THE ABORLAN WEST-COAST GEOTAGGED REPORT
Evidences of massive forest clearing for rubber plantation
in Bgy. Culandnamum, Municipality of Aborlan (Palawan)
The Philippines

A report by CALG (Coalition against Land Grabbing) supported by Rainforest Rescue
and Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)
in collaboration with NATRIPAL (Nagkakaisang Tribu ng Palawan)

CALG is a member of
A. INTRODUCTION

On 23 July 2015, a mission led by the Coalition Against Land Grabbing (CALG) travelled to Barangay Culandanum, located on the West Coast of Aborlan Municipality (Palawan) to carry out a preliminary field and geotagging reconnaissance on the massive forest clearing on timberland allegedly being initiated by a Filipino entrepreneur (Mr. Norman Moralde) for the purpose of developing a large area into rubber plantations. In a photographic context, geotagging is the process of associating photos with specific geographic locations using GPS coordinates.

The mission was guided into the area by the President, Vice President and by another member of the local Tagbanua indigenous association named Samahan ng mga Tribung Tagbanua sa Tina (NATRITI) which is an affiliated member of NATRIPAL (Nagkakaisang Tribu ng Palawan), the largest indigenous federation in Palawan. The members of (NATRITI) are also the local beneficiaries (claimants) of an ancestral domain embracing the barangay of Apurawan and Culandanum and significant portions of primary and secondary forest that is primarily used by them for the collection of NTFPs (mainly rattan), medicinal plants and as their customary hunting ground. The local indigenous inhabitants complain that migrant workers, mostly from Culandanum and other neighbouring barangay, have entered their ancestral domain around 2011 and, since then, massive forest clearing has taken place through the use of chainsaws, leading to the removal of natural vegetation and to the cutting of valuable timber species. Such operations, according to the residents of the local Tagbanua community, have been initiated and coordinated by Norman Moralde who is not a resident of the area.

Moralde’s direct involvement in forest clearing was confirmed to us by Mrs. Anna Dumael, a local resident of Bgy. Culandanum who receives from N. Moralde a monthly salary to guard the rubber plantation and organize the workers being employed for the clearing and planting of rubber seedlings.

At the time of our visit, we discovered that a large area of primary forest had already been developed into rubber plantations, with young rubber trees reaching an approximate height between 80cm. to 2.5 m. At the lower edge of the cleared area, a nursery of young rubber seedlings is found. However, the planted trees look frail and yellowish and this suggests that the soil may not be suited for rubber. Concerns, therefore, are being raised on whether the on-going rubber plantation is rather an alibi to ‘prepare the ground’ for future mining exploration and extraction. Although these are only assumptions, the mission did find a mining test-pith about 3 meters deep in the upper portion of the plantation area. Our local Tagbanua guides told us that the test-pith has been there since many years but no mining extraction has ever taken place in the area.

The area cleared for rubber and visited during our mission was identified on the satellite Google map (see pictures below). However, in addition to this large clearing, the CALG mission discovered at least two other massive clearings of the same size, which – we were told – are a recent expansion of the existing rubber plantation and were opened between March and April 2015. We also noticed other neighbouring areas where forest was set to fire without being cleared and one of such areas lies within the boundary of Barangay Berong (Sitio Kalyagen), in the neighbouring municipality of Quezon. The mission members were told that all such new clearings are part and parcel of the same rubber project being implemented by N. Moralde. The direct responsibility of N. Moralde in the opening of these forest areas was confirmed by the Barangay Kapitan of Culandanum (Armelio Lagud) who told us that he had already warned Norman Moralde to refrain from
additional forest clearings, and he also extended the same warning to the workers being employed by him. The Baragay Kapitan, also told us that he has no contact address for Mr. Moralde and it is very difficult to contact him since he only visits the area sporadically (every 4/5 months). We were also told by both Mrs. Dumael and the Barangay Capitan that foresters of Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) are aware of the illegal activities being carried our by N. Moralde and, in fact, have made attempts (although unsuccessful) to contact him and ask him to report to DENR Office.

Outside the rubber plantations, and as we moved towards the lower part of the said forest, we noticed other large forest clearings along the edge of the Piabuyukan river. Our Tagbanua guides told us that these areas have been illegally opened by migrants without the authorization of the local CADT (Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title) claimants. In such areas, the felled logged were cut into smaller logs for charcoal (uling) making. We were unable to identify the persons responsible for such new clearings, but the local barangay kapitan assured us that he would investigate the matter further in the attempt of identifying the culprit(s).

Our GPS data overlaid on Google Earth map has clearly shown that the area of on-going rubber expansion was covered by good standing forest until very recently. Thus, N. Moralde and his workers must be held responsible for the on going plundering of natural forest. It must be pointed out that Google Earth Satellite Maps available on the net are not updated (unless one registers for special access), hence some of the new forest clearings geo-tagged by us do not show yet on public Google Earth maps. Rather these areas, on Google Earth, appear to be still covered by natural vegetation. This further indicates that the clearings documented by the CALG mission are relatively recent.

The expansion of rubber plantations by Mr. Moralde is taking place without the Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) of the local indigenous communities, thus in violation of NCIP Administrative Order no.3 of series of 2012 and in contradictions with other key articles stated in the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (R.A. 8371) such as the: 1) Rights of Ownership (Chapter III, Sec. 7, item a); 2) Rights to Religious, Cultural Sites and Ceremonies (Chapter VI, Section 33); 3) Right to Develop Lands and Natural Resources. (Chapter III, Sec. 7, item b); 4) the Rights to Ancestral Lands (Chapter III, Sec. 8); 5) the Right to Determine and Decide Priorities for Development (Chap. IV, Sec. 17), etc;

As of now, the affected Tagbanua communities are taking actions to protect their ancestral domain against Mr Moralde’s agribusiness expansion. On 12 September 2015, the indigenous Tagbanua representatives of Culandanum, council of elders and NATRITI wrote and signed a resolution and a certification against rubber development on their ancestral land (see Annex 1 and Annex 1a).

Overall our findings indicate that forest clearing, as well as the burning of forest at the boundaries of Bgy. Culandanom and Bgy.Berong, has bluntly violated DENR EO 23. Criminal charges should then be filed against N. Moralde also for gross violation of section 68 and section 69 of Presidential Decree (PD) 705.

This draft report represents only a brief synthesis of the CALG mission’s key findings and has been prepared for the purpose of requesting CENRO to take immediate actions and carry out ocular inspections in the targeted impacted locations.
The red spots indicate the area targeted by the CALG mission in Bgy. Culangdanum, Aborlan West-Coast.

The CALG mission itinerary from main road to the upland forest clearing.
A close-up of the cleared area and the mission’s itinerary during ocular inspection

From a first hand evaluation it would appear that at least two other areas of an equivalent size have been cleared in 2015 on both the west and eastern fringes of the rubber plantation. However, these new clearings do not show yet on the available and public version of Google Earth Satellite map.
Clearings for rubber plantation first opened in 2011 (see images below).
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REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
Lalawigan ng Palawan
Bayan ng Sucupi

TANOG ABAHAN NG KONEHO NG MGA MATATANDA
SA BARANGAY CULANDANUM.

RESOLUTION BILANG: OF 2015

ISANG RESOLUSYON PARA SA PAGTIRIBAHAN NG KINATAWAAN
NG MGA TAGBANUA NG Brgy. Culandanum, Aborlan,
Palawan sa ika-\text{numero} na Kaso Laban kay

KUNGSHAN, ang Panayoran Kultural ng mga Tagbanua ng
Brgy. Culandanum, ay mag-aangkin, gumagsasay ni kinahanglan
sa kanilang lupaing Ninuno sa Brgy. Culandanum,
Aborlan, Palawan.

KUNGSHAN, ang National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
(NCIP), ay kinikilala ang Native title ng mga Tagbanua,
Sa kung ano man ay maimulat na ng oming aplikasyon para sa Certificate of Ancestral Domain Tit

Na sang ayon sa Batas Republika 8371 o Indigenous
Peoples Right Act (IPRA).

KUNGSHAN, para mai tagtanggol ang aming kapatid sa oming
Lupaing Ninuno pinagkaisahan ng Panayoran Kultural ng mga
Hain sa kaso sa NCIP RHO Regional Office No. IV, Laban
Kay G.

Para bawaan ang maulang lupa at pigilan ang anong pagtayo ng iskultura o anumang aktibidad na sa mababang lugar at
DAHIL DITO, dahil sa mga nai-makita ni Antelina Tuyao, "at Sinundan ni Ronald Ongot," ipinakasahan na ang bahala sa kabataan sa kasong sina Panglima Amlong Pandas, NATRIT, Vice President Manila Lagan, Joelino Requio, NATRIT: President, Epren Ongot

Bilang Pagkakataon sa Resolusyon ito Narito ang among mga Pangulo at Sanga ngayong ika-12 ng Septiembre 2015

**Pangalan:**
1. Gemma Lyn O. Lagan
2. Ofelina F. Lesisan
3. Cristine R. Fabian
4. Robena P. Fabian
5. Marilu P. Talia
6. SCHEE PACH
7. Gemma C. Calapog
8. Benigno C. Guinto
9. Junalyse Lecitus
10. MCL ONY
11. REY OYGR
12. Milag K. Alunan
13. fpd
14. Melilio B. Fabian Sr.
15. Melilio P. Fabian Jr.
16. Epren T. Ongot
17. Efren C. Cabahug
18. Cesar A. Pajos
19. Upherson Bael
20. Emerio Pajos
21. Ramayo P. Lagan
22. Belina Lagan

**LAGDA:**
1. REY
2. O. LEOIAN
3. EDO
4. RAPU
5. HER
6. OYGR
7. ENE
8. Benigno
9. Junalyse
10. ONY
11. REY
12. Milag
13. fpd
14. Melilio Sr.
15. Melilio Jr.
16. Epren
17. Efren C.
18. Cesar A.
19. Upherson
20. Emerio
21. Ramayo P.
22. Belina L.
20. ANJT LYN LAGAN
21. JHONNY L. PADAS
22. JOEL L. PADAS
23. WELLY L. PADAS
24. LILIT L. ONGOT
25. ROY P. ONDO
26. LILIT L. ONGOT
27. BONL L. LISIO
28. BONI T. LISIO
29. MEENO P. LISIO
30. ANNABLE ONGOT
31. MALITNA LISIO
32. VICTOR GUINOT
33. REYNA T. GUINOT
34. BILLA T. GUINOT
35. ANGEL O. LISIO
36. CINCO T. ONGOT JR.
37. EMILYN L. ONGOT
38. GONOLI PIGAS
39. JOYCELYN LISIO
40. VENICE LISIO
41. LIO LISIO
42. GONOLIN LISIO
43. SITING LISIO
44. APIN LISIO
45. CECILIA LISIO
46. ELIN LAGAN
47. ROSANNA LAGAN
48. LUISE LISIO
49. LONNA LISIO
50. ARTURO LISIO
51. HENRY LISIO
52. FELICIA LISIO
53. VICTOR LISIO
54. VICTOR LISIO
55. CARL LISIO
56. CRISTINA LISIO
57. JUAN LISIO
REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS

Kaluwigan ng Palawan
Benjain ng Aberlan

Tanggapain ng kensko ng mga Masa'tando sa Barangay Culandanan

PAGPAPATUNAY

SAMA KINAVUKULAN:

Kaming kensko ng mga macabanal (Council of Elders) ng

oring Katubong Panayagang Tumanyang Barangay Culandanan, Aborlan, Palawan ay nagkaisa no siya, Pangluma, Aming Paredes, NARSAT, Vice President, Armado Lagon, Joseño Pigol, NARSAT President,

Ireno Oryt, ang alam na kinatawan sa kasing oming isasanampub

uban kay,

sa aming karapitan iba't-ibong katawbo o di pagkakabang malaya

na uno at mahihang na Kapahintulutan nula sa aming katawbo

sa kasilangan malawak na potaminan ng RUBBER.

Nilagdaan at pinagkosunduan ngayon ito 12 ng September, 2015


PANBULAN

1. Arblino Tausay, Chairman
2. R. Teodoro Yap, Secretary
3. R. Arceo, Vice Chairman
4. Marcelino Kimul, Treasurer
5. Raoucia Reyes, Librarian
6. Libon R. Omagot, Safeguard
7. GETHER B.O.D. Lecian
8. Rody P. Lagon, B.O.D.
9. Donie P. Lecian, B.O.D.
10. Roman P. Tausay, B.O.D.
Efrén I. Ongot 
Pri8
Eliseo L. Castella
Dufadong