

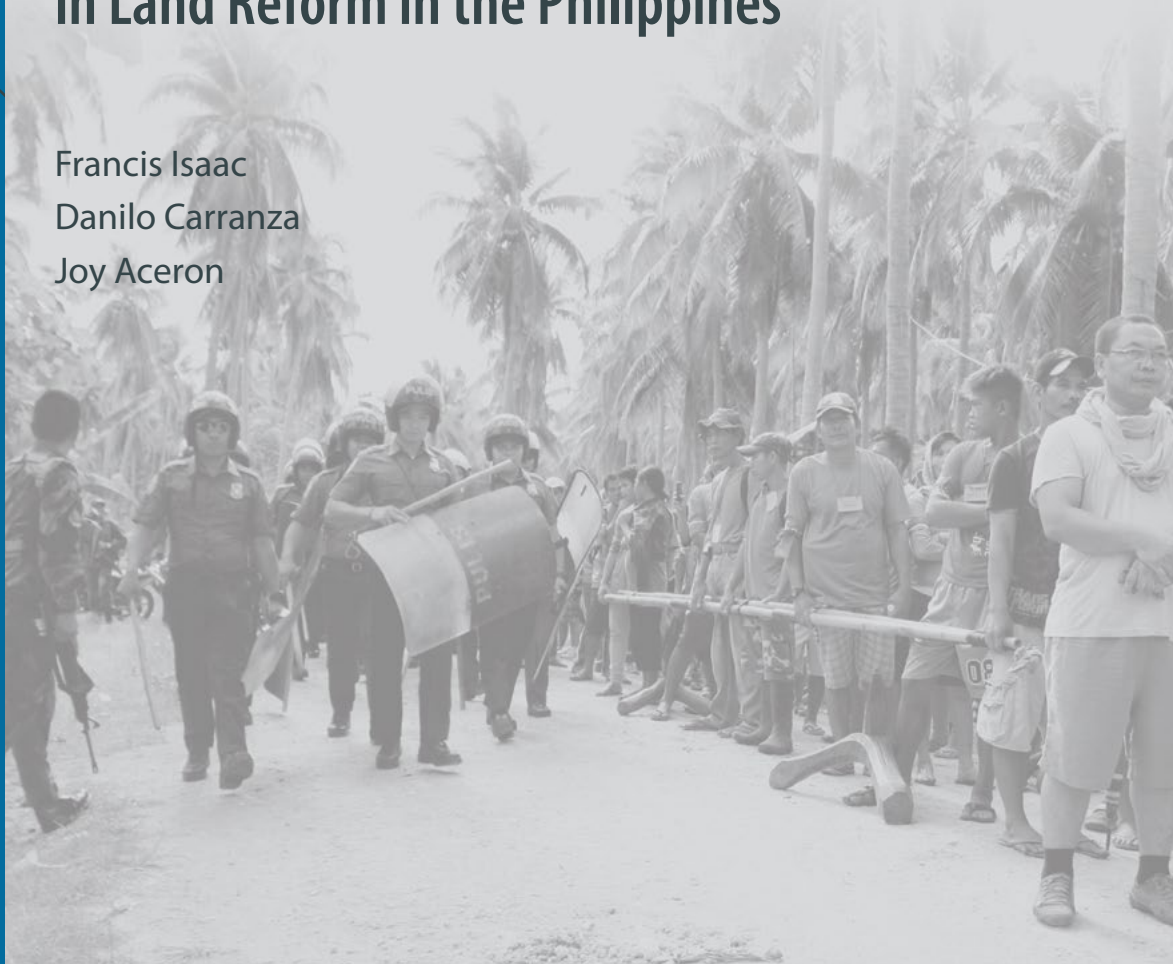
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Accountability Working Paper



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

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Summary

This is a summary of a longer Accountability Working Paper. The full paper and all other ARC publications can be found at www.accountabilityresearch.org



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.

The Scaling Accountability Map, used first in 'Doing Accountability Differently: A Proposal for the Vertical Integration of Civil Society Monitoring and Advocacy' (Fox and Acheron 2016), has two dimensions: Constituency-Building (below), which maps the actions to organize and mobilize civil society; and Interface with the State, which identifies the various ways campaigners engage the state at different levels in synergized monitoring-advocacy campaigns. This Working Paper expanded the mapping tool to include a third dimension—tracing the similarly vertically-integrated Actions of Anti-Accountability Forces.

Scaling Accountability Mapping Matrix: Constituency-Building

Level of Action					
Constituency-building approaches	Barangay (Village)	Municipality	District/Province	National	International
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

About the Authors

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The Accountability Research Center (ARC) is an action-research incubator based in the School of International Service at American University. ARC partners with civil society organizations and policy reformers in the global South to improve research and practice in the field of transparency, participation and accountability.

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Cover Photo: Expecting landlord resistance to the agrarian reform law, Bondoc farmers claimed their land award with police support (July 2, 2015 Philippines). *Credit:* © Katarungan/RIGHTS Network.