of the CARP law. The case narrates how landlords have used various forms of harassment, physical violence, and political maneuverings. By adopting a multi-level approach to examine the opposition, the paper subjects the anti-accountability forces to a comprehensive analysis, instead of implicitly treating them as a residual category outside the main frame of conventional accountability studies. This case brings the opposition back into the picture.

This paper maps the actors in Bondoc Peninsula’s agrarian reform campaign and the actions they have undertaken across various levels to advance agrarian reform implementation. It does so by using a modified Scaling Accountability Mapping Matrix. This matrix was first employed by Jonathan Fox and Joy Aceron “to create an accessible way to map the scale, coverage and intensity of actions” across multiple levels of decision-making (2016:36). The original matrix has two dimensions: *Constituency-Building*, which maps civil society actors; and *Interfaces with the State*, which identifies civil society actors’ varied terms of engagement for monitoring or advocacy campaigns.

In our modified version, a third dimension is added—the *Actions of Anti-Accountability Forces*. This component emphasizes that, while the rural poor undertake various measures to pursue agrarian reform, their opponents are also involved in multiple-level actions to thwart land redistribution. These forces include landowners, their private goons, Maoist guerillas, and other allies, such as state or bureaucracy officials and even certain farmer-residents in the area.

The presence of anti-accountability actors is not unique to Bondoc Peninsula, nor to campaigns for agrarian

reform. Any initiative that seeks to attain reforms by making those with power and authority accountable is likely to face opposition. The actions that anti-accountability forces undertake can be categorized into two broad types: 1) **proactive efforts to influence decision-making processes and policy implementation** (e.g., engagement in elections, influencing appointments, making sure the person in charge has smooth working relationships with them, etc.); and 2) **reactive actions against efforts to hold the forces of impunity to account** (e.g., harassment, legal cases, counter-propaganda, etc.).

Anti-accountability actors are often present at all levels of decision making and in the realms of both society and state. This enables them to interact with their pro-accountability counterparts, often as adversaries with opposing values, interests, and objectives. In almost all instances, anti-accountability forces will attempt to deflect, obstruct, and neutralize citizen-led accountability efforts since (1) their interests will be adversely affected by these initiatives; and (2) they could face possible sanctions if these campaigns become successful. Mapping anti-accountability forces, therefore, allows for a richer and deeper appreciation of the difficult power dynamics that play out in all citizen-led initiatives. This lends weight to the emerging insight that a more complex, integrated, and strategic view of transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) efforts can yield more promising results (Halloran 2015).

Case Study: The Agrarian Reform Campaign in Bondoc Peninsula

This paper presents an agrarian reform campaign in the Philippines to demonstrate how ordinary peasants and their allies made significant gains by adopting a vertically integrated, multi-level strategy. Given the large number of movements and organizations involved in this advocacy effort, the paper will focus on the reform campaign led by the Rural Poor Institute for Land and Human Rights Services (the RIGHTS Network) and its allied peasant federation, Katarungan.

The RIGHTS Network describes itself as a consortium of “grassroots-based organizations” that are “strategically located in major agrarian reform hotspots in the

Philippines” (RightsNetPhils, 2017). These large landholdings are controlled by powerful vested interests, which the state is seemingly reluctant to subject to agrarian reform. The RIGHTS Network has identified sixteen provincial hotspots, covering more than 200,000 hectares of private and public agricultural lands. Katarungan is a national network of provincial-based farmers’ organizations that mobilize around issues of agrarian reform, rural development, and democratization. Since the actions of these two actors are often closely coordinated, they will be referred to here as Katarungan/RIGHTS Network.

One of their most important agrarian reform initiatives is in Bondoc Peninsula—a far-flung district located in the southernmost portion of Quezon Province, roughly 250 kilometers south of Manila. The Quezon Association for Rural Development and Democratization Services (QUARDDS) spearheads the campaign in Bondoc Peninsula and serves as the local NGO partner of the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network. Operating throughout the province of Quezon, QUARDDS provides legal and technical assistance to KMBP—a district-wide peasant federation which is also a member of Katarungan. It is composed of more than 40 *hacienda*-based organizations scattered throughout the district. By creating this partnership, KMBP, QUARDDS and the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network are able to pool the resources needed for the campaign.

The agrarian struggle in Bondoc Peninsula is of considerable interest for both scholars and activists for three interrelated reasons:

1. The campaign is vertically integrated, with ordinary peasants placing pressure on the state at various levels of engagement.
2. The rural citizens of Bondoc Peninsula have been “using state law in innovative ways, as part of a broader collective action repertoire” (Franco 2005a:152).
3. Operating at “the boundaries of legality,”¹⁰ the peasants in this area often use a variety of extra-legal actions (such as land occupation, boycotts of tenancy sharing schemes, and padlocking of government offices, among others) to compel the state to implement its own agrarian reform law.

These autonomous peasant actions in Bondoc Peninsula have generated violent reprisals not only from *hacienda* owners but also from the armed Maoist movement operating in the area. Such reactions have given birth to an interesting dynamic where we see instances of left-wing guerillas and the goons of the landlords colluding to prevent peasants from gaining land through the state's agrarian reform program.

Gains of the Peasant Campaign in Bondoc Peninsula

As farmers campaigned for nationwide agrarian reform, similar initiatives were undertaken in Bondoc Peninsula. The area is largely dependent on the production of copra and composed of 12 low-income municipalities.¹¹ Forty-four percent of all arable land in the penin-

sula is owned by only 1.1 percent of the population.¹² Local elites were able to accumulate political power, turning Bondoc Peninsula into a patchwork of "despotic enclaves" (Carranza 2011:408). As agrarian scholar Jennifer Franco points out, the area has a "deeply inequitable socioeconomic structure based on ownership and control of land" (2005a:116).

The biggest landowners in the district include the Reyes family, which claims ownership of 8,000 to 12,000 hectares of land; the Matias family with 2,000 hectares; the Uy family with 1,000 hectares; Zoleta-Queblar with 359 hectares; and the Tan family with 483 hectares (PCICC 2011; Carranza 2011; Franco 2005). Unchallenged for decades, the elites of Bondoc Peninsula imposed a tenancy arrangement called *tersyuhan*, or one-third sharing scheme, wherein tenants shoulder the bulk of the production cost in exchange for 30 percent of the harvest (Franco 2011).

Table 2. Largest Landholdings in Bondoc Peninsula

Landowner	Estimated Land Size (Hectares)	Municipality
Reyes family	Between 8,000 to 12,000	San Andres, San Narciso and Buenavista
Matias family	More than 2,000	San Francisco
Uy family	More than 1,000	San Andres and San Narciso
Zoleta-Queblar	359	San Francisco
Tan family	483	San Francisco

Source: Philippine Campaign for the International Criminal Court (PCICC 2011).

Peasants began organizing themselves into village-level associations in the mid-1990s, after contact with the Bondoc Development Project (BDP). A bilateral development initiative of the Philippine and German governments, BDP aimed to alleviate poverty through agrarian reform. To this end, BDP tapped the assistance of PEACE to conduct legal training and human rights education designed to enhance the legal know-how and consciousness of the rural poor. PEACE also began organizing peasant communities in municipalities with the heaviest concentrations of land ownership—first in Buenavista and San Narciso, later expanding to Mulanay, San Andres, and San Francisco. By 1999, 48 hacienda-based organizations had been established in Bondoc

Peninsula, which federated into the KMBP in that same year. As farmers became better organized, they began sending petitions to local DAR offices, asking that the lands they were tilling be covered by CARP (Franco 2011; Carranza 2011).

Through painstaking organizing and alliance building across different levels of governance, Bondoc Peninsula's rural poor achieved their first major breakthrough in the village of Barangay Catulin in the municipality of Buenavista: a 174-hectare property of the Reyes family was redistributed to 56 peasant beneficiaries on September 9, 1998 (Franco 2005:166-167).

The beneficiaries were all members of the *Samahan ng mga Magsasaka sa Catulin* (Farmers' Association of Catulin, SAMACA), a village-level peasant organization formed in 1994 in order to gain access to the government's rural assistance programs. It was during this time that tenants first heard of CARP, leading them to petition the local DAR office to help them gain control of the land that they were tilling. However, the municipal agrarian reform officer dissuaded the group from contesting the property since the Reyes family was a "*malaking isda*" or big fish (Franco 2005:64).

For the next two years, peasants of Catulin would not achieve any significant headway, until they came into contact with PEACE in 1996. PEACE began providing SAMACA with legal training to assist them in their campaign for agrarian reform. The farmers also began networking with the local Catholic Church, which quickly extended moral and institutional support. By the middle of 1996, SAMACA, along with three other village-level farmer organizations, joined in the formation of the municipal-wide Buenavista Bondoc Peninsula Farmers' Alliance (BBPFA).

Sensing that the municipal DAR officer was not supportive of their cause, SAMACA appealed directly to Secretary Garilao at a dialogue held in August 1996. During the exchange, the farmers discovered that the DAR officer in Buenavista had submitted a report stating that there were no claimants on the Reyes family's Catulin property. Upon learning that this was not true, Garilao ordered the department to immediately begin the process of subjecting the landholding to compulsory acquisition.

As expected, the decision did not sit well with Reyes family. In July 1997, they began fencing off the estate with barbed wire. At around the same time, tenants began noticing several armed men inside the property keeping watch over the area. By December, the situation took a turn for the worse when armed goons, aided by a bulldozer, forcibly ejected eight tenant-families from the area.

With the landlords still in control of the land, the farmers responded by engaging allies at various levels to put

pressure on the authorities. They joined KMBP, which was formed just as the goons began their campaign of harassment. The newly formed peasant federation soon adopted the Catulin case as its priority advocacy campaign. In January 1998, they began a campout in front of the DAR central office in Manila to call for the speedy resolution of the case. In March, KMBP and SAMACA staged a "people's march" in front of the municipal hall of Buenavista demanding the immediate redistribution of the Reyes property.

Finally, in June 1998, DAR issued a directive ordering portions of the property to be distributed to the farmer-beneficiaries. Elated by this decision, farmers attempted to enter the property and plant fruit trees but were driven away by the landlord's goons, who insisted that the land still belonged to the Reyes family. This incident prompted DAR to form an Inter-Agency Task Force, including both the military and the police, to install SAMACA's farmer-beneficiaries.

On the morning of September 9, 1998, DAR officials from Manila arrived in Catulin to accompany the farmers to their newly-awarded plots. Along with journalists covering the event, farmers were escorted by a huge contingent of police and army personnel. As the convoy arrived at the main entrance, an *enkargado* (farm overseer) of the Reyes family made a last-ditch attempt to prevent the beneficiaries from entering the property. Yet he too had to bow down to the inevitable. One-by-one the farmers passed through the gate, cradling seedlings in their arms, ready to claim their land.

News of SAMACA's victory quickly spread throughout Bondoc Peninsula, inspiring other tenants to launch their own initiatives for agrarian reform (Franco 2011:110). Most of these efforts closely followed the pattern of mobilization that was exhibited in the Catulin case:

1. Village-level organizing;
2. District- and provincial-level engagement with relevant state institutions through QUARDDS and KMBP;
3. Alliance work with the Catholic Church at the provincial level; and
4. The use of pressure politics vis-à-vis DAR at the municipal, provincial, and national levels.

Between 1996 and 2015, these estate-by-estate initiatives resulted in more than 10,000 hectares of land being placed under the effective control of more than 3,800 farmers. This includes landholdings that were “formally reformed by the government (distributed lands and leasehold areas) and lands controlled through peasant initiatives” (Carranza 2011:410). In Buenavista alone, more than 596 hectares, covering the villages of Catulin, Wasay Ibaba, Siain, and Bagong Silang, were obtained from the Reyes family and redistributed to 197 farmer-beneficiaries. In the neighboring town of San Andres, 4,274 hectares of privately-claimed timberlands are now under the control of more than 800 coconut farmers residing in Barangays Tala, Camflora, Talisay, and Mangero.

Another 3,000 hectares of land in the municipality of Mulanay were distributed to 706 farmers, most of whom were either former tillers at the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) or tenants of private estates owned by the town’s biggest landowning families. In San Francisco, 755 hectares of land were awarded to 218 tenants, covering four barangays that were mostly owned by the Tan family, portions of the Matias estate, and commercial lands owned by Superior-Agro, Inc. In the nearby town of San Narciso, more than 400 farmers were able to gain control of 2,084 hectares of land, 381 hectares of which were taken from the powerful Uy family. Table 3 shows land redistribution by municipality.

Table 3. CARP Accomplishments: Hectares of Private Land Redistributed in Bondoc Peninsula (as of 2016)

Municipality	Compulsory Acquisition	Voluntary Land Transfer	Voluntary Offer to Sell	Government Financial Institutions/ Government-Owned Lands	Total
Agdangan	133	137	56	-	325
Buenavista	1,503	1,310	1,397	578	4,788
Catanauan	789	1,164	1,948	116	4,017
General Luna	343	419	274	25	1,061
Macalelon	89	720	289	46	1,144
Mulanay	1,874	605	2,465	697	5,641
Padre Burgos	399	353	18	-	769
Pitogo	243	133	343	8	728
San Andres	3,664	502	1,283	57	5,506
San Francisco	5,348	343	4,173	873	10,737
San Narciso	2,603	921	2,610	251	6,385
Unisan	154	980	616	-	1,750
Total	17,142	7,585	15,471	2,651	42,850

Source: DAR-Quezon II Provincial Office, 2016.

Tenancy Boycott

In addition to the transfer of private lands, 4,000 hectares of public lands are now under direct peasant control, although the formal title has not yet been transferred. This was due to an innovative strategy that combined archival research and a boycott. Most of these landholdings were previously controlled by the Reyes family, who imposed a lopsided tenancy arrangement which generated widespread resentment among the actual tillers. This was pointed out by KMBP Vice President Melchor Rosco who stated that:

Liban sa hatiang 70-30, amin pa ang lahat ng gastos. Kaya 'pag kinuwenta mo 'yun, walang matitira sa amin. Sapat lang na parang inupahan ka lang din. (Apart from the 70%-30% sharing scheme in favor of the landowner, we also pay for all the inputs. So, when you compute everything, we are actually left with nothing. With the meager amount that we receive, it's like our bodies are simply being rented out to do all the work.)

Hoping that each family would receive a small parcel of land, in the mid- to late-1990s peasants began asking the local DAR office to place landholdings under agrarian reform. Before the formal agrarian reform process could begin, however, DAR would first have to locate the titles of the contested properties and verify if they fell within CARP's coverage. Believing that this would slow action from DAR for months, if not years, the peasants began "conducting archival research at the DENR's regional management office, the office of the Tax Assessor, and the Land Registration Authority" (Franco 2005b:36).

As they went through their application for CARP coverage, the tenants discovered that the land was officially classified as public timberland. This meant that the Reyes family had no legitimate claim over it. Armed with this information, the peasants declared a crop-sharing boycott in 2003. They argued that the Reyes family had no claim over their harvest since they were not the rightful owners of the land. Beginning with just four villages, the boycott soon spread to other areas in San Andres, San Narciso, and Mulanay. The action was also meant to challenge the government to implement its own Community-Based Forest Management Program (CBFMP). The farmers believed it would enable the state

to reassert its jurisdiction over the timberland areas claimed by the Reyes family, while at the same time ensuring the peasants' security of tenure.

More than 800 peasant families joined in this daring form of direct action. The boycott effectively deprived the Reyes clan of one of their most important sources of income and political power. According to estimates made by KMBP, the Reyes family received around Php 750 (USD \$15) per hectare per month, for a total of Php 3 million (USD \$60,000) each month. This income helped to cover the salaries of their lawyers, goons, and *enkargados* (farm overseers). With the boycott in place, however, the Reyes family no longer had enough resources to pay their personnel. Rosco claims that, "even the farm managers and goons have abandoned the *hacienda* owners" (Rosco 2015). To spare themselves further loss, some of the younger members of the Reyes clan have already suggested selling portions of the estate to the farmers that now have de facto control over these lands.

Rosco has described the boycott campaign as "citizen-implemented CARP" and believes it is KMBP's "most important victory" to date. It shows the effectiveness of direct action by the rural poor at the village level, supplemented by peasant solidarity and mobilization at the municipal and district levels. When this study began in 2015, the share boycott was still ongoing. It will likely continue until the land is formally redistributed to the farmers that now control it. The boycott is ongoing as of the publication date.

Multi-Level Resistance from Anti-Accountability Forces

As the nascent peasant movement grew more assertive in the 1990s, *hacienda* owners responded almost immediately with a series of actions to prevent land reform. This included various coercive measures, ranging from harassment and verbal threats, to the forcible ejection of tenants and murder. The first to fall to an assassin's bullet was Edwin Vender—a resident of San Narciso and one of the leaders of the *Malayang Samahan ng mga Magsasaka sa Sitio Libas* (Free Association of Farmers of Sitio Libas). According to witnesses, Vender died in June 1999 from multiple gunshot wounds inflicted by Marcelino "Celing" Catipon and his two sons. As Vender

lay motionless on the ground, Catipon hacked his body with a machete, slicing off his genitals and mutilating his face until it became completely unrecognizable. Shocked by what they had witnessed, Vender's family and neighbors took a while before they found the courage to remove his body. By that time it had already been partially consumed by pigs.

His death, however, would not be the last peasant killing. In October 2003, five years after Vender's murder, Rodolfo Romero, also of San Narciso, was gunned down by Uy henchman Rodrigo Ferancullo. In March 2004, farmer-leader Felizardo "Do" Benitez was killed after surviving earlier attempts on his life. And in 2013, Lisa Tulid was also murdered by armed goons.

Table 4. List of Murdered KMBP Leaders

Name	Date	Perpetrator/s
Edwin Vender	June 1998	Marcelino "Celing" Catipon (farm overseer) and his two sons
Reymundo Tejeno	February 2003	NPA guerillas
Rodolfo Romero	September 2003	Rodrigo Ferancullo (landlord goon)
Felizardo "Do" Benitez	March 2004	Landlord goons
Deolito Empas	February 2008	New People's Army guerillas
Lisa Tulid	October 2013	Claimant's goons
Raul Esco	August 2016	Unidentified assailants, though the NPA posted placards around Hacienda Matias condemning CARP-oriented farmers days prior to the murder

Source: Katarungan/RIGHTS Network, N.d.

While several farmers have been physically attacked, others faced criminal charges for allegedly withholding the landowners' share of the coconut harvest. Franco and Carranza labelled this phenomenon as "criminalization" of peasants, through "filing criminal charges against them in the regular court system" (Franco and Carranza 2014:40). Intended to neutralize collective action by the rural poor and forestall the further implementation of agrarian reforms, criminalization is a "form of landlord retribution against tenants who dare defy the status quo" (Franco and Carranza 2014:35). All of the 57 cases documented by QUARDDS were filed on behalf of the eight most powerful landowners in Bondoc Peninsula. These involved 249 farmers who were charged with ten different kinds of criminal offenses.

While defending themselves from the onslaught of the *hacenderos*, the peasant activists also had to confront violent reprisals launched against them by the armed component of the Communist Party of the Philippines—the New People's Army (NPA). The motivations for such attacks are both political and ideological.

Adhering to the Maoist strategy of "encircling the cities from the countryside," the CPP sees the peasantry as the "main force of the Philippine Revolution" which shall supply the "vast majority of Red fighters of the New People's Army" (Guerrero 2005:158). The CPP, however, also asserts that actual land redistribution can only commence once nationwide victory is finally achieved and a communist-led government is put in place. In the

Table 5. Criminal Cases Filed Against Bondoc Peninsula Farmers (as of 17 February 2010)¹³

Municipality	Total Number of Cases	Nature of Cases	Total Number of Accused	Counts	Landowner
San Narciso	7	Qualified theft Frustrated murder Robbery with frustrated homicide	4	7	Reyes Uy
San Andres	43	Qualified theft Unlawful detention	69	171	Reyes Estrada/Quizon Hilario Tan
San Francisco	14	Trespassing Estafa Grave threat Malicious mischief Qualified theft Attempted homicide Libel	118	15	
Mulanay	1	Estafa	21	102	Aquino
TOTAL	57	10 different criminal charges	249 accused	295 counts	8 landlords

Source: Quezon Association for Rural Development and Democratization Services (QUARRDS), 2010.

interim, the CPP aims to implement land rent reduction and the lowering of interest rates in areas where it has significant control. In Bondoc Peninsula, the CPP's rent reduction program is known as *tersyong baligtad* (inverted one-third). This alters the common share-cropping practice of a 70/30 split in favor of the landowners to a 70/30 split, favoring farmers.

In contrast, KMBP uses an approach involving radical peasant action to compel the state to implement its own agrarian reform program. This does not sit well with the CPP, which has repeatedly condemned CARP as a "sham" whose ultimate purpose is to dampen the revolutionary militancy of the peasantry. In the view of the CPP, efforts to achieve land/agrarian reform through CARP legitimizes the existing regime and undermines the peasantry's commitment to the revolutionary approach of the Party.

Sharing a fierce opposition to implementing CARP, the NPA and *hacienda* owners have exhibited signs of friendly interaction and even outright collaboration. This was pointed out by the Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services, a now-dissolved Manila-based rural NGO, which documented five instances of collusion between landlords and Maoist

insurgents between October 1998 and March 2004 (see Table 6).

One such incident occurred in October 1998, during a dialogue between the farmer-tenants of San Narciso and the New People's Army (NPA). This incident occurred shortly after the farmers began withholding the shares of the Uy family in response to Vender's murder. During the exchange, local NPA commander Domingo Almazor (a.k.a. Ka Jihad) told the farmers to immediately end their boycott and instead accept their proposed 50/50 crop sharing scheme. He also emphasized the futility of their farmers' action, reportedly saying that:

Walang patutunguhan ang laban ninyo, dahil idedepensa namin ang lupa ng mga Uy.

(Your campaign will achieve nothing, for we will defend the properties of the Uys.) (cited in Isaac 2004:7)

Another case of CPP-landlord collaboration involved Do Benitez, whose coconut yields were forcibly harvested by Erwin Esguerra (son-in-law of chief landowner Juanito Uy) and 12 other armed men on July 22 and 23, 2003. Esguerra's group was reinforced by 16 NPA partisans who acted as lookouts during the operation. Due

Table 6. Reported Incidents of Maoist-Landlord Collusion

Incident	Date	Actors Involved
Admission of willingness to protect Uy properties	October 1998	Domingo Almazora (a.k.a. Ka Jihad)
Ground-working for the candidacy of landowner Eleanor Uy for mayor of San Narciso	March-May 2001	NPA
Admission during a campaign rally of supporting the CPP and giving a donation of Php150,000	Between March-May 2001	Mayor Victor Reyes
Forcible harvesting of coconut from land tilled by Felizardo Benitez	22-23 July 2003	Erwin Esguerra (farm manager) and several goons, along with 16 NPAs as lookout
Verbal threat against tenant Alberto Bitong	9 March 2004	Nora Ribargoso along with 3 NPAs, one of them identified as Ogie Jarlito Carabido

Source: Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS), 2004.

to this incident, the farmers became convinced that the CPP had a modus vivendi with the landed elite. This shared consensus was succinctly expressed by a local resident who simply identified himself as “Junrey,” who stated that:

Malinaw sa amin ‘yung sabwatan ng mga goons at NPA. ‘Yung ginawa nilang pagkopras kina Do, patunay na ‘yon. (The conspiracy between the goons and the NPA is clear to us. Their forced harvesting of Do’s produce is enough proof.) (cited in Isaac 2004:7)

This series of violent acts against Bondoc Peninsula’s rural poor eventually caught the attention of peasant groups and human rights advocates at the international level. In 2003, for example, the Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) organized a fact-finding mission in the village of San Vicente in the town of San Narciso to “investigate the situation of agrarian reform implementation and identify possible violations of basic human rights and the right to feed oneself of landless tenants” (FIAN 2003:3). Between November 8 and 10, 2003, FIAN members from Belgium, Germany, Norway, and Sweden, along with participants from QUARRDS and the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR) visited

the area.¹⁴ Prompted by alleged incidents of peasant harassment by both landlord goons and communist guerillas, the fact finding mission reported that, “since 1996 the families in San Vicente had filed various petitions for inclusion in the CARP, but had so far not been recognized as beneficiaries” (FIAN 2003:3). To address this situation, mission members called on the state to put a stop to the violence and expedite the agrarian process in the area (FIAN 2003:12-14).

Three years later, a separate International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM) was convened by a coalition of different civil society organizations (CSOs) to “investigate the worsening trend of agrarian related human rights violations in the countryside” (IFFM 2006:2). The investigation covered a number of areas, including four landholdings in Bondoc Peninsula, concluding that big landowners “are engaged in a wide range of criminal activity that seriously undermines rural poor people’s effective access to their human rights” (IFFM 2006:35). The document further states that, “the Philippine state is failing abjectly to fulfill its obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of the rural poor population, as signatory to the various relevant international human rights law conventions” (IFFM 2006:35). Describing the life of ordinary peas-

ants as “extremely difficult” (IFFM 2006:18), the IFFM called on the Philippine government to address the problem of impunity and hasten land redistribution in the areas that it visited.

On November 8, 2008, a petition was submitted to the respective peace panels of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the CPP’s political arm—the National Democratic Front. It had 60 international and local signatories who were willing to come out and

be identified. The petition condemned “in the strongest possible terms the recent spate of killings of farmers and farmer-leaders in Masbate and Bondoc Peninsula” (Katarungan et al.:1).¹⁵ It identified the slain leader from Bondoc Peninsula as Deolito Empas, “whose perpetrators are believed by community members to be members of the NPA” (Katarungan et al.:1). The petitioners further reminded the two parties that the victims were non-combatants and were supposed to be protected under international law.



IV. Analysis of the Strategy

This section reviews the strategy employed by both the KMBP and the anti-accountability forces using a Scaling Accountability Mapping Matrix. It demonstrates the vertically integrated character of the campaign of both sides and illustrates the highly contested nature of agrarian reform implementation. The actions across different levels constitute the scale of the action. As shown in this case study, the degree of coordinated, multi-level action can mean the difference between who and what succeeds in a situation where policy implementation is contested by various actors, where there are clear winners and losers, and where the government is not inclined to act without direct pressure from citizens.

Constituency-Building

As shown in Table 7, **grassroots organizing and awareness-building** is one of the main features of the agrarian reform campaign in Bondoc Peninsula. This has been undertaken with a high level of intensity at both the village and municipal levels. It is often done by deploying external community organizers to targeted *haciendas*. In the case of Bondoc Peninsula, community organizers were provided by QUARDDS and the RIGHTS Network. This has facilitated the process of organizing *hacienda*-based peasants and linking them to other similar formations to establish municipality-wide farmers' organizations.

Once these actions were accomplished, the organized peasants were then able to engage in high intensity **coalition-building efforts with similarly organized rural poor groups**. This was done by forming municipality-based federations made up of *hacienda*-based organizations.¹⁶ Municipal level organizations are then formed into district or provincial federations, which is how KMBP came into existence in 1998. A similar process was undertaken at the national level, which led KMBP to join Katarungan in 2007. Such scaling up actions were pursued as peasants came to grips with the strength of landlord power, prompting them to seek allies beyond the village and municipal levels.

In a 2015 interview, KMBP Vice President Melchor Rosco explained the strategy as follows:

Ang pinakamahalaga ay makapagtayo ng samahan na may kakayahan sa pag-e-engage sa iba't-ibang level, 'yun 'yung magtri-trigger ng aksyon ng gobyerno. 'Pag walang ginagawa sa municipal, titirahin namin sa probinsiya. 'Pag wala pa rin, titirahin na namin sa national. 'Pag umakyat sa national, pinapakita na hindi kaya ng probinsiya, at lalong hindi kaya ng municipal.

(What's important is to form an organization with the capacity to engage at different levels, in order to trigger government action. If nothing is done at the municipal level, we elevate it to the DAR provincial office. If there are still no developments, we will then bring it to the national level. Once we bring our campaign to the national level, we are, in effect, telling the state that the province does not have the capacity to distribute the land, more so the municipal office.)

When pressed to expound on the seeming reluctance of DAR municipal officers to implement agrarian reform, Rosco's response revealed the despotic nature of landlord power in Bondoc Peninsula:

Ang dahilan, trabaho lang ang kanila, at may mga pamilya din sila. Ayaw pa nilang mamatay nang maaga.

(It's just a job for them, and they have their own families to think of. They don't want to die prematurely.)

Aside from forming intra-peasant movement coalitions, QUARDDS and KMBP also undertook **cross-sectoral coalition-building** at the district/provincial and national levels with a high degree of intensity. According to QUARDDS executive director, Jansept Geronimo, their alliance work broadened and deepened the support base of the agrarian reform movement. In the case of the Bondoc farmers, their main allies came from the media and the Catholic Church, two of society's most influential institutions. The Diocese of Gumaca's

Social Action Center provided logistical assistance and sanctuary to displaced farmers. Geronimo also identified former Gumaca Bishop Buenaventura Famadico (now assigned in the neighboring Diocese of San Pablo) as one of the most vocal champions of agrarian reform.

Advocacy efforts have included working with journalists that are sympathetic to the farmers' cause. QUARDDS has coordinated with media outlets based in Quezon's provincial capital of Lucena to get farmers' stories across to a wider public. Indeed, Geronimo has often been interviewed by local radio stations when in Lucena. Agrarian reform campaigners from QUARDDS and KMBP reported that they consider prominent television journalist Howie Severino to be an ally, for featuring the agrarian situation in Bondoc Peninsula in several documentaries that were aired by the popular current affairs program *The Probe Team*. Delfin Mallari, a reporter for the country's leading broadsheet the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, has also extensively covered the issue. He wrote numerous articles on the peasant campaign in Bondoc Peninsula, including a lengthy report on the criminalization and imprisonment of farmers.

The strategy of establishing broad cross-sectoral coalitions was specifically used in 2005 with the formation of Task Force Bondoc Peninsula (TFBP). Composed of various peasant and human rights groups, civil society allies, church formations, and selected government agencies, such as the Commission on Human Rights, TFBP was established to halt agrarian-related violence and improve CARP implementation in the area. TFBP did so by conducting a fact-finding mission and by holding public education and dialogues with other pertinent agencies.

Since the campaign for agrarian reform has largely been rooted in advocacy, and often involves the use of pressure politics, QUARDDS, KMBP, and the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network also employed **mass collective action or protest at all levels** with a high degree of intensity. Collective protest at the village level has been expressed in various forms, such as organized harvesting in various *haciendas* or the ongoing campaign to boycott share payments in Villa Reyes.

Box 2.

Method: Scaling Accountability Mapping Matrix

Jonathan Fox's Scaling Accountability Mapping Matrix attempts to create an accessible way to map the scale, coverage and intensity of actions. Cells that are filled-in identify the type of action and the level at which it is executed. The color of the filling indicates the intensity of civic engagement at each level, for each repertoire of action, with darker tones meaning more intense engagement. In this way, the tool not only depicts civil society's countervailing power across levels of government, it also takes into account both the variation and intensity of their actions at each level. In gauging the intensity of actions, the researchers first based it on interviews and secondary materials and then had the levels validated by key members of the campaign. For more, see [Doing Accountability Differently: A Proposal for the Vertical Integration of Civil Society Monitoring and Advocacy](#) (Fox and Aceron 2016).

Mass protests from the municipal up to the national level have also taken several forms, including picketing, blockades of public offices, public marches, occupation of government offices, and ouster campaigns against specific public officials. They have often involved actions to push government to enforce laws. Two high-level protest campaigns involving QUARDDS and KMBP took place in 2003, when a broad coalition of peasant groups successfully removed Hernani Braganza as DAR secretary. The same coalition forced out Braganza's successor, Roberto Pagdanganan, a year later. The success of these two ouster campaigns was due to the presence of a strong tactical coalition composed of various peasant groups and cross-sectoral supporters.

QUARDDS, KMBP, and the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network have also undertaken **public education** to communicate their agenda to a broader public. Pursued with a medium degree of intensity, public education has often been carried out at the provincial and national levels through mainstream media, especially radio and newspapers.

Table 7. Scaling Accountability Mapping Matrix: Constituency-Building

Constituency-Building	Level of Action				
	Barangay (Village)	Municipality	District/Province	National	International
Constituency-building approaches:					
Grassroots organizing/ awareness-building	(High Intensity) Deployment of community organizers and formation of village peasant organization	(High Intensity) Formation of village peasant organization	(High Intensity) District-level formation of grassroots organizations into KMBP	(High Intensity) KMBP as one of the main articulators of Katarungan's position on issues involving agrarian reform and human rights	(Low Intensity) Networking with Via Campesina
Coalition-building among already-organized, shared constituency			(High Intensity) KMBP organizational development and expansion Formation of provincial-level issue-based coalition on the coconut levy	(High Intensity) Networking and coalition-building with Katarungan/ RIGHTS Network	(Low Intensity) Networking with FIAN and other international CSOs
Cross-sectoral coalition-building			(High Intensity) Alliance work with church and provincial media	(High Intensity) Alliance work with church, Manila-based CSOs and national media	(Low Intensity) Networking with international CSOs
Mass collective action/protest	(High Intensity) Share boycott and mass surrender	(High Intensity) Share boycott and mass surrender	(High Intensity) Protest demonstration at DAR provincial office and mass surrender	(High Intensity) Protest demonstration at DAR central office	(Low Intensity) Involvement in Via Campesina activities
Public education strategy			(Moderate Intensity) Networking with media	(Moderate Intensity) Networking with media	(Low Intensity) Networking with international CSOs
Independent CSO monitoring of policy implementation	(High Intensity) Monitoring of developments in land redistribution at the village level	(High Intensity) Monitoring of developments in land redistribution at the municipal level	(High Intensity) Monitoring of DAR targets and accomplishments at the provincial level	(High Intensity) Monitoring of DAR targets and accomplishments at the national level	
Horizontal exchange of experiences/ deliberation		(High Intensity) Municipal-level exchanges among peasants from different villages	(High Intensity) Exchanges among KMBP members from different municipalities	(High Intensity) Exchanges among Katarungan/ RIGHTS Network members	
Participatory process to develop CSO policy alternative	(High Intensity) Discussions among KMBP members at the village level	(High Intensity) Discussions among KMBP members at the municipal level	(Low Intensity) Discussions among KMBP leaders	(Low Intensity) Discussions among Katarungan/ RIGHTS Network leaders	
Strategic use of ICT for constituency-building				(Moderate Intensity) Online presence through Katarungan/ RIGHTS Network website	(Low Intensity) Online presence through website of CSO allies

They also monitor DAR's CARP implementation from the municipal level up to the national level with a high degree of intensity. This involves comparing the actual status of their land cases lodged at DAR with the commitments that the Department had made during previous dialogues on how these cases will be resolved. The significant spread of KMBP, and its presence in the biggest *haciendas* that are now being subjected to reform contestation, enable it to do real-time monitoring of agrarian reform implementation. This is primarily undertaken to inform the advocacy of Katarungan/RIGHTS Network, but could also help the bureaucracy improve its performance.

Spaces have also been created to ensure **horizontal deliberation and exchange of experiences** take place between the municipal and the national levels. Pursued with a high degree of intensity, such horizontal deliberations have been intimately connected with organizing and advocacy work, since they have allowed grassroots peasants to form larger collectives and adopt the lessons derived from previous campaigns.

Horizontal exchanges have also provided rural citizens with a set of **participatory processes to develop their own policy alternatives**. Such processes have occurred with a high degree of intensity through planning, assessment, and regular meetings at the village and municipal level. However, their intensity has been moderate at the provincial and national levels due to the enormous logistical requirements of such interactions.

QUARDDS, KMBP, and the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network have also utilized information and communications technology to build constituencies. This has only been done at the national level and only with moderate intensity, through the shared website of Katarungan and RIGHTS Network.

Interfacing with the State

Interfacing with the state refers to the various approaches that peasants use to engage the state. These approaches are all meant to compel the state to act in the peasants' favor by implementing its own policy

on agrarian reform. The actions that peasants use may be collaborative or adversarial. It involves policy advocacy with executive and legislative bodies, legal actions, participation in "invited spaces" and "claimed spaces," public protest, and engagement with public accountability agencies. These approaches are indicated in table 8.

For most of its history, the campaign for agrarian reform has largely been characterized by conflict and political contestation. There was, however, a gradual change in the dynamic between the state and the organized rural poor after CARP was enacted in 1988. Though it was initially rejected by peasant groups belonging to the CPAR umbrella coalition, farmers realized that CARP contained provisions that could be used to guarantee land redistribution.

Using organized pressure from below and reform-oriented action to push for land reform from above, rural organizations such as PEACE, and eventually the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network, began engaging with the state to maximize CARP's positive provisions. Nonetheless, these groups continued to use direct action and other forms of contentious politics to compel the state to implement its own agrarian reform law. This included padlocking the main gate of DAR central office and occupying the main building to force government officials into talks. KMBP also participated in separate campaigns that successfully removed two DAR secretaries accused of gross inaction.

In addition to their engagements in national-level campaigns, KMBP, QUARDDS, and the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network also undertook **policy advocacy with local executive authorities** with a moderate degree of intensity. For example, they called on a number of mayors to prevent the harassment of pro-land-reform advocates. However, since local chief executives are not responsible for CARP implementation,¹⁷ the RIGHTS Network's advocacy at the municipal and provincial levels are only meant to expand their base of support. The same is true for the **policy advocacy with municipal and provincial legislatures**.

Table 8. Scaling Accountability Mapping Matrix: Interface with the State

Interface with the State	Level of Action				
	Barangay (Village)	Municipality	District/Province	National	International
CSO interfaces with the state:					
Policy advocacy – executive authorities (mayor, governor, etc.)	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with allied barangay officials	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with allied municipal mayors	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with provincial governor	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with allies in Malacañang (the presidential palace)	
Policy advocacy – legislature (town council, state legislature, parliament)	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with allied barangay officials	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with allied municipal councilors	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with allied provincial board members	(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with allies in the House of Representatives	
Legal recourse (case-based or strategic)		(High Intensity) Filing of legal cases	(High Intensity) Filing of legal cases	(High Intensity) Filing of cases at DAR	
Participation in “invited spaces” (shared but government-controlled)				(Moderate Intensity) Engagement with National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Farmers Council Filing of cases at the Joint Monitoring Committee of the GPH-CPP	
Participation in “claimed spaces” (shared with government, created in response to CSO initiative)			(High Intensity) Engagement as CSO in various Inter-Agency Task Forces	(High Intensity) Engagement as CSO in various Inter-Agency Task Forces	
Engagement with public accountability agencies (ombudsman, audit bureaus, human rights commissions)			(High Intensity) Engagement with Commission on Human Rights (CHR)	(High Intensity) Engagement with Commission on Human Rights (CHR)	

The farmers of Bondoc Peninsula have considerable experience in pushing for the state to create innovative spaces to respond to their call for government protection and CARP enforcement. This has often involved the creation of inter-agency task forces led by DAR. Such task forces typically include DENR, Land Registration Authority, Land Bank of the Philippines, the Commission on Human Rights, the army, the police, and the National Anti-Poverty Commission. Though formed on an ad-hoc basis, the task forces have often impelled the state to take decisive action against the various obstacles that have been put in place by anti-CARP forces. The latest inter-agency initiative was in 2015, when a contingent led by DAR, accompanied by 200 soldiers and police officers, installed 283 farmers on a 683-hectare portion of Hacienda Matias in San Francisco.

Farmers have been forced to engage the judiciary whenever criminal charges are filed against them by the landowners. This repeating pattern of criminal complaints had prompted KMBP, assisted by QUARDDS and the Katarungan/RIGHTS Network, to hold several talks with officials from DAR and the Department of Justice. They also interacted with an allied political party, the Akbayan Citizens' Action Party, to address the issue of criminalization of agrarian reform. This legislative advocacy led to the introduction of the referral system in the CARPER Law, wherein cases involving "a farmer, farmworker, or tenant... shall be automatically referred by the judge or the prosecutor to the DAR which shall determine and certify within fifteen (15) days from referral whether an agrarian dispute exists" (Section 50-A). While the referral system has not completely deterred landowners from filing criminal charges against the struggling farmers, most of these cases have already been dismissed by the courts, giving tenants the means to neutralize this tactic of the *hacenderos*.

Action from Anti-Accountability Forces

Anti-accountability forces in Bondoc Peninsula have used multiple approaches to halt the advancement of agrarian reform. Fielding candidates for public office at both the village and municipal levels has been one common strategy. This has often been accompanied by patronage politics and vote buying to secure electoral victory.

Anti-accountability forces have lobbied the village and municipal legislatures with a high degree of intensity. This has been facilitated by the fact that the landowners themselves, their relatives, and their close allies often occupy seats on these bodies. Landowners also have considerable presence at the provincial level. For example, Dominic Reyes (Don Domingo's grandson) represents their interests in the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* (Provincial Council). Land reform advocates are also convinced that anti-accountability forces were engaged in highly intense lobbying at the national level from 2008 to 2009 to block the passage of the CARPER Law.

Rural elites have also undertaken highly intense lobbying efforts with elected government executives at the village and municipal levels. This type of action has been made easier by the fact that most local chief executives are either allies of the landowners or the landowners themselves. One stark example is Florabel Uy-Yap, who was elected mayor of San Narciso in May 2016. She succeeded her mother Eleanor Uy, who was the town's chief executive from 2007 until 2016. Yap's father, Juanito Uy, also served as mayor for more than 15 years, from 1980 to 1986 and again from 1988 to 1998. In the neighboring town of Buenavista, the family patriarch Don Domingo Reyes ruled as mayor from 1963 to 1986. His son Ramon followed in the father's footsteps, serving as municipal chief from 2001 to 2007.

Since landowners have effective control over the local executive and legislative branches, they have influenced the appointments of government employees, especially at the municipal level. They are also able to offer bribes to DAR officials in the form of "refreshments." This was pointed out by KMBP's Melchor Rosco, who stated:

Kung gaano tayo kalimit pumunta sa MARO, mas madalas ang landowner. At may tawag pa! Yung magsasaka, hindi naman kaya na magbigay ng pangmeryenda na Php10,000.

(Though we are persistent in visiting the MARO or municipal agrarian reform officer, so is the landowner. And he can directly call the MARO over the phone! For a simple farmer like me, I cannot offer refreshments worth Ph10,000 or \$200.)

Bondoc Peninsula's landowning elites have also used the judicial system to thwart the implementation of

Table 9. Scaling of Anti-Accountability Forces

Constituency-Building	Level of Action				
	Barangay (Village)	Municipality	District/Province	National	International
Anti-Accountability approaches::					
Rent-seeking	High Intensity	High Intensity			
Vote-buying	High Intensity	High Intensity			
Running for office	High Intensity	High Intensity			
Influencing appointments of civil servants	High Intensity	High Intensity	Low Intensity	Low Intensity	
Lobbying the legislature	High Intensity	High Intensity	Moderate Intensity	High Intensity (Likely because this was the height of the CARPER campaign. Though this is undocumented)	
Lobbying the executive	High Intensity	High Intensity	Moderate Intensity	Low Intensity	
Filing legal cases, including OMB ("judicial offensive")		High Intensity	High Intensity	High Intensity	
(Counter) propaganda/misinformation campaigns—mass actions, fora, public meetings	High Intensity	High Intensity			
(Counter) propaganda/misinformation campaigns—use of ICT, media campaigns			Low Intensity		
Harassment	High Intensity	High Intensity			
Killings	High Intensity	High Intensity			
Coalition-building/linkages with fellow anti-accountability actors	High Intensity	High Intensity	Moderate Intensity	Low Intensity	

agrarian reform. They have filed legal cases against poor tenant-farmers at the municipal trial courts, which have often gone all the way up to the higher courts. The Katarungan/RIGHTS Network uses the term “judicial offensive” to refer to this highly intense legal strategy of the landowners. This offensive has led to the detention of more than 300 KMBP members since 1996. In several instances, farmers were arrested in the middle of the night by a combined force of police units and landlord goons. Unable to immediately access lawyers, farmers have often remained in custody for considerable periods of time (Carranza 2011:410).

In addition, anti-CARP forces, including both landowners and Maoist guerillas, utilized mass actions, forums, and public meetings at the village and municipal levels with a high degree of intensity. One common mechanism that landowners have used is the system of monthly meetings to discuss the “*patakaran ng hacienda*” (*hacienda* regulations) under the watchful gaze of the goons and *enkargados* (Franco 2005:411). They have also occasionally initiated provincial media campaigns, though with a low level of intensity. Part of their repertoire has been the killing and harassment of village and municipal farmer-leaders. This has resulted in the murder of six KMBP members, four by the private armies of landowners and two by communist rebels (Carranza 2011).¹⁸

They have also engaged in coalition-building or linkages with fellow anti-accountability actors, as seen in their apparent collaboration with Maoist guerillas to harass advocates of agrarian reform. Such actions have been highly intense at the village and municipal levels, though they become moderate at the district and provincial levels, and light at the national level.

Landowners remain powerful as a class in the Philippines, that is why they are able to influence national politics.

That being said, three points have to be emphasized: 1) they no longer possess monopoly over national power compared to 40-50 years ago due to the rise of other elite fractions such as business and manufacturing. It must also be pointed out that 2) while landlord has been reduced, they are still relatively more powerful than small farmers; and 3) that they most powerful at the village and municipal levels (in Bondoc Peninsula, at least).

Over time, the influence of Bondoc Peninsula’s most feudal-minded landowners has tended to taper off above the municipal level. The intensity of their lobbying has been relatively low at the provincial and national levels. This is due to the changes in the country’s political economy, which is partly reflected in the composition of the House of Representatives. In 1994, Filipino scholar Eric Gutierrez discovered that 58 percent of house members had vested interests in agriculture (1994:39). Ten years later, it had fallen to 40 percent. While a substantial number of legislators still owned large landholdings, “agricultural land as the foundation of power has been eclipsed by other sources of wealth, including manufacturing, services (construction, restaurants, schools, labor contracting, among others), and trade” (Coronel et al. 2004:36). This has prompted some journalists to conclude that, “the hacendados, for all their flair, are a dying class” (Coronel et al. 2004:37).

Yet, the remaining landed families who are in politics will continue to be a formidable hindrance to the completion of land redistribution in the Philippines. The lands that have yet to be redistributed are massive and productive and have been a source of power for the landlords for decades. The landed class will surely flex its muscle to ensure that the final push for CARP will be thwarted or diluted. For some of them, it is what they are in power for.



V. Concluding Remarks: How Did the Bondoc Peasant Movement Build Power at Multiple Levels?

Though land ownership may no longer be the primary basis of elite domination, *hacienda* owners still possess considerable power and influence over CARP implementation. Peasants, on the other hand, have very meagre influence on their own. This has prompted them to band together to combine their strength and gain political voice. Over the course of their struggle, the rural poor have directly experienced the vertically integrated nature of landlord power. This has impelled them to develop more strategic, multi-level campaigns. Still, the task of completing agrarian reform remains difficult because the question of land ownership is closely tied to the bigger issues of political dynasties, electoral politics and the concentration of power in the hands of few families. In fact, there is a common view among activists that the Philippines' power structure will fundamentally change once agrarian reform is finally completed.

Facing these challenges, Bondoc Peninsula's peasant movement works at multiple levels to persuade the government to carry out its own land reform commitments. The direction of their multi-level approach has, by and large, come from the ground up. As their demands have been challenged at the village level, they have gone to the municipal level, then to the provincial level, then to the national level, and so on. Of course, progress is not guaranteed; efforts that fail at the village level often end there, without moving up the scale. In Bondoc Peninsula, however, obstacles at the local level have actually led to a successful scaling up process. This can be attributed to: 1) **the federated character of the farmer groups that are involved in the campaign** (namely, KMBP and its national federation, Katarungan); and 2) **the involvement of NGOs at both provincial and national levels** (i.e., QUARDDS and Katarungan/RIGHTS Network).

To achieve scale, farmers in Bondoc Peninsula have created peasant formations at the village, municipal, and district levels which are integrated into Katarungan at

the national level. Each of these formations hold regular meetings and assemblies to elect their leaders, define their strategies, and discuss organizational concerns in the most democratic manner possible. Vertical integration is further facilitated by allied agrarian reform NGOs that provide technical and legal assistance to the rural poor. QUARDDS is playing this role at the provincial level and the RIGHTS Network is playing it at the national level.

The partnership between QUARDDS and KMBP has allowed rural citizens to assert their rights where actual land contestation occurs, namely at the village and municipal levels. QUARDDS has also enabled farmers to engage state agencies like DAR at both the municipal and provincial level as they pursue their land cases. The partnership has also facilitated coalition-building efforts at the provincial level to gain the support of other vital institutions such as media and the Catholic Church.

The RIGHTS Network, for its part, provides legal, political, and technical support to KMBP farmers. It also helps to push their cases at the national level, by facilitating dialogues with pertinent government agencies, engaging the media, and developing alliances with important institutions such as churches and political parties. It has brought the spate of agrarian-related killings and harassments in Bondoc Peninsula to the attention of the international community by linking with solidarity groups such as the Philipinenbüro and the International Peace Observers Network (IPON).

KMBP's participation in a national federation, on the other hand, enables Bondoc farmers to interact with rural citizens from other regions and provinces. This has allowed them to share their experiences and forge common strategies. It has also brought the issue of peasant killings to the respective peace panels of the Philippine government and the CPP, calling on both sides to respect fundamental human rights and prevent

the further spread of violence in Bondoc Peninsula. We cannot, as yet, determine how the ongoing initiative in Bondoc Peninsula will develop. Though KMBP leader Melchor Rosco may offer us a clue: *"Tuloy lang ang laban"* (The struggle will continue).

The farmers of Bondoc Peninsula have undoubtedly achieved a great deal in their two-decade campaign for agrarian reform. During this period, 10,000 hectares of land have been taken from some of the biggest land-lords in the area and placed under the control of 3,800 tillers. This is not to say that landlordism has finally been eroded, nor is rural poverty in Bondoc Peninsula a thing of the past. Yet it does offer important lessons and insights for other campaigns concerned with accountability, citizens' empowerment, and social justice.

KMBP's campaign for land reform illustrates the kind of struggle involved in the implementation of a highly contested policy such as agrarian reform. In general,

redistributive policies are likely to have losers that have significant clout to effectively resist reform (i.e., anti-accountability/anti-reform forces). But ordinary citizens who are supposed to benefit from these reforms can still push the government to implement such policies by creating formations that mirror how anti-accountability forces organize and exercise power: through a vertically integrated campaign that is present from the grassroots up to the international arena. Such multi-level action that is coalitional, involving broad allied forces, and employing varied approaches and tactics can provide the needed scale to withstand the similarly vertically integrated efforts of anti-reform forces. When Citizen-led and citizen-focused, a long and winding campaign becomes rooted in and anchored to the purpose of the action: to win a pro-people reform, sustained through solidarity, passion and vision for the future that promises better lives for the poor and marginalized who are bound to benefit from the success of the reform.



A community meeting in Hacienda Matias where farmers discussed their issues and concerns about the implementation of agrarian reform.
Credit: © Katarungan/RIGHTS Network

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Interviews/ Focus Group Discussions

Key Informant Interview (Katarungan/ Rights Network Office, Barangay Pinyahan, Quezon City; 7 March 2015).

- Danilo Carranza, Acting National Coordinator, RIGHTS Network.

Focus Group Discussion (Alex III Grill, Matalino Street, Barangay Central, Quezon City; 28 April 2015).

- Maribel Luzara, President, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP).
- Melchor Rosco, Vice President, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP).
- Jansept Geronimo, Executive Director, Quezon Association for Rural Development and Democratization Services (QUARRDS).

Focus Group Discussion (Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR)-Central Office, Elliptical Road, Quezon City; 4 May 2015).

- Alma Ravena, member, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP).
- Leonila Sobreo, member, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP).
- Amalia Ortega, member, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP).

Endnotes

1. The homestead program began in 1903, when the American colonial government opened large tracts of “public land” for settlement. Under the Philippine Homestead Act, potential homesteaders could apply for up to 16 hectares of land. Once the application has been approved, the applicant was given a “non-patented approval” and could begin cultivating the assigned plot. The homesteader would then be awarded a title after a residence period of five years. This scheme enabled the government to give land to peasants without redistributing existing landholdings. The homestead program, however, dislocated the Muslim population in Mindanao who had no titles but had occupied those lands for centuries. This would eventually lead to Moro separatism and the armed conflict in Mindanao which continues to this day.
2. Huk refers to the first three letters of the *Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon* (Anti-Japanese People’s Army)—a Marxist-led armed movement that was formed during the Second World War. After Japan’s surrender in 1945, the Huks continued their guerrilla activities, this time targeting the newly independent Philippine Republic.
3. The aim of this decree was to redistribute all rice and corn lands, seven hectares and above, to their actual tillers. It also changed the status of farmers working on rice and corn farms below seven hectares from share tenants to lease holders.
4. Alienable and disposable lands refer to state-owned agricultural lands that may be redistributed to individual farmers.
5. The data presented in Table 1 is based on a publication by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which is the government agency responsible for all national censuses and surveys. The said document, entitled *Redistribution of Land*, was released in 2016 using data that was provided by DAR (page i). Our original intention was to indicate the yearly CARP accomplishments from the year that the Program began in 1988 until 2015 (or if possible, until 2016). Unfortunately, we have not come across any link or publication from DAR or any other government agency that disaggregates CARP’s accomplishment for the years 1988 until 2010. Even DAR’s official website has not done so. What DAR did is to aggregate the data from 1972 until 2015, without breaking this down on a yearly basis.
6. The 11 agrarian reform NGOs comprising the RIGHTS Network include: 1) Cagayan Center for Rural Empowerment and Development, Inc. (CREDO), which operates in the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela and Quirino; 2) Farmworkers Agrarian Reform Movement of Hacienda Luisita (FARM), which operates in Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac province; 3) Katarungan-Pampanga/Tarlac, which operates in the provinces of Pampanga and Tarlac; 4) Quezon Association for Rural Development and Democratization Services, Inc. (QUARDDS), which operates in Quezon Province; 5) Bicol Hegemony for Rural Empowerment and Development, Inc. (B-HEARD), which operates in the provinces of Albay and Camarines Sur; 6) Masbate Organizing Team, which operates in the province of Masbate; 7) Panay Rural Organizing for Reform and Social Order, Inc. (PROGRESO), which operates in the province of Iloilo; 8) Negros Oriental Center for People Empowerment and Development (NOCPED), which operates in the province of Negros Oriental; 9) Katarungan-Negros, which operates in northern Negros; 10) Center for Rural Empowerment Services in Central Mindanao, Inc. (CRESCENT), which operates in the provinces of North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat; and 11) Builders of Rural Empowerment and Human Rights Advocates Network, Inc. (BRETHREN), which operates in the province of Davao Oriental.
7. Prior to the split, PEACE had successfully campaigned for the removal of two previous DAR secretaries—Hernani Braganza and Roberto Pagdanganan. By 2006, PEACE was preparing to launch a third ouster campaign, this time targeting then-Secretary Nasser Pangandaman. However, there were those inside PEACE who thought that the campaign was ill-advised, arguing that the network should instead focus on extending the mandate of CARP which

was set to expire in 2008. They also questioned the decision of the PEACE leadership to form an electoral vehicle called the Alliance for Rural Concerns to contest the 2007 party-list polls, stating that there was no substantive discussion for its creation.

8. The legislative branch of the Philippines is called Congress which is composed of two chambers—the Senate and the House Representatives (also known as the Lower House).

9. Katarungan planned the action on its own, with the other peasant groups not knowing that the former would force their way into the compound of the Lower House. When the gates were finally breached, other farmers joined their fellow peasants from Bondoc Peninsula and entered the grounds of the legislative complex.

10. Danilo Carranza used this phrase during an informal conversation with his co-author, Francis Isaac.

11. This include Agdangan, Buenavista, Catanauan, General Luna, Macalelon, Mulanay, Padre Burgos, Pitogo, San Andres, San Francisco, San Narciso and Unisan.

12. This is based on the research that was undertaken by the Manila-based Asian Institute of Management in 1989, which is the only major study on the land tenure situation in Bondoc Peninsula.

13. In August 2016, 37 farmers from the municipality of San Francisco were charged with theft and qualified theft by the Matias family. The farmers contend that the charges have no basis since the land that they are tilling is already under government control and is about to be redistributed to them. KMBP is still consolidating the data regarding this latest wave of criminalization.

14. The Commission on Human Rights is an agency of the Philippine government tasked with investigating all forms of human rights violations involving civil and political rights.

15. For more than three decades, the Philippine government and the CPP-NPA-NDF has been holding peace negotiations to hammer out a deal that would end the communist insurgency. Since 1986, over 40 rounds of talks were held under five different presidents, with both sides failing to come up with any substantive agreement.

16. Creating coalitions across different barangays is a difficult task since most elected barangay chairpersons are also farm overseers. This is the case in Villa Reyes and Hacienda Matias. At the same time, farmers from unaffected areas are reluctant to join KMBP, thinking that they could face reprisal from the landowners.

17. Agrarian reform is not among the devolved functions of local government units. It is still the responsibility of the national government, through the Department of Agrarian Reform (tasked with redistributing private agricultural lands) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (tasked with managing public land).

18. A seventh farmer leader was killed in August 2016. Though the assailants remain unknown, residents suspect that the NPA was behind the killing since they posted placards around Hacienda Matias condemning CARP-oriented farmers several days prior to the murder.



American University
School of International Service
4400 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20016
www.accountabilityresearch.org