

The Aetas Land and Life

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The Aetas Land and Life

Part One
INTRODUCTION

The ethnicity of the Pinatubo Aetas is the most significant aspect of their claim to their land and life. Like any other indigenous groups, their life has an important, and almost cosmic, link to their land. It is almost cosmic in the sense that their world consciousness and the continuity of their way of life are rooted in the land where they were born and have defined their humanity. Their land of origin in the mountains and forests of Mt. Pinatubo is not only the source of their sustenance; it is also home to their identity and culture.

The Pinatubo Aetas' situation, however, need not be confined to this perspective. The Aetas' well-being may likewise be addressed from the perspectives of their economic capability and their assimilation in the political diversity of the bigger Filipino society. The human development of the Aetas, or for that matter, of any ethnic minority group, must consist of the freedom to assert cultural identity and the opportunity to pursue economic and political empowerment.

In the process of development, it is inevitable that the Aetas will confront even stronger influences. These influences may improve their living condition but they may, for some reason, also be intrusive of their indigenous lifestyle, which may cause damage to their cultural identity. Whether or not to accept these influences or how much of these influences will be tolerated is an internal decision on the part of the Aeta community, but how to help them grapple with these influences is a critical intervention issue on the part of the external entities, such as the government and other development agents.

The main subject of this paper's discussion is the claim of the Botolan Aetas in the so-called Puyat land and its important implications on their welfare and development. The paper is outlined as follows. The Aetas' socio-cultural profile and their experience during the Mt. Pinatubo eruption serve as a preliminary part. It contextualizes the discussion within the Aetas' indigenous world: their environment, culture, society, religion, etc. Part Three deals with the Puyat land issue and the available methods of action the Aetas can take to assert their right over it. Part Four then tackles the welfare concern where the Aetas' subjective sentiments on the issue were also presented. This is to emphasize that welfare provision must be viewed internally from the perspective of the community.

Part Two
The Pinatubo Aetas: a Brief Socio-Cultural & Historical Profile

The brief ethnographic profile and other pertinent information about the Pinatubo Aetas¹ and their way of life provided here are based mainly on studies and researches about the Aetas of Pinatubo. These written documents include *The Pinatubo Negritos: their useful plants and material culture* by Robert Fox (1952); *Pinatubo Negritos:*

revisited by Calixto Barrato Jr. and Marvyn Benaning (1978); *Pinatubo Aytas¹: Continuity and Change* by Hiromu Shimizu; and *After Duwaga: Deforestation, Succession, and Adaptation in Upland Luzon, Philippines* by J. Peter Brosius (1990).

On their experiences during the Mt. Pinatubo eruption, the following materials have been used: *Disaster-response: lessons from Mt. Pinatubo* by Eufrazio Abaya, et al (1993); *in the Shadow of the Lingering Mt. Pinatubo Disaster* edited by Cynthia Bautista (1993); *Eruption and Exodus* by LAKAS (1991); and *Fire and Mud: Eruptions and Lahars of Mt. Pinatubo, Philippines* edited by Christopher Newhall and Raymundo Punongbayan (1996).

Socio-Cultural Profile

Location. The Aetas of Zambales are known for being the indigenous inhabitants of the Mt. Pinatubo, which is located along the boundaries of Pampanga, Tarlac and Zambales and is part of the Cabusilan Mountains in the southern part of Zambales. Its reported elevation in the pre-eruption period was 1,745 m or 5,730 ft. J. Peter Brosius (1990:37), in his research study done in this area before the eruption, said that the Mt. Pinatubo “in profile is clearly an extinct volcano”.

Prior to the 1991 eruption, the Aetas inhabit peacefully the mountains and forests of Mt. Pinatubo. There were Tarao/Makinang, Manggel, Kalawangan, Lukban, Belbel, Balinkiang, Yamot, Dangla, Kasoy, Moraza, Villar, Patal Anawo, Tipli, Ogik, Burgos, Quitomboc, Tuko, Poonbato, Maguisguis, Kayanga, Mayasan, Nacolcol, Palis, and Dolawan.

The Aetas have long considered the surrounding of the volcano as their natural dwelling-place. Their oral tradition contains tales and stories about their ancestors inhabiting this land long before the Spanish period. Back then; the reach of their vision is the limit of their movement and activity.

Robert Fox’s account (1952:250) explains that, bases on the type of plants they used, the Aetas of Pinatubo may have lived originally in the lowland. It was only in the latter period that they were forced to transfer to the upper regions. He reported:

I strongly suspect that lowland and coastal regions were commonly within the movements of the Zambales Negritos during early prehistoric times, for much of this area was previously uninhabited. When other expanding people, such as the Sambal, began to move into the coastal and lowland regions, the pygmies were forced into the mountains... [They] have been forced into the upland regions through population pressure.

¹ The name “Aeta” is also spelled “Ayta” in this paper. These different spellings are due to the lowlanders’ different adaptations in the English alphabet.

Population. The Aetas belong to the Negrito group, which is one of the six-major-ethnographic groupings in the Philippines². As of 1997, there are 56,265 Aetas in the Zambales Province based on the statistics of the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP). This is 43.4% of the total population (129,516) of Aeta/Agta/Aeta-Abiyan/Aeta-Remontado group around the archipelago. The total Aeta population has increased more than six times while the Aetas of Zambales grew by more or less five times since the 1975 Census. The entire Aeta group comprises one per cent of the 11,778,190 indigenous people in the country.

The Aeta/Agta/Aeta-Abiyan/Aeta/Remontado group is scattered in six regions and 16 provinces in the country. Note that while most of them are original settlers in their areas, such as the Aetas of Zambales, there are some who are recent migrants to other provinces. Among the provinces with recent migrant Aetas include Benguet, Kalinga Apayao, Mt. Province and Pangasinan. To digress a little: in looking into the welfare of indigenous people, it may be worth investigating the phenomenon of migration among the indigenous people and the cause of or reason for their migration.

POPULATION OF AETA/AGTA/AETA-ABIYAN/AETA- REMONTADO GROUPS ^{n1 n2} By Region and Province National Commission on Indigenous People	
Region/Province	Population
<i>CAR</i>	
Abra	122
Benguet	27
Kalinga Apayao ^m	639
Mt. Province ^m	6
<i>Region 1</i>	
Pangasinan ^m	170
<i>Region 2</i>	
Cagayan	1,791
Quirino	38
<i>Region 3</i>	
Bataan	11,963
Tarlac	9,638
Pampanga	9,791
Zambales	56,265
<i>Region 4</i>	
Aurora	562
Rizal	4,945
Quezon	5,732

² The six major ethnographic groupings are the Igorot Tribes, Caraballo/Cagayan Valley group, Negrito, Mindanao Lumad, Muslim Groups, Palawan group, and the Mangyan Tribes. Cited from TABAK, *Tribal Filipinos and Ancestral Domain: Struggle Against Development Aggression* (1989).

<i>Region 5</i>	
Camarines Sur	22,372
Camarines Norte	5,455
TOTAL	129,516
^m Recent IP Migrants to the Province ⁿ¹ NICP borrowed data for Region 4-13 from the Ibon Facts and Figures, updated in 1997. The data for the remaining regions were based on the Listing Operation of the former Office of the Northern Cultural Communities, updated in 1995. ⁿ² These data are not quite consistent with the data found in Katutubo Directory (1996). They are used, however, because of the regional and provincial breakdown.	

Relation to Environment. Anthropologists familiar with the Aetas of Pinatubo attribute them with keen and sophisticated knowledge of their environment. Regarding this matter, Robert Fox (ibid; 187-188) is worth quoting at length:

[One] characteristic of Negrito life, a characteristic that which strikingly demarcates them from the surrounding Christian lowlanders, is their inexhaustible knowledge of the plant and animal kingdoms. This lore includes not only a specific recognition of a phenomenal number of plants, birds and animals, and insects, but also includes knowledge of the habits and behavior of each. This inclusive knowledge of nature is, of course, a product of their way of life, continual hunting, mobility, dependency upon vegetation, as well as survival of their historical association. The Negrito is an intrinsic part of his surroundings, and what is still more important, continually studies his surroundings.... Most Negrito men can with ease enumerate the specific or descriptive names of at least 450 plants, 75 birds, most the snakes, fish insects, and animals, and of even 20 species of ants...

Moreover, the Aetas have

A thorough and sensitive ecological awareness. Many plants have no direct use or value in themselves, but are important to the Negritos because of the relationships of the plant with the animal and insect world.

Aside from their knowledge of the content of the environment and their appreciation of the ecological interconnectedness, the Aetas are also attributed with knowledge of ways to deal with the environment, Jocano (1978:5) said:

Harsh environmental conditions highlight the precarious situation of the Pinatubo Negrito. How they survive in the face of such conditions is a tribute

to their ingenuity. The ingenuity is evidenced by their creative adaptation to the ecological environment.

The Aetas' ancestral land is the repository of their knowledge and world-views. Their clear awareness of the environment and their keen respect for its natural processes constitute for them a kind of intellectual identity.

Mode of Subsistence. Aetas are commonly known as hunter-gatherer and there is a tendency among lowlanders to pigeonhole them in that activity. There are evidences, however, showing that the Aetas might have engaged in swidden agriculture long before the Spanish colonial era. J. Peter Brosius (1990:23) noted:

Based upon historical accounts, the present degree of environmental degradation, the current large number of cultigen varieties, and current population densities, the initial adoption of swidden agriculture by Aytas cannot have been a recent phenomenon.

Accounts that single out hunting-gathering activities as the Aetas' sole means of subsistence are either biased, pre-conceived notions or they point to the far and mythical past of the Aetas' history.

According to Brosius, the first wave of expansion of the Aetas' swidden system began with the introduction of so-called Old World crops of Southeast Asia, such as taro, yams, bananas and rice. The second wave occurred with the introduction of New World (American) crops, such as sweet potato or kamote, corn and cassava.

The Aytas' swiddening system and diet evolved in a way that it became highly dependent on New World crops. In Fox's research on Aetas' diet in the 1950s, it revealed that 70% of it was consisted of New World crops and 53% was even derived from a single New World crop, which is sweet potato. On the other hand, Shimizu (1989:27) observes that contemporary Aetas now have high demand for rice. Root crops, however, remain as their major source of food because of the low productivity of upland rice farming.

In addition to swidden agriculture, which until now remains as their primary means of livelihood, the Aetas also depend on terrestrial, avian and riverine resources. These complement their carbohydrate-rich diet with proteins. The Aetas also engaged in trading.

Settlement. The typical Aetas or Aeta groups may be characterized with extreme variability and mobility. This entails an equally unsteady pattern and style of settlement.

Fox (1952:186) also observe the transient settlements of the Aetas and he attributed it to at least three factors. First is their practice of *kaingin* since the decrease in soil fertility compels them to look for other cultivable fields. The second factor is superstition as they tend to leave their present house if there is frequent sickness or somebody died in it. The

third is a psychological factor because they seem to have a “fear of modern responsibilities of citizenship, taxation and governmental control”.

Brosius (1990:30-31) reported that “Ayta settlements range in size from single isolated lean-tos, to rather large communities of five to fifteen or more thatched houses”. Cluster of two or three huts is most common. In his account on relatively large settlements, he cited economic consideration and conflicts as possible reasons for dispersal. The Aeta settlement will commonly be found within the 500 to 1000 m in altitude.

Note, however, that the Aetas are only semi-nomadic people. Their mobility is limited to the village and the swidden sites. Shimizu (1989:7) explains, “the Aytas change the location of their swidden fields but situate these near and parallel to the center”.

Institutional Structure. The Aetas’ institutional structure has three levels: [1] the nuclear family or *mitata-anak*, [2] the family grouping or camp, and [3] the village (Brosius: 1990; Shimizu: 1989). The nuclear family shares in household and socio-economic activities, primarily in clearing and working in one or two swiddens per year. It is also common among Aeta nuclear families to live together with elderly parents.

The family grouping unit may be composed of a single household or a group of households. The members include parents and their married children. They also communally share food and work in the fields.

The village or district level, also called *sakop*, is a recognized and named area. These villages, according to Brosius (1990:33), average “between 15 and 20 square kilometers in size [but] are not discrete bounded territories”. Most members of a *sakop* are related by blood.

In the political dimension, which exists mainly in the village level, Brosius (1990:34) identified a *kapitan* an “an influential individual who functions as a mediator of both internal and external conflict or who, in the case of an open conflict, may assume a leadership based on popular support.” The elders also have a particularly special role in decision-making in the Aetas’ social life.

At any rate, the most prominent features of the Aetas’ social set-up are its family oriented ness and their strong sense of “mutual cooperation and interdependence”. Perhaps the downside of these features is the “mutual distrust” among Aetas not related by blood or marriage”.

Spirituality. The spirituality of the Aetas is best manifested in their concept of health and disease. The curing ritual is the Aetas’ most important ritual, of which the *manganito séance* is the most refined and well developed.

The Aetas believe in the soul, or *kaelwa*, as a separate entity dwelling in the body. Any disturbance in the body, such as disease and long illness, is attributed to the weakening of the soul. In the case of death, on the other hand, the Aetas believe that the soul still exists. According to Shimizu (1989:47-48), the Aetas do not have a clear idea of death, but there is a belief that the dead proceeds to the “summit of Mt. Pinatubo” and live in unity with the “collective *minaci* (all the dead)”. The Aetas believe that the dead can bring sickness and bad luck. This is, in fact, as mentioned above, one of the reasons for their constant movement from one settlement to another.

The spiritual realm of the Aetas includes the belief in environment spirits, who co-exist with humans. There are two types of environment spirits, namely *anito* or the good spirit and the *kamana* or the bad spirit. These spirits may reside in the “forest, trunk on a huge tree, bamboo thicket, rock, stream, cave, and other places or objects.” The Aetas try to maintain harmonious relationship with the anitos. And although anitos are basically friendly, they may retaliate harshly at humans when their territories were harmed or they were offended. To overcome the anito’s displeasure, a *langgad*³ or gift must be offered.

Because of this belief in environment spirits, the Aetas regard nature with extreme caution. This sets an implicit rule among them that natural resources should not be abused and exploited. This also affects their agricultural activities. For instance, they make offerings to the anitos before they start working on a swidden field.

Culture and Society. Shimizu (1989:1) describes the Aetas’ culture and society as “cold” (based on Levi-Strauss model, 1962). Generally, it means that the Aetas’ are not so receptive to external influences. Shimizu (ibid; 11-14) cited two reasons for such “coldness”. One, the population are pressured by the lowland settlers. Two, “there are frequent armed attacks and kidnappings of their people for enslavement by the Sambals”. These pushed them farther up in the mountain throughout their history. Another factor that perhaps contributed to the Aetas’ cold society is the strong social relation based on family grouping.

The cold society of the Aetas, however, does not entail a rare interaction with lowlanders. The Aetas’ relation with Sambals could have transpired even during pre-Spanish times. The Aetas’ use of the Sambal language, the lowlanders’ language, according to Shimizu (ibid; 11), indicates a long relationship of the Aetas with the lowlanders, including the locals, the Spaniards and the Americans.

These outside forces generated different reactions from the Aetas. Some decided to be under the municipal jurisdiction while others chose to stay in the higher altitude of the mountains as a form of resistance.

According to Shimizu (ibid; 146-147), the Aetas are not exactly closed to, but are rather very selective of, external influences. They adapt only those that they find useful in a certain period of need. Those Aetas’ social mechanisms are, however, so strong that new things are easily neutralized. This is manifested in the phenomenon of *langgad*,

³ Langgad is also offered as a sign of reconciliation with or apology to a fellow Aeta. See below.

which is compensation offered to the offended party. Such compensation aims to pacify the offended party and symbolizes the desire to maintain social order. The Aetas are basically peace-loving people.

The Mt. Pinatubo Eruption

Aetas as the major casualty of the eruption. The major eruptions of the Mt. Pinatubo occurred from June 12-16, 1991. Task Force Pinatubo (cited from Bautista, "The Mount Pinatubo Disaster and the People of Central Luzon," in *Fire and Mud*, 199:153) estimated the number of Aetas affected by the eruption at 7,800 families or 35,000 persons. Bautista and Tadem (1993:12), in the book *in the Shadow of the Lingering Mt. Pinatubo Disaster*, remarks:

However one looks at it, the Aytas were the prime victims of the volcanic eruption, if secondary effects like lahar and floods are not taken into account. Not only were they displaced much earlier but also moved from one evacuation to another, trembling in fear as they watched explosions of fire and brimstone that signified their God's displeasure over human transgressions against the mountains. An uprooting from a total way of life became their lot.

From what has been discussed earlier, the effect of the eruption on the Aetas can already be gauged. It destroyed their livelihood and it created turmoil in their psychological and socio-cultural universe.

The experiences of the Aetas during the eruption are beyond description. Their flight from the mountains in search for a safer place was indeed life threatening. The book *Exodus and Eruption* documented this life-and-death adventure of the Aetas. Bautista (1996:153) remarked based on the book's account:

They changed sites with each extension of the danger zone from a 10- to 20-km radius of the volcano, from 20- to 30-km, and finally from 30 to 40 km. Some moved nine times in 1991 before they found semi-permanent relocation sites.

The transfer of the victims to various evacuation centers was the next phase of the disaster control. Both local and international agencies contributed to the establishment of the evacuation centers and for the evacuees' basic needs. Abaya, et al (1993:7) reports that there were total of 44 evacuation sites built through the efforts of the governments and some non-government organizations (NGO) in 1991. The sites accommodated a total of 120,000 people. Out of the 44 sites, the Aetas could be found in twelve evacuation sites. Latter reports (October 1993) indicated that there were 159 evacuation centers built and operated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, excluding those under the management of non-government organization. These housed about 11,455 families or 54,880 individuals. The Aetas comprised 2.4% of the families or 1.6% of individuals affected by the eruption (*Fire and Mud*, 1996).

The poor living conditions in the evacuation centers were the worst problem encountered by the evacuees, most especially the Aetas (Abaya et al, 1993:7-8). This led to different types of sickness, such as measles, diarrhea and pneumonia, which were also major causes of death. Of the 538 cases of death recorded by the DOH in one month, 93% were Aetas. Further, 80% of the recorded deaths among the Aetas were children from 0-10 years old. Half of the Aeta children were also found malnourished.

The medical volunteers partly blamed the Aetas for their indifference towards, or perhaps fear, of the medication and immunization being provided for them. Thus, the problem of culture arose again.

Abaya et al noted, however, that if it is any consolation, the evacuation of the Aetas from the Mt. Pinatubo, no matter how difficult, informed the government of their needs. It exposed to the public the government's negligence of the Aetas' welfare.

The Resettlement of the Aetas. From the Aetas' several stop-over in semi-permanent evacuation sites during the eruption episodes, as first phase, to their entry to the actual evacuation centers, as second phase, the Aetas' initial and partial recovery from the disaster culminated in the establishment of resettlement projects. Botolan, a municipality of Zambales, was a major location for the Aetas.

There were two resettlement areas and one evacuation center in Botolan that accommodated the Aetas after the eruption. These are Baquilan and Loob-Bunga Resettlement Sites and Bucao Evacuation Center. The areas were subdivided into *sitios*, which are composed of contiguous clusters of houses. The Aetas named the *sitios* in the resettlement after the same name of their *sitios* in Mt. Pinatubo.

The overall coordinating body for the resettlements was the Task Force Mr. Pinatubo. It coordinated the projects and activities of the government agencies, non-government organizations and the residents in the resettlement sites. In both resettlement sites, various government agencies extended assistance, such as water sources, roads, health programs and school buildings. A settlement manager in each resettlement site was also assigned to coordinate local activities of various concerns, namely social services, infrastructure, resettlement and livelihood. Moreover, tribal councils were also formed for administrative and/or political functions.

Holding, culture and social upbringing as important aspects of survival, the Aetas will expectedly experience difficulty adjusting to their "environment". First, they are now living in a different place with very different environmental features and content as compared to that in Mt. Pinatubo. Second, they are now more accessible to lowlanders and to lowland lifestyles. Similar to their previous encounters with "outsiders" or what they call *mga unat*, the experience in the resettlement areas generated different actions and reactions from them. Some were able to adapt to their new situation. Some simply expressed resigned satisfaction, i.e. they simply accepted the fact that the resettlement site is an unavoidable substitute for their land in Pinatubo. This is their new home and what is important now is to learn how to get their living from and out of it. But the

others, after some time, followed their urge to return to their former home in the Mt. Pinatubo. For those who tried tilling nearby farmlands, probably most striking among their complaints is the poor productivity of the lands in the resettlement sites, the best alternative they see for which is the land they have left in the Mt. Pinatubo.

Part Three **Reclaiming the Aeta's Land**

The return of many Aetas to their land in Mt. Pinatubo was not a bare act of walking back to their old home. In 1996, the Aetas received legal recognition of their ancestral domain in Mt. Pinatubo. While it can be said that no legal document can further legitimize their claim to this land, as it was history itself and generations of rootedness in the land that bestowed them the right over the land, such legal recognition seems to have helped the Aetas assert their unique domain within the larger map of the Philippine mainstream society. For such recognition was supposed to define their place and protect them from external transgression. It was likewise supposed to strengthen their access to social and economic entitlements as members of the society. Thus, the Aetas' decision to return to Mt. Pinatubo, even though not all of them are aware of it, was and is supposed to be accompanied by government recognition and promise of development.

However, the indigenous peoples' right to ancestral domain have to contend with the highly formalized concept of private ownership, which the ancestral domain law also upholds. In this case, the Aetas have to abide by the rules of the legal institution as to what it will say regarding the clash between ancestral domain and private ownership. The Aetas have had a taste of this clash when part of their ancestral domain turned out to be titled properties of Vicente Puyat, who later sold them to The Manila Banking Corporation.

The Puyat property is very useful to the Aetas because it is the most developed area for agriculture. This productive area is also one of the main reasons for the return of many Aetas to the Mt. Pinatubo from their resettlement sites. Needless to say, the ancestral domain claim is now one of the legal instruments that the Aetas are using to access the use of the area.

The other legal aid the Aetas are employing is the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL). Prior to the 1991 eruption, the Department of Agrarian Reform already made an effort to cover the said Puyat property, a number of beneficiaries of which were Aetas. The effect and the continuing threat of lahar on the fields, however, kept the department from pursuing the coverage. But the Aetas have been unyielding to any threat as many Aetas already returned to plant around the vicinity of Mt. Pinatubo. This perhaps implies that their urge for survival has been stronger than their fear for lahar. Now, discounting lahar risk, the Aetas are reviving the coverage of the Puyat land under CARL. And like ancestral domain, agrarian reform also comes with the promise of government assistance and rural development programs.

Thus, the Aetas' struggle to reclaim their land now consists in two advocacy points, ancestral domain vs. private property and CARP vs. lahar danger. These two points have their distinct differences, in terms of both concept and implementation. Later it will be evident that the Aetas may have to choose or prioritize only one of them despite efforts to combine the two programs into one advocacy agenda as an advocacy strategy or a tactical move. Nonetheless, there has to be a constant reminder that the main objective of the advocacy is the securing of the land and welfare of the rightful beneficiaries.

In the following sections, we will outline the pertinent details of the land case of the Aetas of Botolan, Zambales.

Accounts on the Titling of the Puyat Estate

It will take an entirely separate paper to trace the actual history of the Puyat estate. It is indeed a big question, particularly to the Aetas, how Puyat was able to register the Aetas' lands in his name.

The accounts here on Puyat's acquisition of the estate are based on the recollections and narrations of Aeta elders and leaders on the events that led to the titling of the estate. However, the coherence of the facts states here may not be so precise owing to the different time consciousness of the Aetas. The ways to counter-check these facts, if any, have not been explored yet.

Since 1957, there have been dialogues on the ancestral domain claim of the Aetas. They recall that they were waging this struggle against a *ranchero* claiming parts of ancestral land. There was no record of these dialogues.

Then, from 1960s up to 1970s, the Aetas started paying land taxes. They remember possessing tax declaration documents for their lands. It is probable that the possession of the document laid the basis for legal sale or transfer of the ancestral land to the interested buyer. According to the Aetas, some papers appeared upon entry of CAREBI Sugar Central. In 1980, the Amaya Corp. operated there through lease. As to who manages the lease contract, the Aetas do not know. While under lease, there were rumors that a lawyer by the name of Atty. Yalong would assist the Aetas in the titling of the lands. This, however, did not push through because an FMM sister, then doing a volunteer work with the Aetas, informed them of Atty. Yalong's ulterior motive. Despite this aborted plan, Puyat was able to capture the land after the CAREBI.

As per the latest research date, the property is recorded in 48 private titles: two titles under the Bukidnon Greenfields and 46 titles under the Aquatic Ranch Enterprise Inc. The Bukidnon Greenfields covers 989 hectares while the Aquatic Ranch Enterprise Inc. lands total 1,250 hectares. Later, these landholdings have been sold at a public auction to TMBC. More recent information, however, reveals that TMBC is already under the receivership of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which may entail that the Puyat estate is already a government property. Nevertheless, the Puyat properties are separately located

in the eastern portion of Botolan, Zambales, specifically the barangays of Poonbato, Maguisguis, Villar, Burgos, Malomboy, San Juan and Moraza.

Ancestral Domain vs. Private Ownership

In 1996, the government has awarded four Certificates of Ancestral Domain Claims or CADCs to the Aetas of Botolan, Zambales. The four CADCs cover a total area of 44,803 hectares. These are located in the barangays of Poonbato (CADC-069: 8,700 ha), Villar & Burgos (CADC-068: 22,400 ha), San Felipe (CADC-043: 7,500 ha) and Cabangan (CADC-042: 6,203 ha).

The Aeta CADCs were given through the DENR Administrative Order No. 2, Series of 1993. This order provides rules for the “identification, delineation and recognition of ancestral lands and ancestral domains” of indigenous people or indigenous cultural communities. Note, however, that the CADC merely establishes the claim of the indigenous group. It does not guarantee the tenurial right of the claimants.

Such limitation of the CADC was finally overcome when the Congress passed into law the Indigenous People’s Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 or Republic Act No. 8371. Through this law, the indigenous people can avail of the title of ownership for their ancestral domains or ancestral lands, among other rights and privileges.

Currently, the Aetas are in possession of CADC and they have yet to apply for the conversion into titled ownership, as provided for in RA 8371. The Aetas can perhaps easily do this, except for the 2,223-hectare Puyat Property. The existence of private ownership within the ancestral domain is definitely a big obstacle to the indigenous people. Section 56 of IPRA has a provision of *Existing Property rights Regimes*, which stipulates as follows:

Property rights within the ancestral domains already existing and/or vested upon affectivity of this Act shall be recognized and respected.

In view of this clause, the concern as to how the concerned government agencies could have recklessly overlooked the facts and documents of the Puyat property when they awarded the Aeta CADCs now becomes a secondary issue. Had the Aetas known about it even during the process of applying for the CADC, they could also have taken steps to put the Puyat private ownership claim into question. The core of the matter now, therefore, is how to resolve the conflict in favor of the Aetas’ interest.

At the outset, Section 8b of IPRA on *Right to Redemption* can be used to counter the provision on property rights. Section 8b stipulates as follows:

In cases where it is shown that the transfer of land/property rights by virtue of any agreement or devise, to a non-member of the concerned ICCs/Ips is tainted by the vitiated consent of the ICCs/Ips shall have the right to redeem

the same within a period not exceeding fifteen (15) years from the date of transfer.

As supplementary information, IPRA's Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) on the provision on the *Right to Redemption* (Section 2, Part III), moreover, states:

Transfer of ancestral lands by Ips to non-Ips attended by vitiated consent or made for an unconscionable price shall, upon investigation and proof thereof, be declared null and void ab initio and the transferor has the right to redeem the property within a period of fifteen years from the date of transfer. In case of fraudulent transactions, the redemption period shall be reckoned upon the discovery of the fraud.

Consent is deemed vitiated when given through the error or mistake, violence, intimidation, undue influence, fraud or deceit. The price is considered unconscionable when the amount compared to the value of the property is so disproportionate as to be revolting to human conscience.

The transferor shall exercise his right to redeem within fifteen years from date of transfer. The NCIP shall provide, as part of its Rules of Procedures, the process for the exercise of this right. It shall include the filing of a petition therefore stating for the exercise of this right. It shall include the filing of a petition therefore stating the circumstances of vitiated consent or unconscionable price; due notice and hearing; and the reconveyance of the property to the transferor ICC/IP.

In essence, the Aetas need to accomplish three things to reclaim the Puyat property according to the above provision of the IPRA's IRR. These are [1] account on the possibly anomalous nature of transaction between the Aetas and Puyat, which can perhaps be traced from the Deed of Sale executed by and between the two parties; [2] determination of the date of transfer, in which the main consideration is that it took place within the period of fifteen years, and [3] actual filing of petition documenting the anomalous transaction.

Claimant Aetas in the Puyat property are inclined exactly in this direction of advocacy. There are at least eight Aeta organizations⁴ that have stake in the Puyat property. They believe that there could have been some anomalous negotiation with their ancestor Aetas, which led to the titling of the lands in Puyat's name.

On the other hand, the Aetas can also make use of the Executive Order No. 86 executed on November 6, 1915 by Francis Burton Harrison, then governor general of the Philippine Islands under the American government. EO 86 of 1915 declares that an area

⁴ Villar Indigenous People (VIP), Samahan ng mga Katutubong Aeta ng Botolan (SKAB), Lubos na Alyansang Katutubong Aeta ng Sambales (LAKAS), Samahang Katutubo ng Villar at Burgos (SKVB), Malomboy Aeta Tribal Association (MATA), Samahang Katutubo ng Poonbato (SKP), Pederasyon ng mga Aeta ng Sambales (PAS) and Nagkakaisang Kababaihang Aeta ng Pinatubo (NAKAP)

of 5,947,908 square meters of public domain in the barrio of Villar, municipality of Botolan, Province of Zambales is “reserve [d] for school purposes and withdraw [n] from sale or settlement.” In view of this old document, for whatever it is worth, the Aetas can appeal to the provision on the *Right to Claim Parts of Reservations*, as contained in Section 7g of IPRA, which states:

The right to claim parts of the ancestral domains which have been reserved for various purposes except those that reserved and intended for common and public welfare and service.

IPRA’s IRR on claiming reservations states the following procedures:

(1) For purposes of the enforcement of this right, the NCIP shall review all existing Executive Orders, Presidential Proclamations covering reservations within ancestral domains to determine the actual use thereof.

(2) Thereafter, it shall take appropriate steps to cause the de-establishment of the reservation or the segregation and reconveyance of ancestral domains or portions thereof to the concerned ICCs/IPs.

Assuming the usefulness of the 1915 document, this can perhaps be used to annul Puyat’s title in the portions of land referred to in the executive order. But note that this document can possibly salvage only around 600 hectares.

At any rate, one important consideration that needs particular attention is the fact that there was already a change in ownership from Puyat to TMBC. Even supposing that Puyat was guilty of malicious dealing with the Aetas in the sale of the land, he is practically not a direct party to the case anymore. Note that Puyat’s guilt and accountability does not transfer to the new owner.

Agrarian Reform vs. Lahar Threat

The so-called Puyat property, which has been transferred to The Manila Banking Corporation (TMBC), was subjected to CARP under the Compulsory Acquisition in 1990. Recent information, however, reveals that it is already under the receivership of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). In any case, the property was still under the ownership of Aquatic Ranch Enterprise Inc. and the Bukidnon Greenfields Agricultural Development Corporation when the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) processed its documents back in 1990.

For the Aquatic Ranch, DAR Zambales prepared 48 claim folders involving 46 out of 67 titles. There were 675 hectares CARPable area identified for 354 potential and actual farmer-beneficiaries. The claim folders reached the valuation stage in the LBP, but the process was derailed because of the damages on the area caused by lahar during the eruption.

In the case of Bukidnon Greenfields, two claim folders have been prepared. These involved 989 hectares intended for 355 farmer-beneficiaries. The processing of these folders will then be deferred even before they were forwarded to LBP because the lands concerned were also hit by lahar.

The deferment of the coverage of lahar-affected areas was prescribed in the Joint DAR-LBP Administrative Order No. 9. AO 9 categorized lahar-affected agricultural lands into "I. Actually affected by lahar; II. Not yet affected by lahar, and III. Lands covered by ash fall." Lands under the first and second categories were deemed not coverable until condition therein is finally declared safe from lahar. The Philippine Volcano logy and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) provide the certification as basis of said categorizations. At any rate, one of the primary considerations of AO 9 was the lands' unproductive state, which therefore denies beneficiaries the capacity to amortize the lands with the bank.

Almost ten years after the eruption, the Puyat property still remains shelved in PHIVOLCS' lahar hazard file (Categories I and II). As a consequence, DAR is left with no feasible recourse when the Aetas revived their claim on the Puyat land from a simple request to plant seasonal crops to its actual acquisition through CARP. On the Aetas' initial request to use the land, DAR naturally can only courteously decline since it is a private property, and therefore not within its jurisdiction.

Some details of the developments on the property of TMBC since 1997 are reported in a briefer prepared by DAR (not dated):

1. On October 1997, TMBC thru Valerio, de Guzman, and Diodino Law Office applied for the exemption of the aforesaid landholdings covering 2,223 has more or less;
2. MARO Encarnacion of Botolan, Zambales send [sic] letter request, dated April 2, 1998 to Atty. Valerio to submit required documents for their application for exemption;
3. MARO Encarnacion informed the PARO thru a Memorandum dated May 15, 2000 that TMBC did not respond to her letter request [sic] to submit exemption documents;
4. Sometimes [sic] in 1998 TMBC with the assistance of Atty. Clifford Barkley offered all properties in Region III for ACRP coverage. Their preference is LBP compensation scheme, in this case properties in Zambales were not considered because of its Lahar Risk status.
5. The Samahang Aeta ng Villar an indigenous cultural minority group, represented by Chito Balintay, formally requested Dir. Nestor C. Acosta on July 27, 2000 to issue authority for their group to utilize the property of TMBC specifically that acquired from Aquatic Ranch for seasonal crop production;
6. DAR Legal Division issued legal opinion over the request of Samahang Aeta ng Villar stating that DAR being a government

entity has no authority to grant the request because the property is privately owned and that SEV should instead secure the consent of the landowner to pursue their objective;

7. During the Provincial Consultation on Agrarian Reform an activity jointly sponsored by PDI and DAR on July 27, 2000, the issue of lands for the indigenous people in Botolan, Zambales were [sic] given primordial [sic] concern. At this juncture, the possibility of distributing the land owned by TMBC was given due consideration. Nevertheless, there are still some areas of concern that has [sic] to be clarified.

In a more recent development, the Aetas raised the same concern in a follow-up national consultation on the Aetas' land claim sponsored by PDI last September 21, 2000. In this consultation, PHIVOLCS Director Raymundo Punongbayan broke the issue of the lahar risk in the so-called Puyat land. According to Punongbayan, the Land Bank can allow the coverage of the property, despite being under Lahar Zoning Categories I and II, for as long as it will be used *only* for agricultural purposes.

Taking Punongbayan's word as a possible alternative certification, there seems to be fewer obstacles to the acquisition of the Puyat land. Thus, either the compulsory acquisition (CA) scheme or the voluntary-offer-to-sell (VOS) scheme can smoothly push through. These schemes apply for privately owned agricultural lands, such as the TMBC property.

But in the event that the TMBC properties have already been under the receivership of the BSP, then the acquisition scheme to be used will be that applicable for land under the Government Financial Institutions (GFI). This is a better scheme as compared to either CA or VOS since lands will be much cheaper in this scheme than in the other two schemes.

The most difficult, but nonetheless tolerable, scenario may be the stubborn stand of Land Bank on non-acquisition of TMBC property (discounting the possibility of receivership under BSP). In response to this, the DAR can propose the Voluntary Land Transfer (VLT) scheme to the Aetas. In this scheme, TMBC must agree to voluntarily transfer the land. This is quite difficult since it will be executed under the arrangement that the beneficiaries, on individual basis, will directly deal with the landowner regarding the valuation and payment of the land. The Land Bank will have no participation in this scheme.

All these three types of acquisition schemes have one thing in common. It is that the Aetas will have to shoulder the responsibility of amortizing the lands that will be awarded to them. This differentiates the agrarian reform program from the ancestral domain.

Combining Ancestral Domain and Agrarian Reform

The previous section dealt with the two legal instruments, i.e., provision on ancestral domain and agrarian reform law, the Aetas can employ to reclaim the so-called Puyat land. Ancestral domain and agrarian reform are two social concepts that provide foundation for the recognition of the right to the ownership and stewardship of lands for two of the deprived sectors of the society. On the one hand, ancestral domain addresses indigenous people's or indigenous cultural communities' welfare, and on the other hand, agrarian reform focuses on farmers' tenurial rights. But while indigenous people get their ancestral lands for free, the farmer beneficiaries of agrarian reform must amortize the land before they can fully claim ownership.

Circumstances allowed the Aetas to invoke both the provision on ancestral domain and the agrarian reform law in their move to reclaim the Puyat land. These circumstances include those mentioned above wherein there had been attempts to acquire the land through CARP in 1990 and the awarding of CADCs in four Botolan sites for the Aetas in 1996. Currently, opportunities are still present for the Aetas to take up these lines of struggle. First, both indigenous people's rights and agrarian reform are still in the present government's priority agenda. Second, there are available friendly forces, such as civil society groups, to back up their activities.

The result of these circumstances is a bifurcated advocacy for the Aetas as they pursue the same case using two different laws. At the outset, this puts the Aetas in an apparently very advantageous position since they have two laws at their disposal. This impression, however, assumes that these two laws, when combined, shall support and complement each other in achieving the goal of getting back the Puyat land. As this appears to be the emerging tactical move, the practicability of its assumption must, therefore, be put under scrutiny.

What does, "combining" mean? By combining ancestral domain and agrarian reform, the Aetas are using them simultaneously, in which process one of the instruments combined is expected to succeed. This process does not discriminate one instrument from another and their utilities are viewed from a purely pragmatic standpoint. Their final arbiter will be the simple fact of whichever will deliver first.

There are other perspectives from which one of the instruments is viewed to have primacy over another. Ancestral domain is the more likely candidate here since the Aetas, being indigenous people, will naturally appeal to their cultural attachment to the land as justification for their claim. On the other hand, some are inclined to prefer agrarian reform more than ancestral domain since its process is less tedious and offers more immediate chances of transfer than ancestral domain. In this process, ancestral domain can tactically be used as an added pressure point.

These three perspectives are, so far, the most dominant construal of the said “combination”. The first type puts the two elements on equal footing while the other two set their priority. The first type lets things take their own course while the other two use one as support for the other.

The combination of the two laws, in whichever sense, is practically the logical tactical move to take since they are both available. The Aetas have been wise to follow this path. However, agrarian reform and ancestral domain have fundamental differences such that they cannot be used together to acquire one and the same land at the same time. The Puyat land, for instance, cannot have both the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) and the Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA). Thus, the term “combining” cannot categorically be taken in this sense. The following questions may be considered in formulating a workable advocacy strategy for the Aetas’ claim in the Puyat land:

[1] Is acquisition the Aetas’ main interest in the Puyat land or is it more necessary to take into consideration the cultural integrity they will get from proclaiming the land as ancestral domain? Is the spirit of ancestral domain not lost if the Aetas were able to reclaim the land through agrarian reform instead of ancestral domain? Or, does not the payment of land under agrarian reform demean or defeat the cultural and historical value of the ancestral domain?

[2] How do the Aetas use both laws without sacrificing, the other so that they can maintain and optimize all the network of institutional support available to them right now?

The cultural side of the Aetas is obviously given weight in the first question. This can perhaps serve as a fulcrum in the decision-making of the Aeta community with respect to the Puyat land. While their being Aetas are not diminished in the act of disregarding the ancestral value of the Puyat land if they submit it to agrarian reform, there seems to be something sacrilegious in paying the person whom they accuse of stealing the land from them. And while on a positive note, paying for the land under CARP develops responsibility among the Aetas, the shadow of social justice will perhaps always be a constant reminder for the society and the government that this was the price of that responsibility.

The second question posited the possible use of both laws. Considering the special nature of the Puyat land, agrarian reform as an alternative comes as a second best. Only when efforts through ancestral domain reach the point of futility must agrarian reform be resorted to. If this pushes through with the consent of the Aetas themselves, both the Aeta-beneficiaries and the concerned government agencies must be prepared for its consequences. The area, while fit for agriculture, is not only far from the lowland, but has rough and not cemented road going to the lowland. This makes transportation and marketing of goods, if the Aetas plan to engage in these activities, very difficult.

On the other hand, the welfare of the Aetas can also be seen beyond the domain of Mt. Pinatubo and the so-called Puyat property. The Aetas in the resettlement areas, who have long term plan to stay there, may as well apply to the agrarian reform office for a productive agricultural land near their barangay. This will directly address their complaint about the poor productivity of the land around the resettlement areas.⁵

Part Four
ONE

[Non-formal] Education for Indigenous People

I. Education for Liberation

They wanted us to go to school
and to turn the pages of books...
Why learn the language of books
when the forest speaks to you?
One cannot eat books,
and pens and pencils are poor weapons
to kill the deer of the mountains
and the grunting boar...⁶

In reality, the needs of indigenous people are still not acted on accordingly compared to others in mainstream society. A classic example of this is the educational system imposed on them by colonial and present day educators which the indigenous people perceive as unsuitable to their needs. The indigenous people identify education as the crucial factor in the historical process of their marginalization. This process started at the onset of western colonization and was carried over by state afterwards.

The “system of education” featured a divide and conquer strategy. This approach slowly destroyed and eradicated indigenous knowledge, traditions, culture, arts and most strategically, language, while the IPs were being assimilated into the dominant or culture. Nonetheless, some elements of the Indigenous People’s culture, those that were deemed “acceptable”⁷ were integrated into the mainstream culture.

The indigenous people before had no choice but to get an education so they can be “co-equals” with the non-Indigenous people. Yet in schools, they learn this is not so. They are taught to forget if not condemn cultural heritage, which are tagged as pagan or barbaric. Their own histories of resistance are not highlighted; and their viable

⁵ One Aeta group has already identified an area that they can cultivate as of year 2000. They are already negotiating with Provincial Agrarian Reform Office of Zambales regarding its acquisition and distribution.
⁶ Gilbert Perez in *The Leader*, Manila, November 1932, cited by Keesing and Keesing, *Taming the Philippine Headhunters*, (California; Stanford University Press, 1934) pp.260-261. cited by R. Rovillos, *International Decade of IP*
⁷ “Acceptable”- pertains to those practices deemed moral to the standards of the colonizers and ruling elite

indigenous learning systems, ignored. Even so-called alternative education programs have failed because they are not based on concrete conditions and aspirations of Indigenous People.⁸

From then on, there were various initiatives and pressure from indigenous peoples' organizations. They have started initiatives to establish and control their educational systems and institutions. Simultaneously, there were efforts at the grassroots level along the line of alternative indigenous education.

Long before western education was introduced among Indigenous People, there already existed viable indigenous learning systems, for education was a continuous daily activity for the Indigenous People. Through these systems, children were taught their history and culture.

For the Indigenous people, education was relevant because it served the needs of Indigenous communities to survive, to be safe from enemy attacks, and to be in harmony with each other and with nature. For it is during their "daily lessons" children were taught livelihood and skills, the norms and practice of society. Their education represented and substantiated their distinct culture and heritage as a people.



9

"...we yearned to return to our own ancestral land at the foot of Mount Pinatubo, where no one forbade us from doing what we wanted, where we were free to live and plant our gardens..."

Indigenous People want to rejuvenate the basic elements of their learning systems, while they learn new ideas and skills to survive in their rapidly changing environment.

⁸ Raymundo Rovillos, Education in the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples: Bringing education back into the mainstream of Indigenous Peoples' lives

⁹ Photo by Dee Hunt, *KASAMA* Vol. 15 No. 3 / July–August–September 2001 / Solidarity Philippines Australia Network

Indigenous People want to learn other modern sciences, but in the context of their own culture and in their own terms and according to their own pace.

IPs wanted an education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. Indigenous People demand their right to speak their own language, along or with the practice of their indigenous education, since language cannot be divorced from the struggle for self-determination and ancestral land and domain.

They demand more direct involvement in the structure, process and content of education. The following demands resonate in various statements, manifestoes, agreements and laws by and for Indigenous Peoples:

- Teachers should be chosen by the communities;
- Learning support delivery systems should be characterized by flexibility in entry and exit
- It should cater different types of learning pace, mental ability, and learner educational and cultural background.
- Give communities and families an active role in determining curricula and the school calendar and the authority to recommend the appointment or removal of teachers in order better to serve the educational and cultural interests of communities;

The following paragraphs are excerpts from an essay written by EPANG DOMULOT, a young Aeta student in Zambales, who won the first prize of 25,000 pesos in the Philvocs essay writing competition which she donated to the LAKAS scholarship fund for the benefit of all the students. She narrated her experiences and struggles in acquiring for herself a formal education.

“.....we did not forget our formal education. I enrolled in Grade One along with other children. This is when I started to experience the oppression of my fellow ‘straight-haired’ students who insulted us with words like "*kulot salot*" (kinky hair is jinx¹⁰), "*Itah... Itah... Itah... Maitim*" (Ayta... Ayta... Ayta... Black), and if we could not answer a question, they'd say, "*they don't have that in the mountains*". They laughed at us when we wore the *Lubay*¹¹ and *Baheleng*¹², our native garments.

All these insults and put-down remarks for Indigenous students I experienced until I reached High School. I was hurt but I fought back. I tried to be strong inside and often near tears, I tried to let the teacher know. I didn't expect the teacher to listen but the teacher talked to the rest of my fellow students about my concern.

I was surprised that my teacher showed concern for Indigenous students. I was encouraged to persuade my brothers and sisters and fellow Indigenous students to form a

¹⁰ kulot salot- kinky hair is jinx, you are a pest because you have kinky hair.

¹¹ G-strings

¹² Sarong

party which we called LAKAS to participate in the Student Body Organization at our school. Out of the 15 positions, six of us won the positions of Vice President, Treasurer, two Business Managers, Press Information Officer and a representative in fourth year. I was delighted along with my fellow Indigenous students to see that gradually we are being acknowledged as people endowed with rights....”¹³

The essay was translated from Tagalog by Deborah Ruiz Wall

The clamor for more direct participation in all levels and aspects of the educational system are valid. But there are limits to educational change. Substantive and meaningful participation in the educational system requires more fundamental changes in the political system of nation-states. Certainly the demands enumerated above cannot possibly happen in highly centralized, authoritarian regimes. This is unfortunate, but this also validates what Indigenous Peoples have been saying time and again: that a truly liberating and empowering indigenous education can only happen in the context of a self-determining and democratic society.¹⁴

TWO

Strong Republic School, a mighty fortress or sign of distress? *A government's call for help*

The combination of demographic growth, resource constraints and the socio-political conditions hampers government efforts to provide livelihood opportunities, education and other social services to the more remote and often conflict-ridden areas of the country. This is the reason why distance-learning technology is seen as a way of meeting the development needs of these areas.

Last December 29, 2003 President Gloria Arroyo signed Executive Order No. 266 establishing the STRONG REPUBLIC SCHOOL (SRS), a distance learning school, to bring educational opportunities to identified disadvantaged communities.

The Strong Republic School (SRS), a Distance Learning Program is established under the Department of Education (DepEd). The SRS takes a three-track approach: through the formal school system; through the alternative learning systems of the **Bureau of Non-Formal Education**; and through orientation and training courses offered by other government agencies.

¹³ KASAMA Vol. 15 No. 3 / July–August–September 2001 / Solidarity Philippines Australia Network

¹⁴ Raymundo Rovillos, Education in the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples: Bringing education back into the mainstream of Indigenous Peoples' lives

The SRS aims to:

- Expand the delivery of alternative learning systems among the impoverished sectors of the population and give their graduates access to the formal school system;
- Provide **disadvantaged sectors of the population** access to the formal school system through distance learning technologies and alternative learning systems;
- Offer entrepreneurship, livelihood and skills development programs through other government agencies.

Thus, SRS shall have three (3) components, namely:

1. Strong Republic Alternative Learning Systems
2. Strong Republic Basic Education Curriculum
3. Strong Republic Technical/Vocational Skills Training

For the DepEd, the SRS Program takes a two-track approach. The first track, following the projects of the **Bureau of Non-Formal Education**, will deliver the *basic literacy and Non-Formal Education A & E system* for the participants who have not had access to any formal schooling or those who have dropped out. The second track will provide assistance to the established formal school system with focus on the five (5) learning areas known as MAKABAYAN, a learning area intended to equip target learners with core life skills. The system will use appropriate distance learning information technology package as the major delivery mode.

Critique

Though stately are the objectives of the SRS, its implementation however, is both questionable and intriguing. For a program that is suppose to address a major flaw in the educational system of the government, there seems to be a problem in its institutionalization.

Question on devolution and decentralization.

The Executive Order involves almost all line agencies of the government. Section 5 of the EO states that, “The Department of Education leads implementing agency and ensures inclusion of the Strong Republic School in the DepEd’s priority regular programs. The SRS draws support from agencies which can make use of the technical facilities provided the SRS for their own program when classes are not in session.”

List of other SRS implementing agencies:

1. Department of Agriculture
2. Department of Environment and Natural Resources
3. Department of Interior and Local Government
4. Department of Health
5. Department of National Defense-Armed Forces of the Philippines
6. Department of Public Works and Highways

7. Department of Social Welfare and Development
8. Department of Trade and Industry
9. National Anti-Poverty Commission
10. National Commission on Indigenous People
11. Office of Muslim Affairs
12. Philippine Information Agency
13. Department of Science and Technology
14. Technology and Livelihood Resource Center
15. Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

Complicating matters further Section 5 goes on to include the local government units, “The SRS Program may call on the participation of other government agencies and the different leagues of Local Governments and Local Officials as necessary to attain its objectives”.

The SRS Program may call on the participation of other government agencies and the different leagues of Local Governments and Local Officials as necessary to attain its objectives.

How can a very important government program be just relegated to other government institutions and agencies on top of their regular services rendered to the public? Surely, balancing difficulties and duplication of work is inevitable. Wastage of resources, problems in manpower complementation will eventually lead to the failure of SRS.

Question on Budget Allocation

A start-up fund of PhP 15 Million shall be provided by DepEd for the initial operations of the SRS Program. Appropriations for the succeeding years shall be included in the budget proposal for the DepEd.

A government that carries a bloated and bungling bureaucracy, while operating under deficit spending, does not need another program which put its faith on the efficient service delivery of its line agencies and departments (which actually are aiming for further reductions in spending). This is a sure formula for failure and waste of resources.

Question on Quality of Education.

There was a decline in the quality of the Philippine education, especially at the elementary and secondary levels. For example, the results of standard tests conducted among elementary and high school students, as well as in the National College of Entrance Examination for college students, were way below the target mean score.

Question on Affordability of Education.

There is also a big disparity in educational achievements across social groups. For example, the socio-economically disadvantaged students have higher dropout rates, especially in the elementary level. And most of the freshmen students at the tertiary level come from relatively well-off families.

Question Budget for Education.

The Philippine Constitution has mandated the government to allocate the highest proportion of its budget to education. However, the Philippines still has one of the lowest budget allocations to education among the ASEAN countries.

Question on Education Mismatch.

There is a large proportion of "*mismatch*" between training and actual jobs. This is the major problem at the tertiary level and it is also the cause of the existence of a large group of educated unemployed or underemployed.

Recommendation

While it is true that there is a need to revitalize and institute reforms in the educational system, (much more) to overhaul the whole Philippine Educational Institution, the government needs to remind itself its mandate to provide free and quality education to all. There seems to be a perennial setback when implementing these reforms. It is not only a question of making these reforms work, but the appropriateness of the program is also questionable.

The following are some of the reforms proposed:

Upgrade the teachers' salary scale. Teachers have been underpaid; thus there is very little incentive for most of them to take up advanced trainings.

Amend the current system of budgeting for education across regions, which is based on participation rates and units costs. This clearly favors the more developed regions. There is a need to provide more allocation to lagging regions to narrow the disparity across regions.

Stop the current practice of subsidizing state universities and colleges to enhance access. This may not be the best way to promote equity. An expanded scholarship program, giving more focus and priority to the poor, maybe more equitable.

Get all the leaders in business and industry to become actively involved in higher education; this is aimed at addressing the mismatch problem. In addition, carry out a selective admission policy, i.e., installing mechanisms to reduce enrollment in oversubscribed courses and promoting enrollment in undersubscribed ones.

Develop a rationalized apprenticeship program with heavy inputs from the private sector. Furthermore, transfer the control of technical training to industry groups which are more attuned to the needs of business and industry.

THREE

PDI's Non-Formal Education

Education. Empowerment. Progress

“Noon, nagtatago kami sa aming mga bahay kapag nakakakita kami ng ibang tao. Natatakot kaming makiharap. Ngayon, hindi lamang kami nakikipag-usap. Nakapagsasalita na ako dito sa entablado.”

- NFE student in Palawan

“Before, we would hide inside our houses when we see other people around. We were afraid to speak or even face them. Now, we do not just talk to them, I can even speak here on the stage”

- English translation

This testimony aptly illustrates how PDI's Non-Formal Education, coupled with community organizing and community building brings about positive changes in the indigenous people's lives.

The NFE program passes on encouraging results in indigenous people's lives particularly the, women. An improvement over previous conditions where the majority of women were less educated than men and worked more hours suffering from poor health and nutrition. Improvements in gender consciousness led to an understanding of the equal rights and responsibilities of women and men, and a demand for the creation of equal opportunities for them in society.

Another great contribution brought about by the NFE is the improved and higher functional literacy rate, along with increasing realization of the importance of education, led to the augmentation of family incomes through income generating activities which subsequently improved the standard of living. Increased self-esteem and confidence were other significant contributions the NFE program made in the communities.

Discernible changes took place in the personal and community lives of the people, particularly women, following their participation in NFE program. Women play a positive role in their own development, and in the development of their families and communities. Women were able to recognize their urgent needs and problems, and express their concerns to others because of better communication skills.

Furthermore, women became more active in getting their daughters to attend school (unlike their mothers) and in counseling children on matters such as schooling, family planning and relations with the opposite sex.

All these positive changes challenge PDI to continue pursuing NFE in rural communities, especially among the marginalized indigenous people. PDI believes that education or non-formal education, in this case, is a very powerful tool. It implants knowledge, where there is none. It brings forth hopes, confidence, self-esteem, and unlocks human potentials. Non-formal education deals not merely satisfy literacy objectives. It is a process of reckoning with day-to-day reality – of empowering the deprived to confront the socio-economic and political vacuum created by greed and reinforced by poverty.

Presently, PDI supports the implementation of Non-Formal Education in two provinces, Zambales and Palawan. Two major indigenous peoples groups, with distinct culture and ethnicity, are served by PDI in these areas. The Aetas of Zambales and the Tagbanuas of Palawan.

PDI sees to the attainment of NFE objectives in Botolan, Zambales and in at least 7 barangays in the municipalities of Coron and Culion, Palawan. This is carried out in coordination with local para-teachers, barangay governments and the District Offices of the Department of Education. In Zambales, the local para-teachers are also beneficiaries of the NFE program earlier launch by socio-civic organizations after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption. This assistance seeks to meet the basic learning and capacity building needs of out-of-school youth and adults, who, for various reasons, are unable to enter the formal school.

Non-formal education addresses the necessary learning competencies that are parallel or comparable to formal school curricula. The desired competencies include Level I for those who have no literacy skills. This is comparable to Grades 1 and 2 of the formal school. Level II is semi-literacy level to reinforce the basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills of students. This is similar to Grades 3 and 4.

Levels III – V are flexible competency exercises designed for functional literates. Level III is equivalent to Grades 5 and 6 of formal school. Level IV is for adequately functional literates. This is equivalent to First and Second Years of secondary school. Level V, meanwhile, is an autonomous learning level equivalent to Third and Fourth Years of the secondary school.

In supporting NFE, PDI is emphatic that assistance must put premium on addressing the learning needs of the IP community. This enabling clause is crucial to secure a planned integration of the local IP population into the mainstream without compromising their integrity, culture and social practices. Given this thrust, PDI, in effect, also seeks to re-orient and sharpen NFE to become one that is truly situation-based and action-oriented.

Toward this end, PDI practically enjoins and engages the teacher-facilitators, para-teachers, NFE Coordinators and the District Supervisors of the Department of Education to continuing dialogues and planning exercises to refine and calibrate the existing NFE curricula in line with obtaining situation and articulated/expressed needs of NFE students. The effects of these exercises are more patent in Level III curriculum where education on livelihood takes off from recognition of local poverty situation, identification and analysis of factors that account for such, and establishing the need to address this poverty while pursuing local development.

Subsequently, the resolution to the problem takes into account community organizing and community building on top of all other skills that the NFE hopes to impart.

To implement the NFE, PDI and DepEd employs the support of regular school teachers and trained para-teachers. PDI covers the honoraria of NFE facilitators while DepEd takes care of other required logistical support, including supplies, venue, administrative costs, curriculum and materials development, training of facilitators etc. Curriculum and materials development, on the other hand, involves the design/production of at least 29 modules for 150 hours of education sessions for each competency level. Each module, in turn, consists of a teacher’s manual and a session guide.

Prior to deployment of facilitators, the PDI (through its Executive Director) and the Department of Education (through the District Supervisor) execute a Memorandum of Agreement to provide for the terms and conditions as well as to establish the respective roles and responsibilities of parties to the Project. In general, PDI assumes full responsibility (as lead agency) over project coordination in collaboration with the DepEd-assigned NFE Coordinator. The NFE Coordinator assumes other responsibilities including field coordination, supervision and delivery of required technical oversight.

By experience, the PDI Area Coordinator and the NFE Coordinators meets intermittently to discuss implementation issues and formulate remedial measures. In the case of Level III implementation, the coordinators collaborate on design, course content and program of study

Table 1
NFE Project Areas

Central Luzon

Municipality/ Province	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Zambales				
Botolan				
1. San Juan	XX¹			

Northern Palawan

Municipality/ Province	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Palawan				
Culion				
1. Luac				
Ditupiak	XX¹			
Lamud	XX¹			
Luac Proper	XX²			
2. Burabod				
Inurol	XX	XX		
Coron				
1. Tagumpay				
Balisungan	XX	XX	XX	
Bayo-bayo	XX²			
2. Lajala	XX	XX	XX	
3. Malbato	XX¹			
4. Banuang Daan	XX¹			
5. Marcilla	XX²			

XX¹ - Classes started but required number of hours not completed

XX² - Not implemented

Part Five Reclaiming the Aeta's Welfare

It is not only about land. At the core of it are people, the Aetas, and their will to survive in the unique way they have learned. The issues in the Puyat land put this will to challenge and encourage their involvement in the politico-legal institutions of the mainstream, lowland society. It has definitely expanded their horizon. It has entailed both benefits and some sacrifices. It has built new relationships, but has also invited confrontation and conflict.

The Aetas cannot anymore deny that their survival, and more specifically, their social and economic welfare, is now directly entangled with the ways and practices of the larger society. They were, for instance, already familiarized with the idea that the government is responsible for the development of the different sectors of the society.

With such exposure to the government's roles and functions in the social well being of its constituents, the Aetas remained perplexed with the way things are going. But from what have been gathered from the Aetas, the issues need not be that complex and burdensome. The issues can be simplified in the following manner:

[1] The Aetas need lands, and not ownership papers;

[2] The Aetas see the need to feed their families a greater responsibility than the anticipation of the danger of lahar.

[3] they need the help of both government and non-government development agents to improve their lives.

In this part of the discussion, the deeper sentiments of the Aetas are reflected. These are some thoughts and insights, which are sometimes set aside and deemed immaterial because they are idiosyncratic. They are, however, integral in understanding their well-being and how they want to achieve its development.

Access to land, Not ownership papers

The Aetas say that they now appreciate the conventional concept of legitimate ownership, which land titles represent. They believe providing security and protection to the owner is the most important function of titles. Nonetheless, at the end of the day, titles are *just* papers, where the ultimate end of claiming the land is mere possession. But to the Aetas, there is an end higher than mere possession, and that is actually working on the land. The real value of land is its capacity to produce plants and crops, and consequently to provide food to the tillers and their families. In the words of one Aeta leader:

Sekundaryo lang kung CADC yan o CLOA, ang mahalaga ay matrabaho kung ano ang maiturong lupa.¹⁵

Another Aeta leader put it more bluntly:

Sa kanila na ang papel, sa amin ang lupa.¹⁶

Here we see the indigenous concept of the value of land. The land's character as a titled property is secondary to its being something that people should work on and develop. Based on this principle, the Aetas believe that a person should be stripped of the right to use the land not because he cannot show any paper or title, but because he cannot anymore make the land productive. It is, therefore, actual and active responsibility over the land that legitimizes the right to enter and use the land. In a more introspective evaluation, this belief on the use of the land may be anchored on the deeper spirituality of the Aetas. Such spirituality comes in the form of their high respect for the environment as signified in their belief in environment spirits. The objects in the environment and the environment itself have a life of its own, such that humans are only their stewards. Only in the fulfillment of this stewardship role does a person become entitled to the land and its fruits.

¹⁵ "Whether it is CADC or CLOA is of secondary concern, the important thing todo is to work on whatever land will be available."

¹⁶ "They can have the papers, let us have the land."

The equation of “access to land” and “responsibility over the land” suggests that the main concern of the Aetas’ claim over the Puyat land translates into their more immediate concern for their welfare. Welfare, for the Aetas, is nothing more than sufficient opportunities for productive work and a reliable food source that the Puyat land can provide. Their claim for these is not only a matter of institutional acceptance and proving genuine ownership. This is not simply a matter of law and legal rights. It is instead a matter of everyday existence, which for the Aetas, is a constant reason of food search.

To survive and not to fear

As if a hampered access to land is not difficult enough a burden, the unstable environment within Mt. Pinatubo also puts the Aetas on the defensive position whenever eruption threatens. Possible lahar outflow is not only an obstacle to the coverage of the Puyat land under agrarian reform, it likewise poses real danger to the Aetas living and planning to live within the vicinity of Mt. Pinatubo. Note that the Aetas do not deny and are, in fact, fully aware of such fact. But they decided to stay and depend on the resources of Mt. Pinatubo either as a matter of necessity or as a matter of principle, or a mixture of both and other reasons. This decision attends to one simple purpose: survival.

Survival is *not* to cling to life and activity; it is to continue life and activity. It does not matter if an activity may end, what matters is that the activity can be done now and in this chosen place. One significant aspect of survival, therefore, is the preservation of what is left. For the Aetas, part of what is left after Mt. Pinatubo eruption is the Mt. Pinatubo itself in its post-eruption tranquility. The Aetas believe that the relatively peaceful state of the volcano right now is sufficient reason to inhabit its surrounding once again, notwithstanding another eruption.

An Aeta leader says,

“Huwag mong tingnan ang panganib. Ito’y isang sapalaran para mabuhay ang pamilya.”¹⁷

It is difficult to read the minds of the Aetas with respect to Mt. Pinatubo because it is both a symbol of a sacred home, according to tradition, and a looming danger, based on experience. Thus, their willingness to take risk in this area is quite puzzling to outsiders and a stubborn attitude for authorities. At any rate, the Aetas’ long experience with the volcano entitled them to give a remark like this:

Alam namin kung kailan puputok ang bulkan. Nararamdaman namin iyon.¹⁸

This remark does not say that the Aetas are not afraid, but only that they need not be afraid of their situation. While this remark did not save many Aetas during the 1991 catastrophe, it can be understood as a statement of independence and self-reliance. Only

¹⁷ “Don’t bother with the danger. It is a gamble where the family’s welfare is at stake.”

¹⁸ “We know when the volcano will erupt. We feel that.”

through an independent and self-reliant community life, manifested in their capacity to decide for themselves, can the Aetas achieve political maturity. They may have made the wrong decision, but trusting them to experience a healthy political process.

The government can contribute in this political process. It need not contradict the Aetas' brave choice to stay in Mt. Pinatubo, for that may somehow curtail their autonomy given the incalculable value of the place to them. The government may rather support them with constant monitoring advisories and other protective measures.

Continuing Engagement

After laying down the main issues and concerns and the various discourses pertaining to the Aetas' stake in the Puyat land, here we outline the Aetas' actual engagements as part of the civil society institution.

A series of consultations was conducted in connection with the Aetas' claim to the Puyat estate. These consultations have solicited involvement and actions from both government and non-government agencies. Among the government agencies, which got involved were the National Commission for Indigenous People (NCIP), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Philippine volcano logy and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) AND THE Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). From the non-government sector, the Project Development Institute (PDI) is one of those civil society groups that have the most visible engagement activity with the Botolan Aetas.

Several Aeta organizations likewise participated in these gatherings to voice out their organizational issues and concerns, some of which were repeated in this paper's discussion. These consultations definitely gave the Aetas some hope and inspired them to take bolder actions on the matter.

The consultations being referred to are the following:

1. *Agrarian Reform in Zambales: Development within Reach*, held last July 27 in Zambales.
2. *Ang Lupang Ninuno ng mga Aeta ng Botolan: Consultation-workshop and Planning*, held last august 15 in Zambales.
3. *The Aetas' Land and Life: Prevailing Issues on the Tenth Year of the Mt. Pinatubo Eruption*, held last September 21 in Quezon City.

It started with an ordinary community organizing work, through which the Aetas were able to relate their community sentiment. They then elevated it to a public forum when they spoke in the July 27 provincial conference. It was a simple follow-up on their request to plant seasonal crops in the Puyat land, which they addressed to the DAR Provincial Office. This prompted DAR to look into the records of the Puyat estate. Note that there was no discussion yet on the question of ownership. The only concern of the Aetas was to have an area to plant their crops.

Realizing the Aetas predicament, PDI invited the Aetas to a consultation-workshop on August 15. It was supposed to be an in-depth and focused discussion on three aspects of the Aetas' living condition, namely land security, delivery of support services and organizational maturity. Because of the ethnic character of the Aetas, the issue of ancestral domain was likewise included in the program design. The program actually had two parts [1] review of the Aetas' historical presence in the land; and [2] formulation of a plan of action. Part of the plan they have formulated is to pursue the acquisition of the Puyat estate under agrarian reform while maintaining the position on the ancestral value of their land.

To fully address the issue, PDI decided to make a national issue out of the Aetas' ancestral domain during the conference entitled, *The Aetas' Land and Life: Prevailing Issues on the Tenth Year of Mt. Pinatubo Eruption*," held last September 21. The Conference had gathered together key officials of concerned government agencies, one of whom is Dr. Raymundo Punongbayan of PHICOLCS. One output of the conference was the assurance from Dr. Punongbayan that lahar risk categorization does not apply if the land will be used for agricultural purposes. Another was recommendation on an alternative livelihood for the Aetas, taking advantage of the "touristy" characteristic of the Mt. Pinatubo.

The Aetas' land and welfare problems are not yet completely resolved. But the Aetas' engagement experience with various development agents has surely informed them that they are not alone in advancing their welfare and development. There are sectors and agencies that are both committed and willing to share such responsibility.

Part Six **THE AETAS QUEST FOR FOOD SECURITY**

I. Introduction

Food is life. Every man, or any living creature for that matter, needs food in order to live. The lack of food will surely endanger one's life. To secure food will guarantee a person's healthy being.

Food security is one of the most discussed or written subject matter. Many development organizations are into it for a long time. Examples of these are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the World Bank among others. A special day was even assigned to highlight the importance of food security --- the World Food Day, which is being observed every October 16 since 1945.

In the Philippines, every effort for development, whether initiated by the government or not, always claimed to assure that there will be enough food on the dining table of every household. In 1995, a task force on Food Security was organized in University of the Philippines in Los Baños in partnership with the Department of Agriculture.

Yet, achieving food security for all Filipinos remain unattained

Based on the 2000 National Census and Statistics Board (NCSB) report, there are 4.3 million families or 26.5 million Filipinos were living below the poverty line. This means that more than one-third of Filipinos didn't meet the requirement to satisfy their basic food and non-food needs. This is a sad realization considering that the figure in which the NCSB based their estimates are too low at PhP 11,605 annually, or 4, 835 monthly, while IBON, a private research institution estimated that in 2000, a family of six living outside Metro Manila and in agricultural communities, needs at least PhP 360.00 daily.

Another sad truth is that the Philippines, although an agricultural country that used to export rice in the mid-70's, now depends on other country for her food requirements. This is not solely because there is a shortage of rice production in the country. The government just thinks that importing rice is much cheaper than buying rice from the Filipino farmers instead.

If food is limited for the majority of the impoverished population, what more for the so-called "cultural minority" or the Indigenous People, especially the Aetas of Pinatubo, who live way below the standard of living as assumed by the government.

This paper is an attempt to shed light on the plight of the Aetas from the surroundings of Mount Pinatubo. Specifically, this tackles the food problem of the Aetas in the area. Also discussed here are the responses and some solutions proposed and actually done by other sectors in dealing with these difficulties.

This paper is outlined as follows: A discussion on the principles governing the issues on food security is presented on the second part. This gives the reader a preliminary understanding on the concepts of food security. The socio-economic profile of the Aetas in Zambales is discussed in the third part. It contextualizes the discussion within the Aetas' indigenous world—their environment, culture, society, etc.—and their traumatic experience during the Mt. Pinatubo eruption. From here, the emergent need of the Aetas is discussed. On the fourth part, the food problems of the Aetas are tackled. This is based on actual survey conducted by PDI in August 2003.

The main sources of information in the discussion on food security derive from a paper published by the Food and Agriculture Organization that was published on the web. Another is an executive summary of a conference on Food Security and Political Stability in the Asia-Pacific, which was sponsored by the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii in September 1998. The NCSB report and IBON was also consulted.

Previously published papers by the Project Development Institute were also used such as: Food Security, Agrarian Reform and Rural Development: Opportunities, and Challenges for Action, written by Ms. Aurora A. Regalado. And another paper written by Dr. Teodoro Mendoza for PDI on Sustainable Food Security in the New Millennium: "Is it Achievable?" and "Zambales Accomplishment - Grand slam or Grand Manipulation:

An Analysis of LTI – PBD Integration”. And another paper by PDI on alternative Marketing: Responding to the Food Security Issue in Central Luzon.

The brief ethnographic profile and other pertinent information about the Pinatubo Aetas and their way of life provided here are based mainly on studies and researches about the Aetas of Pinatubo. These written documents include The Pinatubo Negritos: their useful plants and material culture by Robert Fox (1952); Pinatubo Negritos: revisited by Calixto Barrato Jr. and Marvyn Benaning (1978); Pinatubo Aytas: Continuity and Change by Hiromu Shimizu; and After Duwagan: Deforestation, Succession, and Adaptation in Upland Luzon, Philippines by J. Peter Brosius (1990).

On their experiences during the Mt. Pinatubo eruption, the following materials have been used: “Disaster-response: lessons from Mt. Pinatubo by Eufrazio Abaya, et al (1993); “In the Shadow of the Lingering Mt. Pinatubo Disaster” edited by Cynthia Bautista (1993); “Eruption and Exodus” by LAKAS (1991); and “Fire and Mud: Eruptions and Lahars of Mt. Pinatubo, Philippines” edited by Christopher Newhall and Raymundo Punongbayan (1996).

Other important documents that were consulted: The Aetas land and Life (A documentation of a conference conducted by PDI last 2000 on the Aetas right to land); Women and Food Security (A summary of workshop on the role of women in securing food for the rural families) conducted by PDI year 1999, 2000, and 2001.

To come up with a clear and objective presentation of the problems and solution to the plight of the Pinatubo Aeta, the proponent of this study conducted the following activities:

1. Published articles were carefully selected, organized and analyzed and data derived therein were evaluated to decide on the usefulness of the object.
2. A survey was conducted among the Aetas of Botolan, Zambales.
3. Interviews were also conducted
4. The Internet helped a lot in the gathering of materials that could be used.

II. Food Security Concepts and Principles of the Project Development Institute

The Project Development Institute (PDI) is a non-governmental development organization in the Philippines, working for genuine agrarian reform and alternative rural development strategies through participatory methods. Its vision is the establishment of viable, sustainable and self-reliant communities through people empowerment. PDI has been working at the grassroots level since 1989 but was formally established in April 1991. At present, PDI works along with farmers groups in Central Luzon and doing advocacy work at the national level. It is currently initiating an alternative marketing and trading scheme that directly links the rural cooperatives of Central Luzon to the urban cooperatives.

Objectives

1. To strengthen the capabilities of people's organizations in agrarian reform and rural development initiatives.
2. To provide a package of services in project development and related areas to NGOs, peoples organizations (POs) and other institutions to further strengthen their organizations, upgrade skills and broaden service packages.
3. To develop community-based comprehensive development programs using participatory methods in pursuit of genuine agrarian reform.
4. To undertake program implementation and management in selected areas.
5. To conscientize other sectors of society, specifically intellectuals and professionals in the process of realizing genuine agrarian reform and rural development.

Mandates of the Project Development Institute on Food Security

PDI is mandated to help agrarian communities be self-reliant through participatory processes. The rural poor can only be self-reliant if they are food secure at the household level. Food Security is the product of an adequate supply of food (food production) and free access to it (food distribution).

In the Philippines, food insecurity is brought about by two structural factors: landlessness and very weak control over production. Agribusiness capitalists control decision-making in food production and thereby wield economic power, while our farmers work only as food producers. In this situation, agrarian reform becomes the fundamental ingredient in making rural communities self-reliant. It is the center of PDI's work.

Food security can only be achieved if the very producers of food are themselves food secure. This can be achieved if the farmers control the means of production.

Support for small farmers, sustainable agriculture and land reform are therefore the essential elements in realizing food security. Only sustainable agriculture has the potential to feed the country's poor in the long term. PDI concentrates in supporting the rural poor achieve food security.

Approach Used by PDI in Responding to the Food Security Problem

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING AND ANALYSIS

Realizing the gravity of the problem, PDI did not focus on a piecemeal approach. Rather, it conducted a thorough environmental scanning and analysis, examining the needs and problems of the majority of the rural poor in the Central Luzon where farmers comprise more than 70 percent of the population. The government says 60 percent of poor peasants rely on subsistence farming.

Majority of the farmers and farm workers in the Philippines do not own the land they till or do not have titles to the land they occupy. Land is the property of whoever possesses the title.

III. THE PINATUBO AETAS: A BRIEF SOCIO-CULTURAL & HISTORICAL PROFILE

Socio-Cultural Profile

Location. The Aetas of Zambales are known for being the indigenous inhabitants of the Mt Pinatubo, which is located along the boundaries of Pampanga, Tarlac and Zambales and is part of the Cabusilan Mountains in the southern part of Zambales. Its reported elevation in the pre-eruption period was 1,745 m or 5,730 ft. J. Peter Brosius (1990:37), in his research study done in this area before the eruption, said that the Mt. Pinatubo “in profile is clearly an extinct volcano”.

Prior to the 1991 eruption, the Aetas inhabit peacefully the mountains and forests of Mt. Pinatubo. There were 25 established Aeta villages in Mt. Pinatubo (LAKAS, Exodus and Eruption: 1991). These were Tarao, Makinang, Manggel, Kalawangan, Lukban, Belbel, Balinkiang, Yamot, Dangla, Kasoy, Moraza, Villar, Patal Anawo, Tipli, Ogik, Burgos, Quitomboc, Tuko, Poonbato, Maguisguis, Kayanga, Mayasan, Nacolcol, Palis, and Dolawan.

The Aetas have long considered the surroundings of the volcano as their natural dwelling-place. Their oral tradition contains tales and stories about their ancestors inhabiting this land long before the Spanish period. Looking back, the reach of their vision is the limit of their movement and activity.

Shimizu (1989) noted that the Betas previously occupied the outlying areas near the coastline and seabed's, but were forced to resettle in the mountains by the coming of the migrants.

Robert Fox's account (1952:250) explains that, based on the type of plants they used, the Betas of Piñata may have lived originally in the lowland. It was only in the latter period that they were forced to transfer to the upper regions. He reported:

I strongly suspect that lowland and coastal regions were commonly within the movements of the Ambles Neuritis during early prehistoric times, for much of this area was previously uninhabited. When other expanding people, such as the Samba, began to move into the coastal and lowland regions, the pygmies were forced into the mountains... [They] have been forced into the upland regions through population pressure.

Population. The Betas belong to the Negritude group, which is one of the six major ethnographic groupings in the Philippines¹⁹. As of 1997, there are 56,265 Betas in the Amble Province based on the statistics of the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP). This is 43.4% of the total population (129,516) of Aeta/Agta/Aeta-Abiyan/Aeta-Remontado group around the archipelago. The total Aeta population has increased more than six times while the Aetas of Zambales grew by more or less five times since the 1975 Census. The entire Aeta group comprises one per cent of the 11,778,190 indigenous people in the country.

The Aeta/Agta/Aeta-Abiyan/ Aeta-Remontado group is scattered in six regions and 16 provinces in the country. Note that while most of them are original settlers in their areas, such as the Aetas of Zambales, there are some who are recent migrants to other provinces. Among the provinces with recent migrant Aetas include Benguet, Kalinga Apayao, Mt. Province and Pangasinan. To digress a little: in looking into the welfare of indigenous people, it may be worth investigating the phenomenon of migration among the indigenous people and the cause of or reason for their migration.

Relation to Environment. Anthropologists familiar with the Aetas of Pinatubo attribute them with keen and sophisticated knowledge of their environment. Regarding this matter, Robert Fox (ibid.:187-188) is worth quoting at length:

[One] characteristic of Negrito life, a characteristic that strikingly demarcates them from the surrounding Christian lowlanders, is their inexhaustible knowledge of the plant and animal kingdoms. This lore includes not only a specific recognition of a phenomenal number of plants, birds and animals, and insects, but also includes knowledge of the habits and behavior of each. This inclusive knowledge of nature is, of course, a product of their way of life, continual hunting, mobility, dependency upon vegetation, as well as a survival of their historical association. The Negrito is an intrinsic part of his surroundings, and what is still more important, continually studies his surroundings.... Most Negrito men can with ease enumerate the specific or descriptive names of at least 450 plants, 75 birds, most of the snakes, fish insects, and animals, and of even 20 species of ants...

¹⁹ The six major ethnographic groupings are the Igorot Tribes, Caraballo/Cagayan Valley group, Negrito, Mindanao Lumad, Muslim Groups, Palawan group, and the Mangyan Tribes. Cited from TABAK, *Tribal Filipinos and Ancestral Domain: Struggle Against Development Aggression* (1989).

Moreover, the Aetas have

a thorough and sensitive ecological awareness. Many plants have no direct use or value in themselves, but are important to the Negritos because of the relationships of the plant with the animal and insect world.

Aside from their knowledge of the content of the environment and their appreciation of the ecological interconnectedness, the Aetas are also attributed with knowledge of ways to deal with the environment. Jocano (1978:5) said:

Harsh environmental conditions highlight the precarious situation of the Pinatubo Negrito. How they survive in the face of such conditions is a tribute to their ingenuity. The ingenuity is evidenced by their creative adaptation to the ecological environment.

The Aetas' ancestral land is the repository of their knowledge and world-views. Their clear awareness of the environment and their keen respect for its natural processes constitute for them a kind of intellectual identity.

Mode of Subsistence. Aetas are commonly known as hunter-gatherers and there is a tendency among lowlanders to pigeonhole them in that activity. There are evidences, however, showing that the Aetas might have engaged in swidden agriculture long before the Spanish colonial era. J. Peter Brosius (1990: 23) noted:

Based upon historical accounts, the present degree of environmental degradation, the current large number of cultigens varieties, and current population densities, the initial adoption of swidden agriculture by Aeta cannot have been a recent phenomenon.

Table 1 POPULATION OF By Region and Province NCIP	
Region/Province	Population
CAR	
Abra	122
Benguet ^m	27
Kalinga Apayao ^m	639
Mt. Province ^m	6
Region 1	
Pangasinan ^m	170
Region 2	
Cagayan	1,791
Quirino	38
Region 3	
Bataan	11,963
Tarlac	9,638
Pampanga	9,791
Zambales	56,265
Region 4	
Aurora	562
Rizal	4,945
Quezon	5,732
Region 5	
Camarines Sur	22,372
Camarines Norte	5,455
TOTAL	129,516
^m Recent IP Migrants to the Province	
ⁿ¹ NCIP borrowed data for Regions 4-13 from the Ibon Facts and Figures, updated in 1997. The data for the remaining regions were based on the Listing Operation of the former Office of the Northern Cultural Communities, updated in 1995.	
ⁿ² These data are not quite consistent with the data found in Katutubo Directory (1996). They are used, however, because of the regional and provincial breakdown.	

Accounts that single out hunting-gathering activities as the Aetas' sole means of subsistence are either biased, pre-conceived notions or they point to the far and mythical past of the Aetas' history.

According to Brosius, the first wave of expansion of the Aetas' swidden system began with the introduction of so-called Old World crops of Southeast Asia, such as taro, yams, bananas and rice. The second wave occurred with the introduction of New World (American) crops, such as sweet potato or kamote, corn and cassava.

The Aetas' swidden system and diet evolved in a way that it became highly dependent on New World crops. In Fox's research of Aetas' diet in the 1950s, it revealed that 70% of it was consisted of New World crops and 53% was even derived from a single New World crop, which is sweet potato. On the other hand, Shimizu (1989:27) observes that contemporary Aetas now have high demand for rice. Root crops, however, remain as their major source of food because of the low productivity of upland rice farming.

In addition to swidden agriculture, which until now remains as their primary means of livelihood, the Aetas also depend on terrestrial, avian and riverine resources. These complement their carbohydrate-rich diet with proteins. The Aetas also engaged in trading.

Settlement. The typical Aetas or Aeta groups may be characterized with extreme variability and mobility. This entails an equally unsteady pattern and style of settlement.

Fox (1952:186) also observed the transient settlements of the Aetas and he attributed it to at least three factors. First is their practice of kaingin since the decrease in soil fertility compels them to look for other cultivable fields. The second factor is superstition as they tend to leave their present house if there is frequent sickness or somebody died in it. The third is a psychological factor because they seem to have a "fear of modern responsibilities of citizenship, taxation and governmental control".

Brosius (1990: 30-31) reported that "Aeta settlements range in size from single isolated lean-tos, to rather large communities of five to fifteen or more thatched houses". Cluster of two or three huts is most common. In his account on relatively large settlements, he cited economic consideration and conflicts as possible reasons for dispersal. The Aeta settlement will commonly be found within the 500 to 1000 m in altitude.

Note, however, that the Aetas are only semi-nomadic people. Their mobility is limited to the village and the swidden sites. Shimizu (1989:7) explains "the Aetas change the location of their swidden fields but situate these near and parallel to the center". This center being referred is the village, which is the largest Aeta political unit as described below.

Institutional Structure. The Aetas' institutional structure has three levels: [1] the nuclear family or mitata-anak, [2] the family grouping or camp, and [3] the village (Brosius:1990; Shimizu:1989). The nuclear family shares in household and socio-economic activities, primarily in clearing and working in one or two swiddens per year. It is also common among Aeta nuclear families to live together with elderly parents.

In addition to swidden agriculture, which until now remains as their primary means of livelihood, the Aetas also depend on terrestrial, avian and riverine resources. These complement their carbohydrate-rich diet with proteins. The Aetas also engaged in trading.

Settlement. The typical Aetas or Aeta groups may be characterized with extreme variability and mobility. This entails an equally unsteady pattern and style of settlement.

Fox (1952:186) also observed the transient settlements of the Aetas and he attributed it to at least three factors. First is their practice of kaingin since the decrease in soil fertility compels them to look for other cultivable fields. The second factor is superstition as they tend to leave their present house if there is frequent sickness or somebody died in it. The third is a psychological factor because they seem to have a "fear of modern responsibilities of citizenship, taxation and governmental control".

Brosius (1990: 30-31) reported that "Ayta settlements range in size from single isolated lean-tos, to rather large communities of five to fifteen or more thatched houses". Cluster of two or three huts is most common. In his account on relatively large settlements, he cited economic consideration and conflicts as possible reasons for dispersal. The Aeta settlement will commonly be found within the 500 to 1000 m in altitude.

Note, however, that the Aetas are only semi-nomadic people. Their mobility is limited to the village and the swidden sites. Shimizu (1989:7) explains "the Aytas change the location of their swidden fields but situate these near and parallel to the center". This center being referred is the village, which is the largest Aeta political unit as described below.

Institutional Structure. The Aetas' institutional structure has three levels: [1] the nuclear family or mitata-anak, [2] the family grouping or camp, and [3] the village (Brosius: 1990; Shimizu: 1989). The nuclear family shares in household and socio-economic activities, primarily in clearing and working in one or two swiddens per year. It is also common among Aeta nuclear families to live together with elderly parents.

The family grouping unit may be composed of a single household or a group of households. The members include parents and their married children. They also communally share food and work in the fields.

The village or district level, also called sakop, is a recognized and named area. These villages, according to Brosius (1990:33), average "between 15 and 20 square kilometers

in size [but] are not discrete bounded territories”. Most members of a sakop are related by blood.

In the political dimension, which exists mainly in the village level, Brosius (1990:34) identified a kapitan as “an influential individual who functions as a mediator of both internal and external conflict or who, in the case of an open conflict, may assume a leadership based on popular support.” The elders also have a particularly special role in decision-making in the Aetas’ social life.

At any rate, the most prominent features of the Aetas’ social set-up are its family oriented ness and their strong sense of “mutual cooperation and interdependence”. Perhaps the downside of these features is the “mutual distrust” among Aetas not related by blood or marriage”.

Spirituality. The spirituality of the Aetas is best manifested in their concept of health and disease. The curing ritual is the Aetas’ most important ritual, of which the manganito séance is the most refined and well developed.

The Aetas believe in the soul, or kaelwa, as a separate entity dwelling in the body. Any disturbance in the body, such as disease and long illness, is attributed to the weakening of the soul. In the case of death, on the other hand, the Aetas believe that the soul remains. According to Shimizu (1989:47-48), the Aetas do not have a clear idea of death, but there is a belief that the dead proceeds to the “summit of Mt. Pinatubo” and live in unity with the “collective minaci (all the dead)”. The Aetas believe that the dead can bring sickness and bad luck. This is, in fact, as mentioned above, one of the reasons for their constant movement from one settlement to another.

The spiritual realm of the Aetas includes the belief in environment spirits, who co-exist with humans. There are two types of environment spirits, namely anito or the good spirit and the kamana or the bad spirit. These spirits may reside in the “forest, trunk of a huge tree, bamboo thicket, rock, stream, cave, and other places or objects.” The Aetas try to maintain harmonious relationship with the anitos. And although anitos are basically friendly, they may retaliate harshly at humans when their territories were harmed or they were offended. To overcome the anito’s displeasure, a langgad²⁰ or gift must be offered.

Because of this belief in environment spirits, the Aetas regard nature with extreme caution. This sets an implicit rule among them that natural resources should not be abused and exploited. This also affects their agricultural activities. For instance, they make offerings to the anitos before they start working on a swidden field.

Culture and Society. Shimizu (1989:1) describes the Aetas’ culture and society as “cold” (based on Levi-Strauss model, 1962). Generally, it means that the Aetas’ are not so receptive to external influences. Shimizu (ibid; 11-14) cited two reasons for such “coldness”. One is the population pressure from the lowland settlers. Two is the frequent armed attacks and kidnappings of their people for enslavement by the Sambals”. These

²⁰ *Langgad* is also offered as a sign of reconciliation with or apology to a fellow Aeta. See below.

pushed them farther up in the mountain throughout their history. Another factor that perhaps contributed to the Aetas' cold society is the strong social relation based on family grouping.

The cold society of the Aetas, however, does not entail a rare interaction with lowlanders. The Aetas' relation with Sambals could have transpired even during pre-Spanish times. The Aetas' use of the Sambal language, the lowlanders' language, according to Shimizu (ibid; 11), indicates a long relationship of the Aetas with the lowlanders, including the locals, the Spaniards and the Americans.

These outside forces generated different reactions from the Aetas. Some decided to be under the municipal jurisdiction while others chose to stay in the higher altitude of the mountains as a form of resistance.

According to Shimizu (ibid; 146-147), the Aetas are not exactly closed to, but are rather very selective of, external influences. They adapt only those that they find useful in a certain period of need. Those influences that were adapted were then synthesized within their social norms and institutions. The Aetas' social mechanisms are, however, so strong that new things are easily neutralized. This is manifested in the phenomenon of langgad, which is compensation offered to the offended party. Such compensation aims to pacify the offended party and symbolizes the desire to maintain social order. The Aetas are basically peace-loving people.

The Mt. Pinatubo Eruption

Aetas as the major casualty of the eruption. The major eruptions of the Mt. Pinatubo occurred from June 12-16, 1991. Task Force Pinatubo (cited from Bautista, "The Mount Pinatubo Disaster and the People of Central Luzon," in *Fire and Mud*, 1996:153) estimated the number of Aetas affected by the eruption at 7,800 families or 35,000 persons. Bautista and Tadem (1993:12), in the book *In the Shadow of the Lingering Mt. Pinatubo Disaster*, remarks:

However one looks at it, the Aetas were the prime victims of the volcanic eruption, if secondary effects like lahar and floods are not taken into account. Not only were they displaced much earlier but also moved from one evacuation to another, trembling in fear as they watched explosions of fire and brimstone that signified their God's displeasure over human transgressions against the mountains. An uprooting from a total way of life became their lot.

From what has been discussed earlier, the effect of the eruption on the Aetas can already be gauged. It destroyed their livelihood and it created turmoil in their psychological and socio-cultural universe.

The experiences of the Aetas during the eruption are beyond description. Their flight from the mountains in search for a safer place was indeed life threatening. The book

Exodus and Eruption documented this life-and-death adventure of the Aetas. Bautista (1996:153) remarked based on the book's account:

They changed sites with each extension of the danger zone from a 10- to 20-km radius of the volcano, from 20- to 30-km, and finally from 30 to 40 km. Some moved nine times in 1991 before they found semi-permanent relocation sites.

The transfer of the victims to various evacuation centers was the next phase of the disaster control. Both local and international agencies contributed to the establishment of the evacuation centers and for the evacuees' basic needs. Abaya, et al (1993:7) reports that there were a total of 44 evacuation sites built through the efforts of the governments and some non-government organizations (NGO) in 1991. The sites accommodated a total of 120,000 people. Out of the 44 sites, the Aetas could be found in twelve evacuation sites. Latter reports (October 1993) indicated that there were 159 evacuation centers built and operated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, excluding those under the management of non-government organization. These housed about 11,455 families or 54,880 individuals. The Aetas comprised 2.4% of the families or 1.6% of individuals affected by the eruption (Fire and Mud, 1996).

The poor living conditions in the evacuation centers were the worst problem encountered by the evacuees, most especially the Aetas (Abaya et al, 1993:7-8). This led to different types of sickness, such as measles, diarrhea and pneumonia, which were also major causes of death. Of the 538 cases of death recorded by the DOH in one month, 93% were Aetas. Further, 80% of the recorded deaths among the Aetas were children from 0-10 years old. Half of the Aeta children were also found malnourished.

The medical volunteers partly blamed the Aetas for their indifference towards, or perhaps fear, of the medication and immunization being provided for them. Thus, the problem of culture arose again.

Abaya et al noted, however, that if it is any consolation, the evacuation of the Aetas from the Mt. Pinatubo, no matter how difficult, informed the government of their needs. It exposed to the public the government's negligence of the Aetas' welfare.

The Resettlement of the Aetas. From the Aetas' several stop-over in semi-permanent evacuation sites during the eruption episodes, as first phase, to their entry to the actual evacuation centers, as second phase, the Aetas' initial and partial recovery from the disaster culminated in the establishment of resettlement projects. Botolan, a municipality of Zambales, was a major resettlement location for the Aetas.

There were two resettlement areas and one evacuation center in Botolan that accommodated the Aetas after the eruption. These are Baquilan and Loob-Bunga Resettlement Sites and Bucao Evacuation Center. The areas were subdivided into sitios, which are composed of contiguous clusters of houses. The Aetas named the sitios in the resettlement after the same name of their sitios in Mt. Pinatubo.

Table 2 Statistics on average net monthly income, Aeta (LAKAS), August 2003	
Statistic	Value
Mean	P 1, 789.1
Standard error of skewness	0.481

The overall coordinating body for the resettlements was the Task Force Mt. Pinatubo. It coordinated the projects and activities of the government agencies, non-government organizations and the residents in the resettlement sites. In both resettlement sites, various government agencies extended assistance, such as water sources, roads, health programs and school buildings. A settlement manager in each resettlement site was also assigned to

coordinate local activities of various concerns, namely social services, infrastructure, resettlement and livelihood. Moreover, tribal councils were also formed for administrative and/or political functions.

Holding culture and social upbringing as important aspects of survival, the Aetas expectedly experienced difficulty adjusting to this new “environment”. First, they now live in a different place with very different environmental features and content as compared to that in Mt. Pinatubo. Second, they are now more accessible to lowlanders and to lowland lifestyles. Similar to their previous encounters with “outsiders” or what they call mga unat, the experience in the resettlement areas generated different actions and reactions from them. Some were able to adapt to their new situation. Some simply expressed resigned satisfaction, i.e. they simply accepted the fact that the resettlement site is an unavoidable substitute for their land in Pinatubo. This is their new home and what is important now is to learn how to get their living from and out of it. But the others, after some time, followed their urge to return to their former home in the Mt. Pinatubo.

IV. Pinatubo Aetas After the Eruption

By any economic standard, the Aetas in general, live below the poverty threshold. This simply means that they still lack the capacity to meet the basic food and non-food requirement needed to live a healthy life. The National Census and Statistics Board stated in October, 2000, that a family of five members should have a monthly income of at least P4,835 satisfy their basic needs. The Aetas, however, on the average earn a meager P1, 789 monthly as found in a survey conducted by PDI in August 2003. (See table 2)

The eruption of Mount Pinatubo brings more miseries to them, especially on the first years. Before the eruption, they can still plow their farm so that they could have something to eat on harvest season. They could still gather food from their surroundings while waiting for the plants to bear fruits.

Table 3 Frequency of livelihood sources (responses), Aeta (LAKAS), August 2003	
Livelihood Source	Frequency
Crop Farming	26
Seasonal/occasional hired labor	23
Tenant farming	7
Livestock raising	3
Total	59

The catastrophe changed all these. Because their farms were buried in thick pile of lahar, they have to settle on what the government and other private donors have to give during relief operations. A culture of begging unwittingly developed through the process of giving relief goods and dole-outs. It should be noted that these happened because the Aetas cannot go back to their farms due to the threat of volcanic debris and that the Aetas, themselves, didn't want to. Given the opportunity, they would go back to the mountains and cultivate the soil so that they can provide for themselves.

After 13 years, and several relocations since the eruption, most of the Aeta groups in Zambales were now able to establish their new communities. Some were able to establish their new livelihood.

Table 4 Frequency of tenurial agreement (residence), Aeta (LAKAS), August 2003	
Tenurial Agreement	Frequency
Leased	27
Owned	2
Usufruct	1
Other	1
Total	31

In the same survey on August 2003 in Loob-Bunga Resettlement Center shows that the most common source of livelihood in their newly found community is still farming, as shown in table 2, with 26 respondents (see table 3). However, around 40% of them (23 respondents) do seasonal labor to augment their income derived from farming.

While farming is the primary source of income among the Aetas resettled in Loob-Bunga, of 31 persons ask, only 2 of them own a piece of land while 27 lease the farm they are doing from the owner (see table 4). These suggest that land security is still a problem prevailing in the Area.

This is a sad state. Considering that the Aetas are the original inhabitants in the area and yet, majority of them has no right to claim ownership of the land that their ancestors developed. Ironically, Shimizu (1989:6) discovered that as early as 1917, the American colonial government made a declaration, establishing two reservation areas for the Aetas.

Table 5 Number of daily meals, Aeta (LAKAS), August 2003		
Frequency	f	%
twice a day	5	16.1
thrice a day	26	83.9
Total	31	100
Mode	thrice a day	

Response	F	%
Enough of the kinds we want to eat	1	3.2
Enough but not always the kinds of food we want	28	90.3
Sometimes not enough to eat	2	6.5
Often not enough	0	0
Total	31	100
Mode	Enough but not always the kinds of food we want to eat	

Response	f	%
No	5	16.1
Yes	26	83.9
Total	31	100
Mode	Yes	

Response	F	%
Rarely	6	23.1
Seldom	19	73.1
Occasionally	1	3.8
Often	0	0
Frequently	0	0
Total	26	100
Mode	Seldom	

If the Aetas don't possess the right to land by virtue of the torrens system of titling the land, they also don't have the luxury to assume that they cannot be kicked-out of the land they are cultivating as in the experiences of their ancestors that keep haunting their memories.

Land security is also food security. If they don't have enough land that can produce what they need then they must produce something to be sold in order to buy the things they need. The Aetas, or any farmer, should have enough farm space in order to do these. Yet, that is the very basic problem.

Although the Aetas have limited resources now, majority of them (83.9%) still eat at least thrice a day. This is signified on table 5 of the survey conducted among the Aetas in Loob-Bunga. Yet, although they have enough food, these are the only available within their means. These means that the food they eat is not always the kind of food they want to eat.

When asked if food shortages occur in the household, 83.9% of them responded in the affirmative, while 16% said that they don't experience food shortage at the household. Moreover, 73.1% said that they seldom experience food shortage while none is in frequent short of food for the family. When there is lack of food, the most common response of the Aetas in Loob-Bunga is to seek food from outside of the community.

They usually seek other jobs outside the community. Sometimes, and they are sad about this, they ask for alms.

Other significant findings:

- About 95% of the respondents go to the local store or the market to buy some of their requirements.
- The local market is around five kilometers from the community and could be reach through public transport in 5 minutes.
- About one-third (1/3) or 29% of the respondents said that they experienced health problems as a consequence of food shortage.

The survey signifies that providing food for the need of the family is already hard enough that they cannot anymore meet the other basic necessities like clothing and education. Although the Aetas can go to the market, this does not show that it answers their basic food requirements. Food shortages still happen at the family or household level.

It should also be noted that the survey clearly shows that the food requirement of the Aetas was not able to meet by their meager resources. A significant move must be done to adjust this trend

V. Challenges and Recommendations

1. We could think global, national, regional, municipal, barangay or even at the village level but Food Security should be our primary concern.

There is a need to make a development plan to attain food security at every level.

2. There should be diversification of production because the era of monocrop planting is over. This will enable the Aetas to produce more.

Aetas are both producer and consumer not only in the sense that he has to eat but also because he has to buy. He tends to buy more than he produces.

3. Rice policy favors the consumer not the producer. Policy advocacy should be done to oppose the anti-agriculture bias of national policy makers.
4. We should persuade People's Organization to coalesce, specially the cooperatives and Non-government Organizations to operationalize the concern on food security.

Part Seven
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The advocacy for the Aetas' claim to their land and life is, in effect, an advocacy for development. The eruption of the Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 was a very loud and explosive wake-up call for both the government and the society on the neglected condition of the Aetas. But admit it or not, it is not a very happy note that this claim to development of the Aetas has barely started, if indeed it has started.

The Betas' direct and long-term exposure to the mainstream society since the Mt. Piñata eruption in 1991 has not been easy. It generated various reactions. Some accepted the sad and hard fact of being expelled from their home in the mountains. But some were persistent in rebuilding their lives back from where they started.

The recognition in 1991 of the Betas' ancestral domain claim in Mt. Piñata was a significant accomplishment. It strengthened their cultural identity and their claim for recognition within the larger Filipino society. However, the discovery of the private titles of Peat inside the ancestral domain was a major setback.

Now, the Betas are playing with two legal instruments to reclaim the Peat land. These are the ancestral domain provision in the Indigenous People's rights Act and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. Regarding the Peat land, it seems that the Aetas are compelled to make a choice between the two laws. And given the nature of the land, it appears that the Aetas must give weight to the cultural value of the land over the simple act of acquiring the land back from the non-Aeta owner. The option to use agrarian reform will only be exercised in the event that ancestral domain fails. They can also make use of agrarian reform and the friendly forces in this agency by securing agricultural lands for Aetas who decide to stay in the resettlement area.

The Aetas' claim for the Puyat land is also a claim for their welfare. Land and welfare are interconnected and interdependent, particularly among the Aetas, and this is the crux of the Aetas' engagement. As to the dilemmas, presented about ancestral domain vs. private ownership and agrarian reform vs. lahar risk, the Aetas have their own simple view. For the first, access to land is justified with the actual responsibility over the land, and not with ownership papers. For the second, "survival" has primacy over fear for lahar.

The current condition of the Aetas, particularly with respect to the Puyat land, is still characterized by the continued process of engagement. The process may be long and tiring but perhaps the unseen net effect of all there is the social and political education of the Aeta community.

Annexes

Mensahe mula sa mga Aeta ng Pinatubo, Zambales

Binasa ni Flor dela Cruz, Nagkakaisang Kababaihan sa Pinatubo, sa kumperensyang *The Aetas Land and Life: Prevailing Issues on the Tenth year of Mt. Pinatubo Eruption* 21 September 2000, Quezon City

Hindi po kaila sa ating lahat ang kalagayan ng mga tao sa resettlement area. Ang binigay ng MPC[Mt. Pinatubo Commission na lupa, humigit kumulang 150 sqm ay para lang talaga sa pagtatayuan ng bahay at hindi po sapat para pagtaniman para mapagkunan ng ikabubuhay. Kaya karamihan pong nakatira sa resettlement area ay nagsusumikap gumawa ng paraan upang matugunan ang pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan sa pamamagitan ng paghahanap ng mga lugar para pagtrabahuhan at pagtaniman.

Isa po sa napagtuunan ng pansin ng mga katutubo ay ang maluwang na lupain ng Puyat na sa kasalukuyan ay nakatiwangwang at maaaging tamnan at gawing produktibo at sa katunayan ay may mangilan-ngilan nang mga kasamahan namin na nakapagtanim na at nakapagbaba sa bayan ng iba't ibang produkto. Hindi na po namin nakikita ang lahar bilang hadlang at panganib sa pagbubungkal sa mga lupang ito upang maging produktibo. Kaugnay po nito, kami ay lumalapit sa DAR o sa mga ahensya na may kinalaman sa nasabing lupa na sana'y ipagkaloob sa mga tao upang mabungkal at pagyamanin. Kami po ay naniniwala na sa lupang ito ay magkakaroon kami ng sapat na ikabubuhay para sa aming pamilya. Hinihingi din po namin kasabay nito ang suporta serbisyo ng mga ahensyang naririto na upang matugunan ang mga pangunahing kakailanganin sa pagpapaunlad sa lupain kaya kami po na narito ngayon sampu ng aming mga kasamahan at kalahi ay umaasa sa inyong atensyon at mabilisang pagtugon.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay tayong lahat.

Mensahe mula sa mga Aeta ng Pinatubo, Zambales

Binasa sa *Agrarian Reform Multi-Stakeholders: A PO-NGO-GO Conference* 16 November 2000, Pampanga

Isyu:

1. Gusto po naming I-follow-up yung kalagayan ng Puyat Estate sa Botolan, Zambales. Ano po ang magagawa ng DAR, dahil ito po ay nakapaloob sa CADC at mayroon ng mga katutubong nagtatrabaho dito mula pa noong 1993 hanggang sa kasalukuyan (more or less 2,000 hectares).
2. Garcia estate (Hacienda) na more or less 500 hectares, na kung pwede ay maibigay din sa amin ito tulad naming mga wala pang lupa.
3. Ano po ang magiging kalagayan ng mga PO na lumalakad ngayon ng Puyat Estate sa Botolan na mayroon pong dating naka-apply dito sabi ng DAR.

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