

**ORGANIZING STRATEGY  
CASE STUDY OF PALM OIL  
PLANTATION IN MINDANAO,  
PHILIPPINES**

**CENTER OF TRADE UNION AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS (CTUHR)**



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# INTRODUCTION



In late January 2013, a Malaysian industry group expressed interest in investing US\$575 million to develop some 68,000 hectares of land for oil palm plantations. This was reported by Mindanao Development Authority (MnDA)<sup>1</sup> Chair Lualhati Antonino as a result of the Philippine Business Forum held in Kuala Lumpur on November 29, 2012. One target areas cited by the media reports is Liguasan Marsh, Asia's largest wetland and home to more than 200 rare local and migratory

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birds<sup>2</sup>, reportedly as part of peace dividends.

The Liguasan Marsh is composed of three marshes—Liguasan proper, Libungan, and Ebpanan—and is an important wetland habitat of water bird species. Most are under water during rainy season. About 140,000 hectares dry out during dry season and are cultivated. The main threat in the past has been the conversion of marshes to rice paddies and other agricultural land. A fisheries project will involve the conversion of large areas of the marsh into aquaculture ponds and fish pens. The marsh is settled by over 100,000 Maguindanaon families who are dependent on fishing when water levels are high, and agriculture when the water is low.<sup>3</sup>

Similar to the A Brown Co.'s oil palm expansion in Opol, Misamis Oriental, the proposed investment in Maguindanao was met with immediate opposition for social, environment, economic and other reasons that will inevitably destroy the entire community. Yet, MnDA is still quiet on the issue, while industry promoters primarily from the Philippine Palm Oil Development Council (PPDCI), are now playing up the idea of so-called benefits of Malaysian

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investments, including thousands of jobs that it can supposedly generate.

Amidst the controversy of land use and land conversion, this April 18 to 19, 2013 the 8<sup>th</sup> National Palm Oil Congress will be held in Cagayan de Oro City, a place quite close to A Brown Co.'s operation (Misamis Oriental, Mindanao). This is organized by the PPDCI<sup>4</sup>, and co-sponsored by the Local Government of Cagayan de Oro City, big industry players and various national and local government units. The Congress wittingly chose the theme "Utilizing Unproductive Lands and Promoting Economic Stability thru Investments in the Palm Oil Industry" to downplay the oppositions to conversion of productive lands into oil palm farming.

Regardless of oppositions on the use of inhabited, protected, and productive lands for oil palm plantation, the industry, aided with full government support is bent on expanding.

## **I. OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGIES, AND SCOPE**

There are few but extensive studies made on the situation of workers, agrarian reform beneficiaries, and communities in

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key oil palm plantations in the Philippines and in the Southeast Asian region. But there is little knowledge on the experience of resistance and struggle of workers and communities affected by their existing operations and continual expansion.

This study on organizing in oil palm plantations in Mindanao aims to contribute to the literature on oil palm plantations in Southeast Asia and give insight on how workers and community members in oil palm plantations in CARAGA and Opol, Misamis Oriental organized themselves and led their respective communities to struggle for better conditions or to resist the impending destruction of their communities due to oil palm expansion.

This study was conducted by Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) between December 7, 2012 to March 2013. Personal interviews, focus group discussion and interview of key respondents through email were used to gather data. Twelve worker-leaders from Agusan Plantation Inc. (API), Agumil (API Milling Plant), and Filipinas Palm Oil Plantation Inc. (FPPI) participated in the focus group discussions while five key informants were interviewed: three were conducted in person and two were done through emails. CTUHR also visited and

interviewed organizations in Misamis Oriental involved in the campaign against A Brown expansion in Opol, Misamis Oriental. In addition, CTUHR also used existing documentations on several incidents/cases involving the four companies.

## **II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **A. Oil Palm Plantations in the Philippines and in Mindanao**

The oil palm industry is a growing industry in the Philippines propelled by the increase in demand both domestically and internationally. Considered as a ‘sunshine’ industry by the Benigno Aquino III administration, it is being developed further as a priority industry under the Philippine Development Plan of 2011-2016.<sup>5</sup>

As a move towards expanding the current potential, an agreement between Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) and the Southern Mindanao Development Authority (SMDA) in 2002 identified 477,000 hectares of land suitable for oil palm farming.

The identification however, lacks the description nor the classification of the nature of these lands for oil palm growing

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and various farmers and indigenous communities are wary about possible displacements. In Agusan del Sur for example, both government and palm oil companies claim that oil palm plantations were built from cogonal, low-yielding corn-lands or previously logged areas—claims that were strongly denied by farmers and communities. Thus, the question of land use remains a hotly-contested issue that hounded and is continually hounding any Philippine government administration in power. Apparently, in spite of several laws passed by the government related to land use, the Philippines lacks a comprehensive land use policy framework that will govern so-called multi-stakeholders and competing land utilization. This lack of policy framework resulted to long historical land conflicts that are often marred with bloodshed.

Today, as earlier said, agribusiness, including palm oil production and processing, is listed in the government’s top three priorities for investment (the two others are infrastructure, and tourism facilities and services) particularly in Mindanao under the Public –Private Partnership (PPP) program. To lure prospective investors, the Board of Investment (BOI) issued a pronouncement that specific investments in these three areas

will enjoy up to six years of income tax holidays after getting registered with the BOI this year—a change from the five-year tax holiday that the BOI and the Philippine Export Processing Zone Authority (PEZA) are granting to their listed companies.<sup>6</sup>

The palm oil industry is in fact not new as it has been existing in the Philippines for over 30 years. However, it was only in the last ten years that the government endeavored to speed up its development to encourage more investments. Thus, annual production of both oil palm and its by-products has increased tremendously over the last decade. Production of palm oil fresh fruit bunches has increased from 337,975 metric tons (MT) in 2002 to 540,913 MT in 2011. CARAGA region delivered the chunk of oil palm production in 2011 accounting for nearly 60 percent of the total national production. In Northern Mindanao (Region X), an area of expansion of oil palm plantations, production increased 20 times in the eight years: from 1,557 MT in 2004 to 29,968 MT in 2011.<sup>7</sup>

Expansion of oil palm plantations in the country also intensified in recent years. From the 19,817 hectares in 2002, oil palm plantations have expanded to nearly 55,000

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hectares by the end of 2012. The PPDCI proposes to further expand to 200,500 hectares of oil palm plantation by 2016.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the above-mentioned policies to promote agribusiness, there are no specialists on oil palm production in the government agency in charge of it. The nursery of oil palm trees for instance is operated by the milling plants. In other words, there is no agency in charge of the palm oil industry directly; it is only the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) that is tentatively responsible for palm oil.

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## **B. Issues Surrounding Oil Palm Plantations in Mindanao**

*From farmers to low-paid workers, long term casuals and unemployed*

As in most mono-crop plantations, expansion and increased production of oil palm did not necessarily lead to poverty reduction the way its promoters profess. On the contrary, social and environmental issues abound the history, current existence, and continuing expansion of oil palm plantations in the country. As early as late 1970s, when conversion of land to oil palm plantations in CARAGA was still in its early stages, land grabbing, displacement of indigenous communities, and naked violence were already present (ibid.)<sup>9</sup>.

Farmers and indigenous people who were compelled to stay in their lands—because they had nowhere to go—covered by the country’s biggest oil palm plantations, namely Filipinas Palm Oil Plantation Inc. (FPPI), Agusan Plantation Inc (API) and Agumil in Agusan del Sur became plantation workers, majority of whom remained casual even after 30 years of hard labor. These casual workers suffer from very low wages (as low as Php 150.00

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a day), absence of benefits, and were deprived of the right to security of tenure. This poor working condition compounded by high level of unemployment particularly among women have pushed the children to work in various capacities as plantation workers. CTUHR study (2012) revealed that 24 percent of plantation workers in Agusan del Sur are children between 5 to 17 years old.<sup>10</sup>

The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) passed in 1988 was helpful in uplifting the situation of farmers-turned-workers in many plantations. In Agusan del Sur, oil palm trees planted lands owned by then National Development Corp-Guthrie Estate (now FPPI) was subjected to land reform and the land, was ordered to be transferred to the beneficiaries, undivided. Beneficiaries were then given a collective Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) and were encouraged to form a cooperative of agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs). The cooperative, NGPI-Multipurpose Cooperative, Inc., was set up and later leased their land to FPPI in 1990 for 19 years. This was later extended for another 25 years or until 2032.

In the agreement, FPPI was to pay the cooperative Php 635.00 (US\$ 15.15) per

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hectare per annum while enjoying absolute control of the operation of plantations including labor policies.<sup>11</sup>

The ARBs/cooperative members, many of whom are still casual workers seemed oblivious of the content of the agreement, although questions haunt them: why after becoming owners of the land, it still did not make any difference in their livelihood and income? Members interviewed by CTUHR in 2012 noted that the payment for land rent seemed like a cruel joke as it only amounts to Php 53.00 (US\$ 1.30) per month, just enough to buy half kilo of rice (Php 17.00) and two cans of sardines (Php 34.00) for a single meal of a family of six persons.

Thus, in spite of the much-hyped poverty reduction potential, the existence of oil palm plantations in Agusan del Sur did not make a dent in cutting poverty prevalent in the province. Agusan del Sur consistently ranks as one of the country's 10 poorest provinces, and fourth highest hunger incidence.

*Displacements of indigenous communities, extra-judicial killings and other human rights violations in oil palm plantation expansion*

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Similar to Agusan del Sur, the expansion of oil palm plantation in Northern Mindanao in the last decade also resulted to the displacement of the Higaonon tribe of the Lumad indigenous group. In 2001, American company A Brown began its operation in the region particularly in the province of Bukidnon. In 2010, the local government facilitated the entry and expansion of A. Brown Co. in the town of Opol in the province of Misamis Oriental.

In February 2011, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) local officials told the Higaonon tribe that A. Brown has the authority to develop the land since the holder of Forest Land Grazing Lease Agreement (FGLA) already issued a special power of attorney to A. Brown's subsidiary, Nakeen Corporation. The said lease agreement is set to expire in 2016. In 2010, the lease agreement was cancelled and the local DENR categorized the land as forest land.<sup>12</sup>

The entry hampered the indigenous people's struggle for land rights which was already promised to them by the government in 2008. The Higaonon tribe had been inhabiting Opol long before the Spaniards came to the Philippines. This struggle to

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protect their ancestral land by opposing the entry of A. Brown in Opol, cost the life their leader, Gilbert Paborada, who was killed on October 3, 2012. Paborada's family, Opol residents, and supporters of the resistance against A Brown believed that the killing of Paborada was directly related to his work as a leader of the resistance movement against A Brown oil palm expansion in Opol.

The communities are not only dismayed over and angry at the killing of Paborada, they are also unhappy about the local government and A Brown's promise of better living conditions unfulfilled. The communities were promised more work opportunities, better income, more roads, schools, services, hospital with entry of the A. Brown in Northern Mindanao, but they contend nothing was realized. And similar to the issues besetting the workers in Agusan del Sur, workers in the relatively young plantation in Bukidnon, workers receive wages below the legally-mandated minimum rate and remain in precarious status. .

Other than the issues mentioned above, workers health in the plantations and environmental degradation are also nagging concerns in oil palm plantations in CARAGA and Northern Mindanao.





### **III. EXPERIENCES OF ORGANIZING IN OIL PALM PLANTATIONS IN MINDANAO**

#### **A. Union organizing in oil palm plantations in Mindanao: Lessons from FPPWU, MAPAPI and Agumil Workers Union**

To date, FPPI, API and Agumil in Agusan del Sur are the only palm oil companies in the Philippines where trade unions exist. All unions in those companies are affiliated to National Federation of Labor Unions–Kilusang Mayo Uno (NAFLU-KMU).

Unlike the common practice where workers initiated the union organizing, interviewed union members attested that unionization in three companies was management-initiated and local unions were management-controlled. The reasons for such peculiarity were not clear, but the trade unionists interviewed suspected that it [getting workers into their installed union] was a management attempt to temper the restlessness of farmers-turned workers over what they called as “companies and government forced occupation” of their lands.

Current trade union leaders also added that their union organizing underwent and continue to undergo winding and painful processes to overcome what they considered as deception, violence, and other attacks on their rights as workers and trade unionists. They further added that they had a long history of transforming their former unions into independent unions through “persistent, holistic, comprehensive organizing” and collective struggle.

#### *1) The emergence of pro-management unionism*

FPPI is the first company to operate in Agusan del Sur in 1981. Its operation was not accepted by affected communities and was thus, marred by stories of horror and human rights violations. Left with little if no alternative, affected indigenous communities stayed in their hometowns. Some of them later became the workforce who cleared the area and established the plantation. Workers from other provinces of Mindanao also migrated to Agusan del Sur in search for plantation jobs.

Three years into its operation, FPPI installed a workers union, the Philippine Association of Free Labor Unions or (PAFLU), an affiliate of labor center Trade

Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) in 1984. FGD participants recalled that during this period, they never experienced formal negotiation concerning work conditions, with the management. Years later, PAFLU-TUCP was unseated and was replaced by a local affiliate of Federation of Free Workers (FFW). In 1996 the National Federation of Labor (NFL) took the union position from FFW. For 10 years, NFL served as the duly-mandated bargaining unit in FPPI until NAFLU-KMU beat them in the certification elections in 2006.

In API, current union president Eleazar Abaja Jr recalled that the Associated Trade Unions-TUCP (ATU-TUCP) also ruled as the bargaining unit in the 1990s. He cannot however remember if that union election was held either to: 1) to ask them whether they wanted a union or not, or 2) which union they wanted to represent them. Mr. Abaja further recalled that in 2000, ATU-TUCP lost to NFL in a union election. In 1997, Agumil started its milling operations for API and five years later (2002), a local union, also affiliated to NFL was also formed in Agumil,

However, the establishment of unions in these three oil palm companies by the management themselves, did not

necessarily translate to better conditions for workers in the oil palm plantations.

Mr. Abaja attested that conditions of workers in API did not improve under the TUCP nor even after many years of being under the wings of FFW nor NFL. He narrated that while in paper the workers were supposed to get a total of Php 38.50 wage increase in the span of the five-year Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between API and NFL, the workers did not actually receive any form of wage hike. The wages of casual workers particularly of harvesters were even more pitiful that time: harvesters are only paid 2.50 per fresh fruit bunch harvested.

Agumil union President Alejandro Albores Jr. shares a similar experience with NFL. Speaking in local language (Cebuano), he explained that they indeed got a wage increase but it did not come from the CBA but from the Wage Order issued by the Regional Wage and Productivity Board (RTWPB)—a government body responsible for determining wage increases in different regions of the country. There was a CBA provision that wage increase will be implemented, and when the company did implement it, then, they refused to grant the mandatory increment from the wage orders. Meaning, it was either CBA or Wage Order.

But if one compares the provisions of CBA when it comes to wages, the benefits/amount are far lower than those determined by the RTWPB.

Incumbent union president in FPPI, Mr. Elmer Jamero, affirmed the same experience when NFL was still the union in FPPI. Mr. Jamero said that for over two decades of working in the company and being unionized, he did not feel that their conditions improved. In a personal interview, he shared that during NFL's affiliate union term, wage orders by the RTWPB were much higher than those provided in the CBAs.

It must be understood that unionism in the Philippines, is historically divided. For a century, unions were also used by the ruling class (government) to control the industrial and labor relations on one hand, and by the workers to effect change and challenge the ruling class on the other.

In 1975, three years after then President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in the Philippines and the militant trade unions and federations were clamped down, Marcos, with the support from the United States through America-Asia Federation of Labor Institute (AAFLI), established the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) in the former's effort to

gain support from the labor sector. TUCP's roots explain their stance which is economist and beliefs that "largely reflect[ed] the government's view and defended the government's restructuring policy, even when other labor groups denounced it as restrictive of the workers' basic right."<sup>13</sup>

TUCP—which was then the only recognized labor center—dominated the country's trade union movement until its dominance was challenged by independent and militant Kilusang Mayo Union (KMU) following the latter's establishment in 1980.

The Federation of Free Workers was founded by Jesuits in reaction to communist-influenced unions. It was founded in 1950 and sought to realize in practice the papal social encyclicals. FFW's orientation was also influenced by the US-funded Bell Mission Report in 1950 which recommended "instituting a labor-relation system patterned after that of the US and sending of US leaders to train Filipino trade unionists." Although it promoted an independent and democratic labor movement, it adhered to "political methods supportive of government programs while independently participating in government tripartite bodies..."<sup>14</sup>

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TUCP and FFW, being the only acceptable labor centers by both government and employers officially represent the Philippine labor sector in the International Labor Organization (ILO), considered by majority of the labor groups as misrepresentation.

*2) The road to transformation to independent unions: Strategies and lessons*

In 2001, the National Federation of Labor Unions-Kilusang Mayo Uno (NAFLU-KMU) joined the certification election in FPPI but lost to NFL. In an interview correspondence, Mr. Jacinto Tanduyan, Secretary General of KMU-Caraga said that KMU's loss in 2001 was largely due to the divisive tactics employed by Southern Philippines Federation of Labor (SPFL) who was also previously associated with KMU.

KMU's bitter loss to NFL in 2001 prompted them to study their weaknesses. Just before the scheduled union election in 2006, KMU organizers and local leaders decided to go back to and re-group their members in FPPI they previously tapped in 2001 election. At the same time, they started what they called as social investigation in the adjacent plantation of API.

Social investigation or the act of probing into the issues besetting the population or community target for organizing is a necessary first step in organizing. It enables organizers to understand the objective conditions and social relations that exist in a given area. This process however is never-ending as new issues in the communities and workplaces arise all the time, and investigation enables them to see the issues as inter-related rather than distinct or isolated, and help them formulate strategies.

Dismay over the leadership and performance of the previous unions led the individual workers wanting for genuine representation that could truly uphold their interest as workers. Mr. Albores of Agumil said that through the television, they have known and got interested in KMU as a militant union which is always after the welfare and rights of workers.

In the initial stage of organizing, workers from API formed small groups that discretely met and discussed their conditions, studied the laws and their rights as workers. From an initial group of three individuals, each of them took as their task to enjoin one or more workers to join the group until such time that they have enough

members to form an organization with officers and committees.

Organizing was also not contained in one single company. As mentioned above, KMU's organizing in oil palm plantations started first in FPPI and then in API. And since Agumil is in the same community as API, union organizing in Agumil followed as organizing in API advanced.

Immersion (living with the people) in the community of workers was also among the strategies used by KMU in building contacts in the plantations. Mr. Tanduyan shared that organizing inside FPPI was particularly difficult as the places of residence of workers were far from each other. From February to November 2006, organizing efforts in FPPI resulted to only a handful of contacts but they persisted.

### *3) Organizing: A process of educating the workers and learning from them*

Educating the workers and the communities about the law, their rights and their objective conditions is a fundamental aspect of organizing. FGD respondents and interviewees narrated that during the leadership of the previous unions, they barely held discussions on labor laws and workers rights. In forming independent

unions, it was imperative that they educated each member and potential member to keep the union intact. Mr. Albores shared:

*[sa] pagpasok pa lang ng unyon, siyempre andun na mag-aral, isa, dalawa, lima. Pag nakabuo na kami ng twenty doon nagsimula, natayo ng mga officer para sila ang nakatuon... ”(in the initial stage of our organizing, it is natural that we study and educate a worker, then two , then five. When we were able to conscientize 20 workers, we started forming the adhoc officers).*

Other than labor issues, the unions also raise workers' awareness about the national situation specifically the economic policies that directly affect them and their families. And through these discussions, they are able to make a stand and unite with other sectors to oppose or at least take critical stances on national policies like for instance the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* or 4Ps (generally known as the conditional cash transfer), the privatization

of services, and the economic policy of the present administration, or the PPP.

The long history of management unionism and many years of non-resistance to the company rules and whims have also impacted on the minds of the many workers. Mr. Jamero of FPPI observed that for many years, the workers in the plantation have become passive, uncritical, and individualistic:

*“Yung kontento ka lang sa kung ano ang ibigay sayo na... hindi mo ina-analyze kung ok na ba yun sayo o hindi pa. . . yung bang palagi lang sumusunod sa kwan ng management. Saka yung pag binibigyan ng pera, ok na. bahala na ang iba, ganun. Bahala na ang iba, kanya-kanya na ganun. Yun kasi ang nangyayari dito. Kaya yun ang binago namin.”* (It’s like you are already contented with whatever the company gives you ...without analyzing if those things are acceptable or not...an attitude that always follow or obey the whims of the management...Also, when the management give you money, you feel okay and you think to let others struggle for themselves... to each his

own...That attitude was so pervasive before, that’s what we endeavored to change).

Changing the workers’ conservatism and individualism was a challenge and educating the workers about their rights and collective struggle played a key role:

*“Nag-aral kami [ng mga batas at kasaysayan at tagumpay ng pagkilos ng mga mga manggagawa] at doon unti-unti rin naming na-transform [ang kaisipan ng mga manggagawa.”* (We had to get ourselves educated as well, about laws, history, and successful experiences of workers in other places, and slowly, we have transformed our mindset, as well as the others.)

Education in organizing however does not merely mean studying texts in books of laws, history and other written documents. Actual practice in organizing provides organizations and member individuals with invaluable insights and lessons on how to improve an organization’s

strategy, weaknesses, and overcome shortcomings and correct mistakes. In this sense, organizing is also an endless process of learning and re-learning. Mr. Tanduyan of KMU-CARAGA admitted that before engaging in the 2006 certification in FPPI, they studied closely their loss in 2001. They changed their strategy and won over NFL in the January 2007 elections.

Even in their campaigns and local struggles, FPPWU persistently studies and learns from their experiences. Mr. Jamero pointed out that before launching their second strike in 2012, they seriously assessed and studied their weaknesses in their first strike in 2010. And from there, they strategized and planned new tactics in order to avoid the same difficulties when launching their 2012 strike.

FPPWU staged a strike in October 2010 over the company (FPPI's) non-implementation of the previous CBA particularly the provisions on wage increase, other benefits and promotion to regular status by long-term casual workers. The strike supported by around 2,000 individuals from residents in various communities lasted for three days, when the management promised to sit down and renegotiate the CBA.<sup>15</sup> (CTUHR Documentation, 2010)

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#### *4) Launching campaigns – as means to amplify workers interests*

Union organizing—or any kind of grassroots organizing—is ultimately aimed at developing collective participation and engaging in activities that are intended to overturn conditions of exploitation and oppression or to improve current conditions for a given population to say the least. Thus, launching campaigns is a measure of how much an organization has widened and deepened in order to acquire as much support and actualize collective action toward specific goals.

Collective bargaining agreement (CBA) is considered a form of local campaign that unions launch. And while CBAs are aimed at gaining concrete results like increase in wages and improved benefits at the factory/enterprise level, interviewees and FGD participants also see the success of CBAs as a reflection or measurement of the union's and the workers' readiness to act collectively at the local level.

Aside from local campaigns, the unions in the three oil palm companies also raise their campaigns at the national level and actively engage in general workers

issues such as substantial wage hike and ‘regularization’ of workers.

All unions are unified in saying that for a campaign to be successful, it must reflect the wants and needs of the workers and must serve towards the improvement of their condition. Ultimately, campaigns must lead to concrete results and gains for the workers and their families.

MAPAPI-NAFLU-KMU, the workers union at API, through its CBA was able to substantially increase wages of workers especially the harvesters. In the past, harvesters were paid Php 1.50 per fresh fruit bunch (FFB) harvested which means that he will only earned Php 150.00 for 100 FFB harvested. Through their CBA, harvesters now receive a fixed daily wage of Php 267.00 (US\$ 6.54). And though a quota is imposed with the increased wage rate, workers in API think that the current wage, even when deductions are made on failure to meet the daily quota, is still better than the piece rate wages.

MAPAPI was also able to negotiate higher wages for casual employees. Previously daily wage of casual employees in API was only Php 167.00 and they do not receive 13th month pay. But through the union’s CBA, their wages rose to P248.00

and they now enjoy the mandatory 13th month pay.

In FPPI, the incumbent union through their CBA and campaign was able to promote some 25 workers to regular status from being casual for several years. Although there remain hundreds of contractual workers in FPPI, the union persisted in their fight for regularization. FPPWU also continually assert for substantial wage hikes as high as Php 150 per day in their CBA as opposed to the measly offer of the management of Php 7 in the next three year (Php 2-Php 2-Php 3).

Through FPPWU’s campaign, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in Caraga Region was forced to hold an ocular inspection on October 23, 2012 to check FPPI’s non-compliance with labor standards such as minimum wages and mandatory social security benefits. Although this tedious struggle of the workers resulted to massive dismissal of workers who testified at the DOLE’s inspection, FPPWU persisted in the fight and withstood 62 days of strike (November 27,2012-January 30,2013) until the workers were forced to go back to work following the issuance of an Assumption of Jurisdiction Order by the DOLE Secretary. To date, the union is still fighting through legal and international



campaigns to demand the reinstatement of the 293 long term casual workers who were dismissed by FPPI management.

Campaigns, the FGD participants added, are also necessary and integral to organizing to gain continuous and solid support from its base. As experienced by the three unions, their campaigns for better wages, benefits, and regularization of casual workers earned the acceptance of majority, if not all, of the workers. Looking back at their past experiences with management unions, , workers can now easily identify with the demands of the independent unions for higher wages and regular employment for casuals.

Another distinct element in the present campaign and strategy is the inclusiveness. It is apparent that while legally, union membership base is traditionally confined to regular workers, the three unions bannered the cause of the casual workers. Mr. Tanduyan of KMU-Caraga, emphasized the need to organize the contractual employees even if they are not officially allowed to join unions. This according to the interviewees and respondents is necessary especially today when most companies, regardless of industry, prefer contractual labor over regular workforce. And as seen in the

experience of the FPPWU, the union does not only fight for economic benefits of union members and contractual employees alike, they actually fight for, by inclusion in their CBAs, the “promotion to regular status” of contractual workers in the plantation.

#### From workplace campaigns/actions to national level

These three unions are also active in wider campaigns aim to promote the general interest of Filipino workers in terms of wages, employment, and workers’ rights. Aside from their local fight for higher wages through CBAs, the unions also support a nationwide movement that call for the legislation of two important bills in the Philippine Congress: House Bill 375 that calls for Php 125.00 legislated across-the-board wage increase<sup>16</sup> and House Bill 5110 or the Regular Employment Bill that aims to prohibit labor contracting in the Philippines. And as mentioned above, they also educate and take clear stance on national policies that concern the sector and marginalized communities.

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Campaigns must be sustained, creative,  
diverse and widely-supported

Even when gains are achieved, changing the current conditions is tedious and requires dedication and persistent struggle. Thus, the three unions recognized that actions need to be consistent and widely supported.

The struggle for regularization and wage hikes for instance through CBAs were not achieved easily by MAPAPI and FPPWU, rather it was a result of protracted effort and engagement with the management. In fact, in October 2010, FPPWU already launched a strike for higher wages and regularization which was halted by the Assumption of Jurisdiction (AJ) Order from the DOLE Secretary<sup>17</sup>. FPPWU initially defied the AJ order but was forced to go back to work, lest they face outright dismissal and threats of charges of illegal strike.

In 2012, the union continued its fight and as narrated above used a new tactic by calling the Regional DOLE to hold an ocular inspection. The initial findings of the inspection affirmed FPPI's non compliance with labor standards. However, despite relentless calls of FPPWU, the DOLE did

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not use the report to make the FPPI accountable to the workers.

The unions also employ virtually *all* avenues and means in order to get their message across the authorities and pressure them to respond to their calls and demands. From negotiating through CBAs, dialogues with government officials, to use of legal mechanisms (i.e. filing of cases and complaints at the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB-DOLE), pushing for ocular inspections etc.), and to protest actions as simple as hanging of streamers and as militant and aggressive as launching of strikes and work stoppages.

The local unions also sought the support of its mother federation, which also staged a protest action in front of FPPI's national headquarters in Manila. Other labor rights organizations also issued press statements in support of the struggle and build the pressure on companies and the labor department.

*5) Committees and democratic participation: towards a more solid organization*

Awareness raising of membership and campaigning were not the only important lessons they learned throughout

years of experiences, Also, a key factor is the active and democratic participation of its members in all levels of organizations and actions. This is realized through what the unions called as “committee system” that they put up even at the early stage of union organizing. This means that the 20 members they had recruited in the union, (as in the experience of Agumil) were divided into several committees according to the various union programs. Each program is coordinated by a committee to ensure proper and effective implementation. Some of the committees cited by the FGD participants and interviewees are education committee, public information and campaign committee, membership committee and finance committee. When special activities are held (like when preparing for large protest actions), ad hoc committees are also formed. Logistics committee is also formed to take care of the technical and logistical (even food requirements) during the strike.

The committee system enables all members to contribute and perform specific tasks and responsibilities; they do not merely attend the general assembly of the unions whenever the union officers call for one. And within the committee system, the ordinary union members are also able to participate actively in the planning and

evaluation of activities that will further contribute to the development of their unions.

*6). Organizing women, workers’ families and other sectors within and surrounding the plantation*

Interviewees recognize the important role of gaining the support of the workers’ families and other sectors in order to sustain the union especially during strikes and other local struggles. Mr. Tanduyan said that support from the families are of utmost importance because when their families fully understand their cause, the workers have lesser worries, can actively participate in the union affairs and allot time to do their tasks. If the families are not “conscious and unsupportive” then it becomes difficult for them to engage in union activities.

In order to gain support from the families of workers, union organizers immerse themselves in the communities, literally lived with the workers’ family, to personally know them and educate them about the objective situation of the workers. Normally, it is done during the early stage of union organizing. Even if the unions are already organized or established, it is equally important, that the unionists and

organizers try their best to respond to the family needs.

To complement the effort and to bring new dimension to their organizing, unions in API and Agumil in 2009 helped establish the local women organization, Nagkahiusang Kababae-yan sa Manat (NKM), in the village of Manat where API and Agumil are found. Wives of trade union leaders pioneered the establishment of NKM, and later the organization reached out to other women. The establishment of NKM was multi-pronged: apart from mobilizing and empowering women, strengthening the communities (and the union), NKM focused its eye on facilitating the livelihood programs for wives and women in the oil palm plantation as a means to address the following: 1) most jobs available in the plantation are not for women because of the physical strength they require and 2) the families are in dire need for additional income to augment the low wages that workers receive and to cope with the rising cost of living.

API's unions' services indeed went out of the confines of traditional unionism. In December 2012, when typhoon Bopha destroyed thousands of homes in Mindanao, including those in Manat, Trento, Agusan del Sur, the unions in API and Agumil

immediately gathered support and provided relief and temporary refuge to the affected families. The then, two-week old workers strike did not deter the API and Agumil, FPPIWU and MAPAPI from providing assistance to the typhoon victims. In fact, the picket line was transformed into a virtual evacuation center that provided the affected families some form of shelter and food.

In 2012, women at FPPI plantations, themselves mostly wives of FPPI workers established the FPPI's Workers NKM goals and functions.

#### Gathering support from other sectors

The relative success of unions in the two plantations is also partly attributed to the support gathered from other sectors. FPPWU President Jamero, himself an active Church member, shared that the Church support was really helpful—providing them spiritual and material support—throughout their union strike.

Mr. Tanduyan also pointed out that gathering support from other sectors is also necessary as it is the only means by which workers can raise their issues to a higher level. Mr. Tanduyan pointed out that workers and unions must be conscious that the workers' struggle is never separate from

the struggle of other sectors; Rather, workers must be conscious of uniting with other oppressed sectors in order to overcome ‘selfish’ and individualistic tendencies.

**B. Organizing the Indigenous People’s Communities Oil Palm Plantation Expansion Areas: Opol, Misamis Oriental**

*1) Brief history of the struggle of Higaonon tribe and the Entry of A Brown in Opol*

Long before the entry of palm oil plantations in Opol Misamis Oriental, the Higaonons tribe (a tribe of the indigenous group Lumads) has already been fighting for their ancestral land. The ancestors of this indigenous community have been living in this land before the Spaniards came to the Philippines in 1500s. Their struggle against land grabbing dates back to as early as 1950s when a certain ‘Captain Carrie’ came to Opol and got license from the government to “develop” the forest into a pasture land. In the 1960s, the Higaonons came back to reclaim their land after it was deforested. Around 30 years later, a new landlord, a certain Victor Paras, proprietor of Paras Machinery Works Corp., came into the picture and asserted that he was granted by

the DENR<sup>18</sup> with Forest Land Grazing Lease Agreement (FLGLA) No. 614 in 1991. Lease agreements on forest lands granted by the government are normally given for 25 years, renewable for another 25 years. Grazing permits for forest areas are granted for five years.<sup>19</sup>

There are two major classifications of land in the Philippines, the alienable and disposable (A & D) and the forest lands, both of which are considered lands of public domain. A & D lands refer to those lands which have been declared but are not needed for forest purposes. Forest lands are areas in the public domain that have been classified for forest use such as public forest, permanent forests or forest reserves, timberlands, game refuge and bird sanctuaries, and areas which are not yet declared A & D.<sup>20</sup>

Ten years of Paras Machinery Works Corp, of logging in the area, 520-hectares of land were denuded and Paras showed no more interest in the land. In 2002, some Higaonons went back and reclaimed the area even with constant threat from Paras’ security forces<sup>21</sup>

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Some of Higaonons formed a group called the Sarahogon Bagooboc Farmers Association (SBFA) to bind themselves while developing the denuded area. In response, the government through the DENR also facilitated the formation of another farmers' group, Kahugpongan sa Mag-uuma sa Barangay Tingalan (KMBT), to which they later granted a Community-based Forest Management Agreement. It was however members of the SBFA who successfully developed and revived the area into a farming community and not the KMBT.<sup>22</sup>

In order to strengthen their claim to their ancestral land, SBFA led by Gilbert Paborada filed a petition for stewardship in 2008 at the provincial office of the DENR Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (DENR-PENRO). The office told the group that the petition is not necessary since their right to till the land is already being recognized.<sup>23</sup> Two years later, DENR reversed its statement and facilitated the entry A Brown subsidiaries namely Nakeen Development Corp. (Nakeen) and A Brown Energy Resources Development, Inc. (ABERDI) to the dismay of the SBFA.

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*2) The role of the Church and organizing of Kalumbay and Pangalasag in Opol, Misamis Oriental.*

#### Formation of Pangalasag

In order to legitimize A Brown's entry, the DENR Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (DENR-CENRO) held meetings ('consultations') between A Brown and KMBT, the farmers' organization whose formation was facilitated by DENR in 2002. Farmers questioned these 'consultations' as attendees were reportedly handpicked. In February 2011, DENR officially announced the entry of A Brown, prior to the cancellation of the agreement between Paras and the government on March 4, 2011.<sup>24</sup>

Following the 'official' entry of A Brown and its early operation in March 2011, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI, *Philippine Independent Church*) already received reports and complaints of harassment<sup>25</sup> inflicted on IFI farmer members by local officials and A Brown's security forces. This prompted IFI-Opol to coordinate with Kalumbay Regional Lumad

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Organization (Kalumbay)<sup>26</sup> in Northern Mindanao in August 2011. Since then, social investigation was carried out and community organizing simultaneously began as well.<sup>27</sup>

Through Kalumbay's assistance, a new organization was formed: *Pangalasag*, literally meaning indigenous shield. Its first members were individuals and families who experienced harassments and other human rights violations engendered by the entry of the palm oil company.

### *3. Knowing rights to solidify unity and expand*

Similar with the experiences of the three unions in Agusan del Sur, *Pangalasag*, persevered in educating its members and the entire community about their rights, a move that the organization consider as key to its consolidation and subsequent expansion. *Pangalasag* was built initially from a core group of victims of human rights violations who have been trained and educated about human rights instruments and the value of community organizing in the "broader context of social change in the country." The education and training activities that

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*Pangalasag* did undoubtedly "improved the level of communication and organizing skills as well as the level of commitment [of the members] towards *Pangalasag*'s goals."<sup>28</sup> A series of community meetings also attracted the support of more relatives of victims of human rights violations and other community members. They too, later joined *Pangalasag*.

### *4. State and corporate retaliation*

Even when *Pangalasag* was beginning to gain grounds in the villages of Tingalan Bagooboc in Opol, organizers as well as their new members were targeted by attacks from the local officials in favor of the oil palm plantation. The organizers and members of *Pangalasag* were subjected to red baiting (accused as communist and communist rebel sympathizers) and harassment to dissuade them from their efforts. PAN-AP's Fact Finding Mission Report accounts how A Brown officials threatened, vilified and harassed *Pangalasag*'s vice chairperson Rubenson Batuto:

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*Sometime in October 2011, a supervisor of A Brown punched him in the stomach at a village feast, after seeing him talking to several of the company's laborers. He was called a "rebel" by the supervisor. The next month, he received an anonymous text message that read: "If you do not stop resisting, you will be killed. You will not live to see Christmas."*<sup>29</sup>

Similar incidents of harassment and red baiting were experienced by more members of *Pangalasag*, few months after the group was formed. This however did not stop the group from pursuing its campaigns to resist A Brown's intrusion to their ancestral land.

*Pangalasag's* determined efforts to organize the community and collectively expose the human rights violations committed against the community since the entry of A Brown were met with more cruel retaliatory attacks from the state and the company's security forces. On October 3, 2012, Gilbert Paborada, chairperson of *Pangalasag* was killed in Cagayan de Oro City by two motorcycle riding men. Paborada sustained five gunshot wounds, in the head, chest and abdomen, that killed him

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on the spot. Until this writing, no one was arrested for the killing.

##### *5. Security and preservation of organization*

Harassments against the members and officers of *Pangalasag* did not end in the murder of Paborada. Threats to life of other leaders and members of *Pangalasag* are unrelenting. A statement released by Rural Missionaries of the Philippines-Northern Mindanao, revealed that *Pangalasag* members reported that local police force have warned them of being prosecuted if they join any actions against A Brown Company, Inc. The local police also took photographs of the *Pangalasag* members' houses, which is a clear form of harassment to instill terror to those who dare oppose palm oil operations. The statement also revealed that a relative of a Higaonon elder and one of the laborers was retrenched by the palm oil plantation immediately after the company found out his affiliation to *Pangalasag*.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, security and safety were taken seriously by *Pangalasag* even when it was just starting. Although several measures were taken, Paborada's killing however "underscored the limitations of their security

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measures and in some aspects of coordination between community members and some organizers.” They evaluated these measures and adjustments are underway on how to improve security precautions, simultaneous to deepening the commitment amongst members amidst constant combined attack by A Brown and state forces.

#### *6. Various strategies to intensify campaign*

Since its inception, Pangalasag with the help of other regional groups (Kalumbay, RMP-NMR) has utilized many avenues to intensify their campaign for land rights, against destructive plantations, and against human rights violations.

In Opol, specifically where the local government is actively resisting the organizing efforts of Kalumbay and Pangalasag,<sup>31</sup> they began broadening and amplifying their campaign to the national and international level in the hope of putting more pressure on the local government.” (RMP, EC, 2013).

As early as October 11 for instance, dialogues with the regional heads of the National Commission for Indigenous People

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(NCIP) and the DENR in hope that the authorities would heed the demands of the Higaonons. Formal complaints were also filed at the NCIP.

At the international level, an IFFM was conducted between May 6 to 10, 2012 to investigate the situation in Opol and the impact of the oil palm plantation on the environment and local society. PAN-AP, IFI, KMP and Kalumbay led the IFFM. The findings report was released on June 2012.

Cognizant of the reality that the same situation happens in many farming and indigenous communities target for “corporate development”, Kalumbay and Pangalasag did not limit its campaign to its local fight against A Brown but maintained a broader call against land grabbing, and land use conversion. Both organizations also linked their resistance to A Brown expansion to food sovereignty, right to ancestral lands of all indigenous peoples, and justice for all human rights violations.

## V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Stories of violence and exploitation come along with the entry and operation of oil palm plantations. This situation makes organizing in affected communities of workers, farmers and indigenous people imperative. The experiences of the three local unions in oil palm plantations in Agusan del Sur and the farmer-Higaonon group in Opol Misamis Oriental demonstrate that only through collective struggle can the people challenge and effectively bring about improvements if not total change in the appalling conditions perpetrated by palm oil companies, state forces and policies.

The two areas in study have specifically different situations. FPPI, API and Agumil are established oil plantations and have been operating in Agusan del Sur for more than two decades. Although workers in the said companies are also mostly agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) and also belong to the indigenous group Lumad, the dominant social relation that exists at present in these plantations is that of worker-capitalist. Thus the form of organization and organizing methods and techniques employed are union-related. On the other hand, A Brown is a relatively new entrant to oil palm expansion whose entry in

Opol started only in 2010. The main struggle therefore is between farmer-tribal communities who are asserting their right to ancestral domain versus corporate land-grabbing.

Difference in current situations is apparent; however, human rights violations that characterized the plantation operations from land occupation to land clearing, tree growing to milling are the binding ties that connect the affected communities, regardless of sectors. Agusan del Sur plantations offer strong testimony to the illusions and promises that oil palm plantations lead to improvement in the lives of farmers, affected communities and even workers. FPPI and API's operations vis-à-vis the situation of workers within the plantation-covered lands are living testimonies to the failure of the economic strategy (land grabbing and land conversion to pave way for agribusiness or agriculture cash crops) to cut the poverty and hunger in communities.

Yet, these differences and peculiarities in the two areas (established plantations and new expansion) birth to particular needs, strategies and tactics in organizing. And it will be dogmatic to merely replicate or import one's organizing strategy in one area to another. For instance

while the Higaonon's are organizing for the eviction of A. Brown in Opol, the communities and workers in FPPI, API and Agumil are organizing to improve working conditions which can be mistaken as an implicit acceptance of the companies' operations in the area.

However, it will be unfair and misleading to conclude that the workers are completely in favor of having the palm oil plantations stay and that they do not see the ill effects of the companies in the indigenous groups and the environment. Historically, the communities in Trento, Rosario, and San Francisco in Agusan del Sur where FPPI, API and Agumil now operate also resisted the companies' entry. Worse forms of violence were used by state forces (described by the workers as 'lost commands' during the Marcos dictatorship) against the Lumad communities in Agusan del Sur to quell their resistance. At that time, women were raped and farmers were also summarily killed, there were farmers who were buried in their own land.<sup>32</sup>

After many years of struggle, the land were subjected to agrarian reform and most of the beneficiaries who were also employed by FPPI, API and Agumil are now leasing the land to FPPI and API.. The lease

agreement between the ARBs and the companies however is still highly in favor of the latter with very cheap rent (as low as P625.00 per hectare per annum) fixed for 25 years. The 62 days strike of FPPI, the longest they had since the union was established proved that the workers and their families are ready to go hungry in the picket line, than go hungry at work.

Nevertheless, these two set of experiences can be understood within the universal theme of conflict between oppressor and oppressed, corporate interest and state violence versus the interest of the marginalized sectors. In this sense, the organizing strategies and goals meet in the common goal for rights, and justice. Thus, while there are particularities in their specific situation and struggles, their experiences in organizing also highlight many similarities which organizers in other countries can learn from.

Both groups, the unions in Agusan del Sur and the Higaonon's group in Misamis Oriental, did social investigation before organizing in their areas. From there they learn the needs of the communities and what their objective interests are. Discreet operation and security and safety for new members were carefully employed to protect them and the organization during the infancy

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<sup>32</sup> Center for Trade Union and Human Rights. 2012.

stage. A core group, composed of members who are highly committed to the goals the organization, in both cases were also formed in the early stage of organizing. From the core group, the organization begins to expand until it is ready to openly challenge corporate and state abuses and human rights violations.

Education is a key aspect in the organizing efforts of both groups. From learning their rights, and current situation, and policies that affect the companies, both organizations educated its members to make them aware of reason behind their struggle and the possible alternatives.

In both cases, campaigns launched objectively reflect the aspirations of the people represented by the organizations under study. Persistence and perseverance in launching campaigns proved to be valuable to effectively and continuously challenge the companies and the state. Various ways, tactics and legal mechanism—from dialogues, to lawsuits to more militant protests—are used to push for the campaigns. Still, campaigning is a long and arduous struggle. More often than not, organizing and campaign efforts were met either with violence, indifference, or misleading tactics of the companies and

state representatives. This was also the experience of the both groups.

What is most learning if not inspiring in those organizations in both areas are their readiness to admit and correct their shortcomings, and weaknesses, as much as strengths. Thus, organizing in itself becomes an endless process of learning and studying. In both cases, the groups demonstrated the importance of learning from your previous experiences through regular evaluations, assessments and analyses of changing conditions.

Both groups also strive not to be parochial in their goals. Instead, they endeavor to expose the anti-development policies and systemic ills that perpetuate conditions of exploitation and oppression of the marginalized sector. They raise their calls and campaigns to reflect the demands of an entire class (seeking for higher wages workers, land for indigenous groups and farmers) and a united people. Through this, they also gained support from other sectors in society like the Church.

Consistent consolidation of members and target members is of utmost importance especially amidst relentless attack from the enemies. Education, campaigns and active involvement of members and their families in the affairs of

the organization and its struggles contribute to the strengthening and development of an organization. Ultimately, the organization must keep itself grounded and faithful to its goals and must always for the betterment of its members and the group it represents. Only through this can the challenge and bring about significant changes in society that it aspires.#

### Notes:

1. The Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) formerly Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo), is a government agency created by virtue of Republic Act 9996 was created to promote, coordinate and facilitate the active and extensive participation of all sectors to effect the socioeconomic development of Mindanao. .
2. “Green groups blame palm plantations”, Inquirer News, Feb 02,2013, Retrieved from <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/351665/green-groups-blame-palm-plantations#ixzz2ND33qK00>
3. Rolando Ty, “Palm Oil Industry, A road to Poverty Reduction”. PPDCI, Feb 2013, retrieved from <http://ppdci.org/?p=481#more-481>
4. PPDCI is a group of industry players and companies engaged in the production, processing, marketing and trading of palm oil products.
5. Center for Trade Union and Human Rights. 2012. *Children of the Sunshine Industry, Child Labor and Workers Situation in oil palm plantations in CARAGA*. Quezon City: CTUHR.
6. “BOI identifies Phl’s three priority investment areas.” 28th of February 2012. Philippine Information Agency.
7. Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, Department of Agriculture. Retrieved on March 7, 2013 from BAS website: [bas.gov.ph](http://bas.gov.ph)
8. Center for Trade Union and Human Rights. 2012.
9. *ibid.*
10. *ibid.*
11. Lease Agreement, Addendum to the Original Lease Agreement between NDC-Guthrie Multipurpose Cooperative Inc and NDC-Guthrie Estate (now FPPI), 1990, 2008
12. Olea, Ronalyn, “US-owned palm oil plantation impoverishes indigenous people in Opol Misamis Oriental.” 10 May 2012. retrieved from <http://bulatlat.com/main/2012/05/10/>
13. Leopoldo J. Dejillas. 1994. *Trade Union Behavior in the Philippines 1946-1990*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. pp. 189.
14. *Ibid*
15. from Center for Trade Union and Human Rights’s documentation of FPPWU strike in 2010.
16. The call to legislate a P125 wage increase nationally is in response to the Wage Rationalization Act of 1989 which created

more than 500 varying wage rates in the country depending on the region and industry based on the government's claim that there are varying cost of living in different regions. This scheme has resulted to lower wage rates especially in regions outside of Metro Manila. Workers groups also observed that this scheme is dividing the workers' unity to fight for higher wages. The move to legislate a P125 wage increase thus does not only mean to demand substantial wage hikes but also unite all workers across the country regardless of their regions and the minimum wage rate they receive.

17. Assumption of Jurisdiction Order of the Department of Labor Secretary, or Article 263(g) of the Labor code is the power given to the Secretary to assume jurisdiction over an impending /actual strike or lock-out with an objective of preventing it, with an effect of return to work order in case of actual strike or prohibition to state a strike if the strike has not actually commenced.
18. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is tasked to oversee the utilization of public lands and natural resources.
19. F.A. Moog and J.L. Marbella. "Land Use Transformation of Philippine Grasslands", Date Unknown. Research Division, Bureau of Animal Industry, Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.
20. *ibid.*
21. Ilang-Ilang Quijano. June 2012 "The Real Trespassers: Landgrabbers in the Name of Palm Oil in Southern Philippines" in *Speak-Out! Communities Asserting Their Rights to Food Sovereignty*. Philippine Action Network-Asia and the Pacific. Retrieved from <http://www.panap.net/sites/default/files/SO-2012June-TheRealTrespassers.pdf>
22. *ibid.*
23. *ibid.*
24. *ibid.*
25. The International Fact Finding Mission (IFFM) of PAN-AP Report reveals atrocious forms of harassments on locals perpetrated by A Brown guards. One farmer, Amadeo Payla, 66, narrated how his land was grabbed by A Brown personnel who sprayed his banana and coconut trees with chemicals until they died. They also uprooted his cassava crops and bulldozed his farmland. Burning of houses, destruction of crops and death threats were also employed by A Brown. (PAN-AP, June 2012)
26. Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization is a group of Lumad organizations in Mindanao with the common goal of upholding the rights of the indigenous group to their ancestral land.
27. Electronic-mail interview with John Ryan Mendoza. Rural Missionaries of the Philippines. March 2012.
28. Pangalasang aims to reclaim Higaonon tribe's ancestral land particularly in the villages of Bagooboc and Tingalan in Opol, Misamis Oriental
29. Ilang-Ilang Quijano. "The Real Trespassers..." June 2012.
30. Rural Missionaries of the Philippines Media statement, 29 June 2012

31. Mayor Dexter Yasay of Opol and the entire local government is staunchly supporting the entry of A Brown in their town. The local council for one passed a local legislation in support of A Brown. Mayor Yasay believes that palm oil plantations can help generate more jobs. He also warned that farmers who defy the authority of the guards are also defying his authority. (PAN-AP, June 2012)
32. Center for Trade Union and Human Rights. 2012.