

**A Case Study on Alliance-Building
for Philippine Agrarian Reform**

**The People's
Campaign
FOR AGRARIAN
REFORM NETWORK
(AR NOW!)**

A Case Exemplar prepared by
Mr. Menardo Mendoza and Ms. Maricel S. Almojuela
on behalf of the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform
and Rural Development (ANGOC)
for the International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB)

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Table of Contents

| Section | Page No. |
|---|----------|
| Executive Summary | |
| I. Context | |
| A. Methodology | |
| B. Scope and Limitations | |
| C. Organization of the Study | |
| II. Agrarian Reform Context | |
| A. Overview of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines | |
| B. Coalition Building efforts before AR NOW! | |
| III. Evolution and the process of formation | |
| A. Birth of AR NOW! | |
| B. Ties that Bind | |
| C. Organizational Structures and Decision-making | |
| IV. Lessons for Capacity Building | |
| A. Strategies Applicable to Future Actions | |
| B. Results | |
| 1. Local to National Campaigns | |
| a. CARRUF case | |
| b. MAPALAD case | |
| 2. National Campaigns with broader Tactical Alliances | |
| C. Strengths and Weaknesses | |
| V. CONCLUSION: Facing New Challenges | |
| List of AR NOW! members and their Abbreviations | |
| List of Government Agencies | |
| Schedule of Interviews | |

AGRARIAN REFORM NOW!

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I. CONTEXT

“United we stand, divided we fall.”

For people who have neither influence nor power, the only way to be heard is to close ranks with allies and speak with one voice. Hence, the existence of alliances, networks and coalitions in development work.

Lessons from the experiences of strong formations working together for a common vision should be documented for the benefit of other similar groups. Studying what makes these coalitions, alliances and networks of civil society organizations work and what enables their members to scale up their impact or influence is one of the major initiatives of the International Forum on Capacity Building (IFCB). This global forum aims to build a multi-stakeholder venue in which Southern NGOs engage Northern NGOs and donors in debate to shape conceptual approaches, policies and practices for future capacity building interventions.

IFCB intends to document particularly successful examples, or exemplars, of development networks to compare experiences across countries and regions for future capacity building and replication of successes. Innovative exemplars were to be documented from Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific on five capacity-building themes. For 1999, "Building Alliances, Coalitions, Networks, North-South Partnerships, Inter-sectoral Partnership" was the theme for the case exemplars.

The case for the Asia-Pacific region features *The People's Campaign for Agrarian Reform Network (AR NOW!)* of the Philippines, a group of 14 NGOs and peasant organizations working to hasten and ensure the implementation of the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), especially at the community

level. Though only three years old, the network has assisted many local communities in their struggle for land, introducing them to national level campaigns on issues affecting agrarian reform. Much can be learned from the experience and campaign methods of this coalition, which sustains itself by having a strong commitment to the plight of landless and marginalized farmers and establishing good working relations among institutions and individuals involved.

A. METHODOLOGY

Data for this case study was obtained from primary and secondary sources. Internal primary sources from AR NOW! members were Mr. Rainier Almazan, Executive Director of the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka or PAKISAMA (National Peasant Federation), Mr. Jose Noel Olano, Executive Director of the Philippine Development Assistance Programme (PDAP) and former Undersecretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), and Ka Vicente Fabe, National Council Chairperson of PAKISAMA. External primary sources interviewed were former DAR Secretary Ernesto Garilao and Mr. Gerry Bulatao, a long-time AR advocate and convenor of various coalitions like the Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (PARRDS) who also served as DAR Assistant Secretary and Undersecretary under two different administrations.

Secondary information was collected from the documentation of AR NOW! meetings; AR NOW! reports and media releases; i.e., *“Land to the Tiller Struggle Continues”*, a case study by Corazon Juliano-Soliman and Felipe Ramiro on the experiences of the Congress for People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR); *“Breakthrough”* by Joel Rocamora, IPD, 1997; ICSI Monograph series on Agrarian Reform, Ciely Goño, 1995; *“A Brief Overview of Agrarian Reform Implementation in the Philippines: Emerging Challenges and Directions and*

Challenges (2000-2004)”, Antonio B. Quizon, February 2000; MAPALAD monitors; AR NOW! project reports from 1998 to 1999; “*Situationer on the Peasant Movement in the Philippines 1992 to 1998*”, Sixdon Macasaet, et.al., for PHILINK and Stichting Agri-Terra, January 1999, among others. Validation was done through a Focused Group Discussion with members of the AR NOW! Executive Committee at the ANGOC Regional Office and at the AR NOW! office.

B. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The case study focuses on the growth and change of AR NOW! as an advocacy network for Philippine agrarian reform. The network’s evolution contributes many valuable lessons to the capacity building of similar coalitions of Southern NGOs. The study is the first attempt to comprehensively look at the strategies and operations of AR NOW! after three years of its existence.

The study comes mostly from the introspection of key Manila-based AR NOW! member institutions on how the coalition operated to achieve its goals over the past three years. Getting the opinion and comments of the Mindanao members should be pursued to greatly improve the study. The opinion of influential figures in agrarian reform was also solicited although these are not dominant in the paper. Also, the study may have missed out certain details about structure, decision-making and other strategies that were equally effective in fulfilling certain campaign objectives since these are still evolving. AR NOW! derives its strategies from experience, applying and developing them on a case to case basis.

The study deals especially with the formative years of the coalition, specifically from 1997 to 1999, spanning the duration of the MAPALAD campaign and other activities before and after the said struggle. As the network’s most celebrated case, the MAPALAD campaign was used as case in point to illustrate how AR NOW! approached a farmers’ struggle to regain their right over land as accorded by law.

However, the study would like to analyze AR NOW!’s operations as a coalition more than simply evaluating the effectiveness of its actual campaign methods. Some details, particularly on the issue campaigns, were not very specific and focused mainly on the lessons derived from these activities. This is an attempt to situate AR NOW! in a broader context of the social movement and how it was able to project itself as one of the leading AR coalitions in the country today.

The terms “network” and “coalition” in the Philippines are often used interchangeably and this is reflected in the study. Although AR NOW! characterizes a coalition more than a network according to IFCB’s framework, it carries the word “Network” in its name. It is a tightly organized group whose members are of diverse background yet complementing one another in accomplishing goals beyond the capacities of each one.

C. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

In late 1997, a group of farmers from Sumilao, Bukidnon in southern Philippines went on a hunger strike that turned national as well as international attention to the problem of land tenure in the Philippines. The strike put agrarian reform back to the fore after being kept in the backburner for many years. The issue occupied the media for over a month, especially after then President Fidel Ramos attempted to come up with a solution that would persuade the determined strikers to end their fast.

The success of the campaign caught the imagination of advocates, politicians and the general public. Apart from forcing government to act quickly, the campaign put agrarian reform and the plight of small farmers back in the limelight. Many factors contributed to the success of the campaign— the sheer determination of the hunger strikers, the wide support it received from the public, the powerful message of its peaceful strategy, among others. Behind all these, however, was the success of a new coalition at assisting the farmers in pursuing the campaign. How a newly formed coalition was able to pull off one of the highly successful mass actions in Philippine

history and move on to new campaigns is the subject of this paper.

The first part of the case study gives an overview of agrarian reform in the Philippines at the time of AR NOW!'s formation and its predecessors in agrarian reform coalition building. The second part describes the coalition's evolution, its goals, structure and decision-making, and operations. The last part provides an insight on some of the coalition's reflections on the strategies it used in its local and national campaigns, and their strengths and limitations. Finally, possible areas of intervention for capacity building were cited to enhance the coalition's ability to fulfill its objectives of raising local issues to national attention and protect private agricultural lands and the rights of landless farmers to own land promised to them under the agrarian reform program.

II. AGRARIAN REFORM CONTEXT

A. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PHILIPPINE AGRARIAN REFORM SITUATION

The Philippines has been the setting of over 400 uprisings, many of them land-related and peasant-led, emphasizing the intensity of agrarian conflict in the country. This stems from a highly skewed pattern of land ownership in both food and cash crop farming sectors inherited from hundred of years of colonial rule. Poverty remains highest in rural areas, with more than half of all rural households being absolutely landless.

The Philippines has a total land area of approximately 30 million hectares but only 8.1 million have been targeted for redistribution. Agriculture is the country's main occupation, employing 46% of the country's total labor force and contributing 22% to the gross domestic product (GDP). According to the World Bank in 1996, some 68% of the rural population live in poverty while only 34% of the urban population are poor. Total arable land is only a little over 27% of the country's entire land area.

The government is currently implementing the CARP (R.A. 6657) which the coalition called Congress for People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) pressured Congress and then President Corazon Aquino to enact in 1988. CPAR was an example of a coalition of NGO, PO and individual agrarian reform advocates that worked successfully to realize its goal based on social justice and equity.

The CARP is based on the "Land-to-the-tiller" principle and targets the transfer of 8.1 million hectares of arable land to landless farmers and farmworkers. However, from 1988 to this year, the program's implementation has met varied reactions and mixed successes. As of December 1999, or after 12 years of implementation, CARP has transferred only 63%, or about 5.06 million hectares, to its target beneficiaries. At present, its highest priority and a cause of pressure is how to complete the redistribution of 3.04 million hectares of land while strengthening the mechanisms to ensure the productivity of all distributed lands. The program has only four years, or up to July 2004, to complete its targets yet it still faces heavy obstacles.

B. COALITION BUILDING EFFORTS BEFORE AR NOW!

Before AR NOW! significant success was already achieved from earlier efforts at peasant coalition work which brought forth CPAR. It was the broadest coalition of peasant groups in Philippine history and became a model as well as an inspiration for future coalition work and networking efforts. But CPAR's demise in 1993 created a vacuum in broad-based agrarian reform advocacy at the national level. Lastly, the sluggish pace of the government's land reform program despite two sympathetic presidents and a host of allies holding key positions in government clearly signaled the continuing need to work harder for agrarian reform outside the bureaucracy.

After President Aquino assumed power in 1986, expectations were high that a genuine land reform program could finally be implemented. With a popular and democratically elected

president in power, the peasant movement eagerly awaited the government's actions in addressing the issue of agrarian reform that has spawned discontent like a social volcano for decades. One of the first bills to be filed in the then newly opened Philippine Congress in 1987 was on agrarian reform. But there were apprehensions on what the outcome of the bill would be for Congress was still controlled by the traditional elite who were mainly large landholders.

A series of consultations among agrarian reform advocates led to the formation of the Congress for People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) in May 1987, which was later formalized into a coalition carrying the same name. The group was then composed of farmers' organizations and NGOs from a very wide political spectrum - national democrats, democratic left, the center, and others with no known political leanings. Initially, CPAR worked for a pro-farmer agrarian reform law. But in spite of pressures exerted by sympathetic officials from both the executive and legislative branches of government, landlord interest proved to be formidable and resilient. The result was a watered-down version of an agrarian reform law called the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) - a law that was a victim of compromises.

Disappointed with the outcome, CPAR then came up with the People's Agrarian Reform Code, or PARCODE, that aimed to gather a million signatures in order to repeal CARL and adopt its code as a new law. But the PARCODE campaign was hindered by the limited logistics in gathering the required number of signatures, the unfamiliarity with the people's legislative mechanism and the division within CPAR about what approach to take. Internal conflicts on how best to proceed with a common agrarian reform advocacy then tested CPAR. Some groups rejected CARL while others decided they would try to work within the limits of the law. The presidential elections in 1992, and the question of who among the presidential candidates will the coalition support, deepened the division among CPAR members.

Although the coalition could still work in spite of the political dynamics within, the peasant groups and blocs in CPAR decided amicably to end the coalition. This was after new issues and various approaches emerged with the advent of the CARL and with the assumption into power of President Ramos. It was a mutual decision among the four major groups within CPAR to respect their inherent differences in perspective and strategy in addressing the problems of agrarian reform.

Yet, the legacies of CPAR were far-reaching. A long-term consequence of the CPAR project was, among other things, the primacy of reaching out to varying forces in working for common issues, i.e. setting aside ideological differences for the sake of sectoral interests. Another was the importance of supporting local issues with advocacy at the national level especially if mechanisms to resolve the issue at the local level had reached an impasse. Also, CPAR articulated the need for consultative mechanisms between peasants and government, but not excluding landowners. Whatever bitterness there was that divided the coalition, CPAR had made its mark in history such that up to this day, many agrarian reform advocates still wish for a repeat of such a unity.

Realistically though, the time was not yet ripe for such a broad unity. The issues and debates that led to the folding up of CPAR remained fresh in the memory of many stakeholders in the peasant movement. Differences in approach particularly in engaging government with the new law hindered the formation of another agrarian reform advocacy body that would cut across ideological divides. Although engaged in rich and dynamic discussion, the long processing of key decision points to get a consensus among CPAR's members had become exhausting.

But there remained a need to form an agrarian reform advocacy group. Midway through the term of the Ramos administration, many of AR NOW!'s eventual members realized that the leadership of the agrarian reform department was indeed sincere in its desire to implement an

acceptable agrarian reform program. But they also believed that agrarian reform advocacy from outside the government can complement DAR's efforts and in the process counterbalance the pro-landlord lobby. The more ideologically influenced groups within the peasant movement were skeptical about the real intentions of the Ramos administration and were therefore ambivalent on how to engage the government. Groups under AR NOW!, on the other hand, thought it uncomfortable to work with those who openly supported the Ramos administration on unclear and unacceptable principles of engagement.

Despite the inability of the peasant movement to come up with a broad alliance similar to CPAR's diversity, there was an unequivocal feeling of discontent with the government's land reform program, and land distribution in particular. Many were dismayed with the slow pace of distribution of private land to farmer-beneficiaries. When CARL was passed in 1988, the original target of 10.4 million hectares of farmlands for distribution under the program was cut down to 8.17 million hectares. Around 3.8 million hectares fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) while DAR covered 4.3 million hectares.

In June 1997, after almost ten years of CARP implementation, DAR and DENR reported a joint accomplishment of only 54% of the target. Some 3.7 million hectares were left undistributed with just a year to go before CARP was to expire in 1998. Only two percent of land in the 25 to 50 hectares category of private agricultural land under the DAR was placed under compulsory acquisition (CA). And only 2.78% of land between 5 to 25 hectares were actually distributed.

Worsening the problem is the depleted Agrarian Reform Fund (ARF), which had dropped to 1.7 billion pesos from 50 billion. The DAR projected that it would need an estimated 101.1 billion pesos for CARP to continue for another six years. A bill to augment this depleted fund was presented for deliberation in no less than a landlord-dominated Congress.

For the future members of AR NOW!, it became imperative to lobby for the extension of the CARP beyond 1998 by asking Congress to augment the ARF and revive the dormant issues in agrarian reform by resolving contentious peasant cases and raising local issues to the national level when appropriate.

III. EVOLUTION AND THE PROCESS OF FORMATION

The impetus for AR NOW's formation was a firm belief that the Agrarian Reform program in the Philippines should continue beyond its 1998 deadline. This was amidst formidable obstacles from government bureaucracy, a powerful landlord bloc in all government branches and a strong landowner resistance against CARP coverage. Farmers continued to fall prey to legal and physical harassment even with the force of law behind them.

A. BIRTH OF AR NOW!

A group of like-minded agrarian reform advocates who had established close ties in their long commitment to social development met sometime in January 1997. They discussed the possibility of establishing a campaign network to become a watchdog of national and local issues impeding agrarian reform implementation. They were unanimous in their observation that a vacuum existed in agrarian reform advocacy and hoped that a new group could fill this void. The group then identified lobbying for an increase in the budget for the Agrarian Reform Fund as its first major campaign agenda.

The primary goals the group set for AR NOW! were: 1) to drum up public support for faster distribution of private agricultural land and the eventual completion of the AR program; 2) to ensure Congress increases and sustains financial support to agrarian reform; 3) to document and popularize the impact of agrarian reform; and 4) to conduct policy research and advocacy in support of the agrarian reform campaign. The new coalition also strives to achieve peasant

empowerment, agrarian and aquatic reform and rural development, sustainable agriculture/ fisheries and food security, gender sensitivity and equality of men and women, and appropriate and adequate support services.

At the time of AR NOW's birth, other campaign configurations of NGO-PO groups have been set up. An attempt in 1993 to form a new and respectably broad coalition was the PhilCARRD (Philippine Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development), which was however unsuccessful and eventually became the coalition PARRDS (Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development). In early 1995, a broad section of the organized peasantry got together to form the issue-based coalition called Movement to Oppose and Resist Exemptions to Agrarian Reform (MORE-AR). MORE-AR included FFF, DKMP, KASAMA-FPO, PAKISAMA and other groups to lobby against the exclusion of commercial farms, fish ponds and prawn farms from CARP coverage.

PARRDS attempted to revive agrarian reform campaign advocacy at policy and field levels. PAKISAMA and PhilDHARRA originally participated in some activities of the PARRDS coalition and the MORE-AR coalition. With debates still fresh from the fold-up of CPAR, PAKISAMA decided to stop participating in MORE-AR to avoid conflicts affecting the advocacy of AR issues. Strategic debates on how to look at and approach an issue, they felt, consumed precious time before arriving at critical decisions. PhilDHARRA likewise followed suit saying that they will go by the federation's decisions since joining a coalition would be fruitless without the clear involvement of the peasants' group they supported at the field level. PARRDS, to this day, is likewise an active coalition in peasant advocacy, though it uses a different approach in working for its goals and resolving its issues.

Hence, some AR NOW! members only committed to issue-based collaboration with other groups like the Kilusan para sa Kasarinlan sa Pagkain (KSP) (Movement to advance Food Security), World Food Day initiatives and even

the Provincial Consultations on ARRD for field level collaborations with government.

B. TIES THAT BIND

The initial convenors of AR NOW! were the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (National Movement of Peasant Organizations or PAKISAMA), People's Alternative Study Center for Research and Education in Social Development (PASCRES), Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (CARRD), the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHARRA), Philippine Development Assistance Programme (PDAP), Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN), and Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). Later on, the following organizations joined AR NOW!: Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (ASDHARRA), Upland NGO Assistance Council (UNAC) and Women's Action Network for Development (WAND). Mindanao-based members include Balay Mindanao Foundation, Inc. (BMFI) and the Agri-Aqua Development Coalition (AADC). PAKISAMA and AADC are both peasant coalitions.

Many of the AR NOW! members have been involved in the advocacy and implementation of agrarian reform and rural development since the regime of the late Ferdinand Marcos and were active in the post-EDSA agrarian reform campaign on NCARRD and CPAR. Most groups were organized in the mid '80s to early '90s. Except for two groups in Mindanao, all members are based in Manila including some operating as regional offices. Among its members are two peasant federations and six national coalition/network type of organizations with membership spread out in almost all Philippine provinces. In terms of personnel, most of the organizations have staff numbering from 10 to 20 each. Except for PAKISAMA and AADC, all the members are NGOs providing services to Filipino peasants --- farmers, fisherfolk, rural women, youth and the indigenous peoples.

AR NOW! brought together institutions that offer diverse skills and expertise useful to an advocacy campaign, namely community organizing, community enterprise development, sustainable agriculture, appropriate technology, documentation and research, networking, legal assistance, policy advocacy, gender and development, participation in local governance, training, and fund raising, among others. Separately, these organizations have different approaches to promote social equity in general with some putting focus on agrarian reform as a means to this noble end. Nevertheless, they all share a similar mandate to work for social equity mechanisms such as agrarian reform.

As individuals, the people who make AR NOW! have been involved in land reform and peasant issues for more than a decade. All of them share an equal desire to better the lives of poor Filipino farmers by realizing agrarian reform. There was also a special chemistry among AR NOW! individuals. Some have been good friends and allies in social development work for a long time. They were involved in the same campaigns, joined the same rallies, and worked on common programs or projects. Some were even classmates or members of the same school organizations or political party later on. Many of them know each other's families, with some acting as godparents to each other's children. This "web of ties" cultivated over the years produced the familiarity, trust and confidence among AR NOW! members that later proved beneficial to the network's survival.

New individual members were later on pooled into the AR NOW! circle as the advocacy work progressed. Though coming from groups of different perspectives or focus of work, these individuals share the commitment to landless farmers and their quest for their own piece of land. Diversity of opinion and input was thus common in discussions, which somehow even strengthened the foundation of campaigns and forms of action. Holding the group together despite the individual members' differences was a common goal, and the awareness of this goal strengthened working ties and friendship gained from their campaigns with farmers groups.

The desire to form a national advocacy group was a need felt among the convenors. Yet, each of them had various reasons for forming the group. Many envisioned the group to likewise serve as a watchdog of government's land reform policies. Some saw the group as a means of complementing or advancing issues from their respective areas. AR NOW! also presented itself as another venue by which to resolve local issues, especially if differing opinions have reached a standoff. The organization also felt that the work of NGOs on local issues would be less effective if there was no group that could bring the issues to the national level. On the other hand, all these would work to AR NOW!'s advantage since it will not run out of issues to help resolve.

Thus, the collusion of interests among the initial convenors of AR NOW! made its formation easier.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND DECISION-MAKING

Initially, the organization had no formal structures and rules, only a common vision to hasten the implementation of agrarian reform. It had no elected officers nor was it registered as a separate organization with accreditation agencies. PAKISAMA acted as the campaign secretariat then, being the only peasant federation in the initial list of members and thus should be at the forefront of campaign activities. Later on, AR NOW! assumed a fixed but flexible campaign structure with an Executive Committee composed of key leaders of the member groups, a lean AR NOW! secretariat, and task clusters to divide the work.

Campaign work for field cases were taken on mostly by the institution supporting the problematic area, with help from the AR NOW! Secretariat and the group's clusters. The coalition decided to set-up these ad hoc clusters to support campaign activities for local cases. The first clusters were formed during the CARRUF campaign in April 1997 and became permanent after the MAPALAD campaign in October 1997. Today, these clusters are as follows:

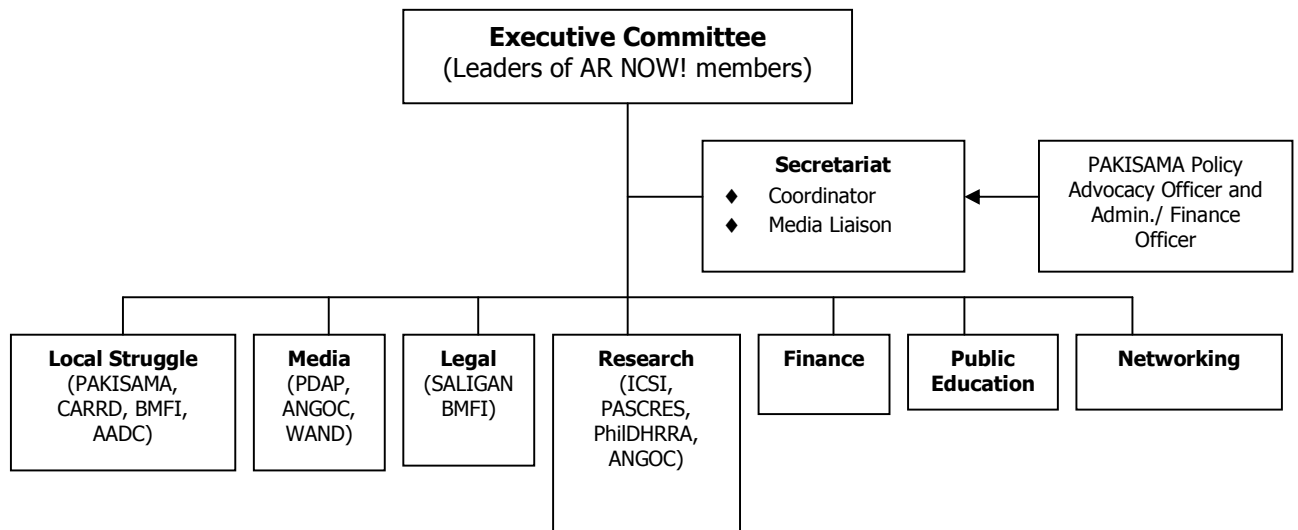
- 1) Local Struggle – assists problematic local areas identified by AR NOW! as strategic for launching agrarian reform campaigns at the local or national level
- 2) Media – in charge of media liaison, especially in the agrarian reform and agriculture beats; writing press releases and statements on key issues of campaigns; organizing press conferences and media briefings
- 3) Research – conducts studies that provides in-depth analysis of current issues affecting the peasant sector and agrarian reform advocacy
- 4) Legal – lawyers from alternative legal groups provide technical analysis and legal support, and represent farmers groups in court when necessary
- 5) Public Education – produces information materials for public circulation and organizes activities that

would popularize issues being advocated

- 6) Networking – engages other sectors (such as youth, church, urban poor, labor, etc.) and forges tactical alliances with other advocacy formations to push for specific issues with concerned agencies
- 7) Finance – raises funds through project proposals to external funders and creates public philanthropy programs

Each AR NOW! member is part of one to three clusters according to the member's expertise as well as the skills of their individual representatives to the network. In 1999, the Networking cluster was dissolved since the function was integral to all other clusters as they liaise with various groups and sectors they get involved with.

The following illustrates the structure of AR NOW! (1998 to 1999):



Generally, the AR NOW! members shift around clusters depending on their skills and preference. As for external projection during campaigns, NGOs almost always took a low-key stance in favor of PAKISAMA leaders. There was a conscious effort to let the national officers of PAKISAMA to take centerstage and be recognized, for they are after all the peasant leaders.

In 1998, AR NOW! formed a separate secretariat with the approval of the Bantay-Saka proposal but still used the PAKISAMA office since it was the project's legal holder. The secretariat coordinated the implementation of plans and provided technical assistance to committees or local campaign focal points. It was composed of three people at most, namely

the AR NOW! Coordinator, the Media Liaison officer and an Administration/Finance person detailed from the PAKISAMA staff. The AR NOW! Coordinator was concurrently the Policy and Advocacy Officer of PAKISAMA to closely link the problematic field areas under PAKISAMA with AR NOW! campaign activities. Later on, a new person was hired as AR NOW! coordinator who continued to work closely with the PAKISAMA advocacy officer. The AR NOW! Media Officer had years of experience as liaison between NGOs and media and had worked for both peasant and urban poor groups. Organizing mobilizations was added to her functions given her experience in the task. In 2000, a different Information Officer was hired to facilitate faster circulation of information within the coalition and other groups.

For the group's finances, AR NOW! members mainly pooled organizational contributions for the coalition. According to the Executive Committee, 80% of AR NOW!'s funds came from institutional commitments while 20% were directly generated from external sources. These contributions, however, were also project funds accessed from external donors. Public donations in cash and kind were likewise solicited especially during public education campaigns in schools and churches for the communities in conflict.

From the start, National Campaigns have been rooted in local issues to stress that AR NOW! has a mass base and the issues raised are legitimate and have adverse effects to the farmers involved. Although the Executive Committee provides the directions and strategies, the campaign structure was democratic and peasant-led, primarily by PAKISAMA. Decisions have always been based on consensus among AR NOW! members.

As to other groups' involvement in AR NOW! activities, there was a general openness to forge tactical alliances and working relations with other AR advocacy groups. However, experience on such alliances proved that strategic debates made decision-making longer.

Hence, this option is adopted only when the issue is of greater national significance, and the approach to address the issue is similar across groups. Nevertheless, no policy bound one institution exclusively to AR NOW! Each institution remained autonomous and could join other advocacy campaigns and formations.

IV. LESSONS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

A. STRATEGIES APPLICABLE TO FUTURE ACTIONS

After three years, the coalition has adopted various strategies and activities on how to forward its objectives.

1. **Locally-initiated Action.** As mentioned, effective national campaigns are those that are rooted in local issues and strongly supported by the affected farmers throughout its duration. The farmers/PO component of the campaign determines to a large extent the decision-making and campaign activities. POs are primed to be at the forefront of campaign activities from mass action, to media interviews, and negotiations with concerned agencies. These activities usually take the form of mobilizations, indefinite pickets, "small but dramatic" actions that depict the issue and are led by the local people for whose sake the campaign is mounted. The farmer-leaders must know by heart the facts of the case and be consistent in pointing out the main issues and the group's demands.
2. **Coordinated National and Local Planning.** Planning is done both at the local and national levels, then coordinated and synchronized into major national campaigns. National plans must support the objectives of the local communities. Annual and mid-year planning are conducted to set and check campaign plans. Special meetings may be called in between depending on the projected campaign activities and swiftness of the response of agency in question.

An assessment of the national agrarian situation and trends is needed from which critical gaps/ issues in AR implementation are identified. Mapping of local areas and cases to be prioritized is done to match with national policy issues and identification of intervention (whether at the national or local levels). Finally, planning is best done by including best and worst case scenarios. Campaigns on specific community struggles must plot the worst case situation and prepare for possible alternatives to the communities involved.

3. **Media.** One key element in the success of many AR NOW! advocacy efforts had been effective media work both for print and broadcast. AR NOW! believes that sustained media coverage of local issues in particular and agrarian reform in general are critical in pressuring concerned agencies to action. Media proved to be a highly powerful tool during the MAPALAD hunger strike, giving the campaign national and international exposure. Media is crucial in keeping the public informed and interested in the AR debate and maintaining objectivity in current AR issues and cases. At the same time, AR NOW!'s media work successfully promoted agrarian reform reporting from the NGO perspective.

The AR NOW! media liaison officer, PDAP's Friends of Agrarian Reform Media Service (FARMS) program, ANGOC and WAND now make up the media cluster. Since the MAPALAD campaign, the AR NOW! media team developed good working relations with beat reporters and have provided good story angles on AR issues for in-depth stories or news reports. This team learned to harness media support by establishing the legitimacy of the cases presented and helping media practitioners understand the issues. It was a welcome surprise that the media was always searching for stories especially from NGOs and POs. AR NOW! just had to package well the abundant supply of stories it had on the cases and issues of campaigns.

AR NOW! learned several critical things about establishing and maintaining good media relations. One must develop a nose for a good news story from the issue at hand, may it be human interest, the effects of the case on a community or the general public, etc. Preparing media-friendly press kits with complete and accurate information and press releases, case profiles, etc. will certainly help since reporters don't have enough time to go through a 20-page case study.

It is also important to know the right news beat and contact persons to give the stories to and be aware of the reporters' own deadlines and constraints in writing stories. Patient groundwork is then necessary to know the reporters and what stories they are after and perhaps even get ideas on how to package farmers' issues. It is also helpful to know how to prepare and handle media activities like press conferences, briefings, interviews with the farmers' involved, and site visits.

4. **Legal Support.** This is necessary in the circuitous process that a farmer-beneficiary goes through until he is awarded his certificate of land ownership. Legal support is currently provided not only by groups within AR NOW! (SALIGAN and Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc.) but also by a non-member, KAISAHAN, which AR NOW! works with on several land campaigns. These three groups are all members of an initiative called the *Pesantech* project that provides paralegal formation and legal consultations to various peasant groups. Lawyers from *Pesantech*, although swamped with work and have limited resources, have managed to conduct paralegal training that developed the farmers' capacity to understand the agrarian reform law and the issues surrounding their particular case. During campaigns, these lawyers help clarify the legal obstacles and the options available to help the POs determine their course of action.

5. **Public Education.** Information is critical in raising more people's awareness of the validity of issues that fuel a campaign. Each campaign has to win public sympathy by explaining the rationale for the actions done to further the peasants' cause. An educated and critical public has been proven to be a veritable strength in gaining ground for the issues' resolution. Rallies, for instance, are venues that can be used to conduct information dissemination, with leaders addressing the public through a loud sound system, or through "leafletting" or distribution of flyers, or cultural presentations. School and church hopping can also be done to gain public support.
6. **Capacity Building in Planning Local Campaigns.** With more locally initiated campaigns being undertaken, farmers' groups as well as NGOs need to plan effective and appropriate strategies to get the most results. AR NOW! assists several campaigns organized at the provincial/ community level by local partner NGOs and POs by designing and strategizing immediate and long-term activities. The strategies may vary from continued mass actions, negotiations, media activities until resolutions acceptable to the community are reached. Local NGOs and POs thus need to hone their skills in conflict management, negotiation, media advocacy and campaign planning and strategizing at the community level.
7. **Advocacy and Network Building: Broadening to other sectors.** In these land conflicts, the farmers are often pitted against the powerful and influential landowners and anti-peasant politicians who protect present or future business interests in the guise of rural development. To counter these forces, a strong alliance of value-based organizations such as the NGOs, the church and the media are needed to rally behind the cause of the farmers. These organizations, with their direct link to the people, have a

strong potential to move the public to support social justice movements. And this peaceful support definitely overpowers armed violence, with farmers gaining respect and empowerment.

AR NOW! for the past three years have been able to engage other sectors and formations in gathering mass support for focused campaigns like the KALAGAN coalition for Poverty and Food Security and the Great Jubilee Pilgrimage Against Hunger. In this last campaign, where the government was asked to heed the five R's of the Jubilee Year, churches and poor communities opened their doors to a ragtag group of "pilgrims" who preached the gospel of social justice and equity as Christ had 2,000 years ago. The urban poor sector, for several times, joined the peasants in the streets to pressure government agencies that have failed to address their concerns time and time again.

8. **Policy Research.** Critical also in the advocacy work of any coalition is influencing actual policies to ensure that laws supporting the interests of the basic sectors affected are passed. AR NOW! wants to make greater national impact by forwarding and passing policy proposals based on local issues. Actual cases and campaigns of AR NOW! are translated into several important policy studies and recommendations lobbied with the Philippine Congress and other implementing bodies involved in agrarian reform. One such study is how the loss of the MAPALAD farm workers' case in the Supreme Court had practically stripped farm workers in general of their constitutional right to be considered as agrarian reform beneficiaries under the CARP.
9. **Dedicated Volunteers.** Since the MAPALAD campaign, AR NOW! greatly benefited from the generosity of volunteers from all walks of life. These groups and individuals continue to support AR NOW!'s

campaigns in various ways. One youth theater group, ANAK-TEATRO, now regularly helps with the dramatization of farmers' issues during campaigns, with members of the group even going on errands for campaign activities. Sometimes they camp out with farmers outside government agencies. Though these youth belong to the urban poor sector, they have contributed so much into a cause which they have come to own. Other student volunteers and concerned individuals have assisted in calling for the resolution of farmers' issues through letter writing to concerned agencies and officials or by donating small amounts for the farmers' welfare and to help sustain the campaign.

- 10. Online advocacy and networking.** The Internet has been a powerful tool for advocacy in this age of information technology. These electronic communication systems allow faster and easier coordination among members of the network at national and even international levels. Articles, signature campaigns, and letters seeking support for farmers' issues and agrarian reform have traveled across the world and back to the Philippines through cyberspace.

To promote its activities on the Internet, AR NOW! maintains ANIHAN, a website hosted by CodeWAN, together with other peasant and NGO networks like the Coconut Industry Reform Movement (COIR) and KAISAHAN. It is supported by the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty, a global consortium of inter-governmental, civil-society and bilateral organizations committed to the empowerment of the rural poor. Through the website more and more people worldwide can now be informed of issues in the Philippine agrarian sector as they happen

as well as receive news on the subject from neighboring countries.

AR NOW! is the current Country Focal Point (CFP) for the Southeast Asian region under the Agrarian Reform Network (AR NET) of the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty based in Rome. Exchange of information and experiences and solicitation of support with peasant groups from Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand has been faster via the Internet.

However, some primary NGO partners directly assisting grassroots groups still face communication problems due to distance, lack of access to and knowledge on using these technologies. Problems in consolidating grassroots information are usually in gathering, updating, and storing of data and effective communication. AR NOW! has identified that installation of communication facilities for easier transfer and exchange of information may help ease this issue.

B. RESULTS

1. Local Campaigns raised to the National Level

To date, AR NOW! has assisted over 10 local cases and led or joined several national campaigns. These local cases, which generally called for immediate land distribution or installation, are the CARRUF estate (Valencia, Bukidnon), Quisumbing estate (Sumilao, Bukidnon), Starke estate and Zabala Estate (Negros Occidental), Hda. Carmencita (Roxas City, Capiz), Potenciano estate (Calamba, Laguna), Ekleong estate (Catanauan, Quezon), Locsin estate (Pres. Roxas, Capiz), and presently, portions of the Cojuangco estates and other land monopolies in Negros Occidental and Iloilo. The status of these cases are summarized below:

| Estate/ Location | No. of Hectares | No. of Benefi- ciaries | CLOA Distribution | Farmer Installation | Campaign Objectives met but stalled at implementation level | Ongoing campaign |
|---|--|---|----------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| CARRUF Valencia, Bukidnon | 147 has. | 111 FBs | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Quisumbing estate Sumilao, Bukidnon | 144 has. | 137 FBs | | | Land awarded to them in 1997 after hunger strike but lost again after successful landowner appeal with the Supreme Court | |
| Starke estate (Kabankalan, Negros Occidental) | 129 has. | 59 FBs | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Zabala estate (Kabankalan, Neg. Occ.) | 26.64 has. | | | ✓ | Expedited valuation and payment by gov't. to landowner | |
| Hda. Carmencita (Pres. Roxas, Capiz) | 173 has. | 97 FBs | | ✓ | | |
| Potenciano estate (Calamba, Laguna) | 49.37 has. (112 individual CLOAs) | 77 FBs | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Ramon Locsin estate (Pres. Roxas, Capiz) | 116 has. | 58 FBs (20 for collective farming) | ✓ | Installation in October 1998 | | |
| Ekleong estate (Catanauan, Quezon) | 105 has. | 52 FBs | | | After conducting a camp-out in October 1999 at the DAR Central office, 50 has. surveyed and a master list was made. Succeeding activities need to be followed-up with necessary agencies. | ✓ |
| 50 estates and other land monopolies (incl. Eduardo Cojuangco's) in Negros Occidental | Some 5,000 has. | About 3000 farm workers across 50 haciendas | | | | ✓ |
| • Hda. Balatong and Nieva (La Castellana, La Carlota and Himamaylan, Negros Occidental) | 777 has. | 647 FBs | | | List of Potential FBs was restored and validated with the PO. Follow-up required | ✓ |
| • Cuenca Estate (La Castellana, Negros Occidental) | 465 has. | 150 FBs | | | Segregation surveys conducted; Follow-up required | ✓ |

* approximate assessment; for confirmation with AR NOW!

* FB-farmer beneficiaries

The coalition's ability to work on a local campaign that was elevated to the national level was tested and honed with two major cases in 1997.

a. CARRUF farmers of Valencia, Bukidnon.

In April 1997, AR NOW! provided media assistance and coordinated with government line agencies concerning the case of the farmers of the Carpio - Rufino Estate (also known as the CARRUF Estate) in Valencia, Bukidnon. The case highlights how landowners find allies in local government units to resist agrarian reform coverage.

The CARRUF estate is composed of 147 hectares where 111 farmer-beneficiaries have been working since 1974. At that time, it was a public land given to the Floreindo family as concession under the Pasture Land Agreement. In 1986, the estate was sequestered by the government as the Floreindos were known to be Marcos cronies. Upon the passage of the Agrarian Reform Law in 1988, the area was covered by CARP and was up for compulsory acquisition. The Carpio - Rufino Agricultural Corp., which suddenly appeared and claimed ownership of the land, appealed the case to the DAR but lost. They then solicited the support of the local government units which were willing to convert the land into non-agricultural use, this time to build an airport. Finally, in February 1997, the farmers were issued their CLOAs but they could not enter the estate as CARRUF hired armed guards to keep the farmers off the land.

Sensing that they could not get justice in Bukidnon, the farmers decided to bring the case to Manila through the help of AR NOW! members. Hence, the farmers with the assisting local NGO decided to take their case to the DAR central office and the Department of Interior and Local Government in Manila by holding a protest rally, a press conference and a media campaign with the support of AR NOW!. Because of the protests, the farmers gained an audience with the DAR secretary and the chief

of the Philippine National Police (PNP). Officials finally set an installation date for the farmers on the estate with the assistance of the PNP.

b. MAPALAD: AR NOW'S Crucible. On October 9, 1997, a group of 20 farmers in Manila and Cagayan de Oro City in Mindanao set out to reclaim their land through self-imposed hunger. They went on hunger strike to fight for their ownership of the 144-hectare Quisumbing estate in Sumilao, Bukidnon in Mindanao, originally awarded to them by the DAR but was reverted back to its former owners by no less than the Office of the President (OP).

The DAR awarded the estate to 137 MAPALAD farmers of Sumilao in 1995 after denying the Quisumbings application for land conversion twice. The Quisumbings had an agreement with the local government of Bukidnon to develop the estate for non-agricultural purposes. Under a Presidential Order, prime agricultural lands like the Quisumbing estate can no longer be converted for non-agricultural use. Still, the Quisumbings won their appeal at the OP due to an alleged technical lapse in procedure by DAR, boosted by a letter from Governor Carlos Fortich of Bukidnon requesting for the reversal of the DAR decision and commending the development plans for the land. The farmers, with their NGO supporters, attempted to occupy the land but was corralled and forced out by the Quisumbing's hired guns. The Quisumbing family and Governor Fortich were even present to make sure that the farmers did not succeed. In tears, the farmers and their families left.

All legal options were then exhausted, but negotiation with the landowners was out of the question. "Meta-legal" strategy was thus the only way. As the farmers belonged to the ethnic Higaonon tribe of Bukidnon, they had a tradition of fasting to death as a sign of protest. Thus, after carefully processing their decision

with their local NGO supporters, they decided to go on hunger strike.

The farmers appealed to former President Fidel Ramos to reverse the OP decision by then Executive Secretary Ruben Torres. But they had to wait 10 days as Pres. Ramos was on an official trip. When he arrived, Pres. Ramos invited the hunger strikers for a dialogue in Malacañang and proposed to set up a fact-finding team to study the issue, a move that gave the farmers hope. The farmers agreed to convert their hunger strike to fasting while the investigation was ongoing, but they again returned to hunger strike after failing to receive the government's decision on the promised date. Two days after, on November 5, 1997, Pres. Ramos reversed the Torres decision upon the recommendations of the high-level team. The team came up with a "win-win" solution that gave the farmers 100 hectares of the land and the Quisumbings the remaining 44 hectares. It was a decision that broke the farmers' fast, with the farmers declaring victory.

What made Mapalad's first hunger strike a victory

A confluence of factors led to the success of the MAPALAD hunger strike. First was the great sacrifice of the farmers who were ready to die to obtain land rightfully theirs. It immediately caught public attention and sympathy to the plight of these poor and hungry farmers. Here was a group of small indigenous farmers who traveled all the way to Manila, willing to die in order to get justice, a picture appealing to the Filipino's natural compassion for the underdog. For AR NOW!, the farmers were heroes -- determined, resolute and single-minded in their goal. They were people in the right in a high profile battle with powerful government officials and landlords.

No sooner had the hunger strike started when support groups started coming. They came from various sectors -- religious congregations, political parties, sectoral groups and even concerned individuals. The hunger strike became a unifying and healing force for the country's fractured social movement. And

since the hunger strike was launched a few months before a general election, it easily caught the attention of candidates who either sympathized with them or were just craving for media mileage. Among the presidential candidates who visited the strikers were Raul Roco, Renato de Villa and Jose de Venecia, as well as a number of senatorial and congressional candidates.

One crucial factor in the success of the hunger strike was sustained media coverage. For several weeks, the hunger strike was front page material for many national dailies. The MAPALAD campaign revived discussion on agrarian reform. This was due largely to a vigilant media team in AR NOW! composed of two PhilDHRRA representatives and the PDAP-FARMS group. Their tasks involved reporting developments at the camp site through regular press releases and feeding these to media visitors, preparing press conferences and kits, and ensuring the slant of news about the farmers was to their favor. AR NOW! proved in this campaign that sustained media coverage of peasant issues could create public opinion and put pressure on landowners as well as the government. The media practitioners, in an assessment after the campaign, said they truly felt they were instrumental in helping the farmers win their fight. The media shared ownership of the farmers' victory.

Vic Fabe of PAKISAMA and other leaders of AR NOW! believed that the Church's support was a tremendous boost to the hunger strike in a predominantly Catholic country. AR NOW!'s media advocacy helped create a groundswell of support to persuade influential and powerful institutions as well as individuals to support the hunger strike and turn public opinion in favor of the MAPALAD farmers. Familiarity with and establishing good relations with these groups during the earlier campaigns paid a huge dividend when the MAPALAD hunger strike was launched.

AR NOW! shifting to high gear

Strong intra-personal relationships among AR NOW!'s members proved an

advantage as the hunger strike progressed. Critical aspects of the campaign like operational decisions, relating with other support groups, funding, division of work and others were handled smoothly. The experienced members of the network planned the strategies, raised funds and linked with other groups while the younger ones did the spadework for the hunger strike, wrote press releases and statements and entertained visitors at the camp site. AR NOW! members virtually gave their all for they believed much was at stake in this struggle.

Without the trust and familiarity among the members developed through years of working together, AR NOW! may not have withstood the pressures of the campaign. Usual irritants common in coalition work like decision-making processes, funding, projection and others were averted due largely to the close relations among AR NOW!'s key players.

The success of the hunger strike had both positive and negative impacts on other networks and these were felt during the campaign. Because of its success in bringing its message to the attention of the government and the public, other groups used the campaign to launch their own crusade against land conversion. Other farmers went to DAR not only to support the MAPALAD farmers but also to present their problems. They were counting on the groundswell of popular sentiment against land conversion to also carry their crusade forward. Since the issue had expanded beyond the plight of the MAPALAD farmers alone, it drew in other forces and players. The campaign began to expand to cover other issues, evolving to a unified action wherein a broad spectrum of forces could participate. Thus, the sensitive and often touchy issue of dealing with groups of varied persuasions came to the fore once more.

Essential questions whether to have a tactical alliance, partnership or united front with other groups became a pressing concern for AR NOW!. Many in AR NOW! became skeptical about the idea not just because of anxieties related to dealing with other groups, but rather

problems with such an alliance might diffuse attention to the campaign and endanger the lives of the hunger strikers. Important questions such as at what point would they agree to lift or until when should they continue with the hunger strike were issues that were kept from other groups whose concern, agenda and mindset were different from AR NOW!. Hence, AR NOW! was charged of being "exclusivist" by these groups.

The MAPALAD campaign, in effect, became AR NOW!'s litmus test. The campaign brought the issue of agrarian reform to an unprecedented level in the country's history. It became the focal point of land conversion cases, with the MAPALAD farmers becoming a symbol of the oppressed and impoverished. It took two presidents to personally intervene in the hope of resolving the issue - one to offer a compromise solution, the other to break bread with the hunger strikers.

AR NOW! gained a lot from the MAPALAD experience, which was in many ways their baptism of fire. They passed the test with flying colors and became respected as a network because of the campaign.

2. National Campaigns with broader Tactical Alliances

In 1997, AR NOW! campaigned actively for the enactment of the AR Augmentation Fund that will increase the Agrarian Reform Fund, allowing the government to continue implementing CARP beyond its supposed expiry date in 1998. Together with other groups, the coalition presented their position papers to Congress and held mobilizations to lobby for this legislation. This campaign was the primary reason why AR NOW!'s members decided to form the coalition. By early 1998, Republic Act 8532, or the AR Augmentation Fund, was successfully enacted, allocating as much as P50 billion for the continued implementation of agrarian reform and expanding the sources of its financing.

Since then, AR NOW! has been consistent in its advocacy against land

conversions and for food security especially for the rural poor. It has been involved in lobbying for a pro-peasant position in the proposed Agricultural Modernization Law with the Agricultural Committee of the Philippine Congress, attending seven regional and two national consultations for the bill. It particularly opposed anti-food security provisions in the draft that would further land conversions and reclassification of lands to non-agricultural uses. The campaign eventually resulted in the passage of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) or RA 8435. Cultivation of ties with specific Congress representatives was also done to ensure support for these pro-peasant calls.

The coalition members also gave their critiques of RA 8371 or the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) led by PAKISAMA and UNAC for AR in the uplands. PAKISAMA and PhilDHRRA were also active in lobbying for pro-small fisherfolk provisions of RA 8550 or the New Fisheries Code and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. The group also took part in drafting the AR, Agriculture and Environment chapters of the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan of President Joseph Estrada's administration. It also came up with a critique of the Joint Economic Enterprise Program (JEEP) promoting Joint Venture Schemes between farmer beneficiaries under CARP and landowners.

AR NOW! in 1999 also worked for the restoration of the budget allocation of P600 million for Land Acquisition and Distribution which was slashed by Congress from P1.2 billion. Another major advocacy of the network is the campaign to recover the coconut levy, which it considers as public funds, together with the Multisectoral Task Force formed with business groups, the Church and other peasant coalitions. A pro-small coconut farmer/farm worker Executive Order (EO) was drafted by the task force which was pitted against other proposals for the EO on the coconut levy.

Lobbying work for AR NOW! usually involves mobilizations, paid advertisements in

daily broadsheets, intensive media work, fax/e-mail barrages to concerned legislators and officials and information dissemination through e-mail and the media. Funds are raised from contributions within the group and from generous donors. Through all these activities, peasant leaders are empowered in running and strategizing campaigns, as well as in articulating positions on critical issues.

AR NOW! was active in other national campaigns on land reform and social justice issues, such as the "Jubilee 2000: Break the Chains of Debt" campaign for the ADB's 32nd Annual Board of Governors' Meeting, Kampanya-Kontra Kumbersyon (KKK) {Campaign Against Land Conversion}, KALAGAN, a broader coalition of three peasant federations calling for Food Security and Land Reform (October 1999), among others.

C. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Its experiences with local and national campaigns fortified the network's ability to undertake advocacy activities. AR NOW! members attribute this growth to several factors. Firstly, the organizations within AR NOW! have years of experience in community organizing focused on socio-economic projects and activities. But they also believe in the need for strong grassroots advocacy with government through mobilizations, dialogues and persistent follow-up for the release of farmers' land titles and farm support services. Hence, a holistic approach is used in responding to the needs of poor landless and farming families.

The network has no acknowledged figurehead who claims leadership of the organization but tends to draw attention to farmer leaders from PAKISAMA and the presence and importance of farmers' groups involved in specific cases. Although some groups may allege that one or two people influence decisions in the network, AR NOW! stresses that decisions are a product of careful discussion and consensus-building among members.

Another strong point of AR NOW! is its ability to network with different sectors to support peasant issues. The MAPALAD campaign, for example, was able to build a vast support network for AR NOW! and the MAPALAD farmers composed of the youth, church (both religious and secular), politicians, and other NGOs from the urban poor, environment, and indigenous people's groups. Campaigns staged later such as the Jubilee Pilgrimage fortified the network's links with these groups and added labor and provincial NGOs and POs that participated in the pilgrimage to the growing list of partners.

International linkages have likewise been forged and maintained with resource institutions and international advocacy groups like TROCARE, who does counterpart solicitation for the farmers in the United Kingdom. These linkages have generated both financial and letters of support for the MAPALAD farmers cause and welfare.

On the other hand, AR NOW! acknowledges that there are areas which it needs to develop. It recognizes that it still lacks appropriate strategies in judicial and even legislative advocacy. Although it is quite well-exposed in advocacy with the executive branch of government, it needs to sharpen its skills in dealing with the Judiciary, a lesson bitterly learned in the second phase of the MAPALAD campaign with the Supreme Court of the Philippines. Also, the network has not yet fully sunk its teeth into legislative lobbying although it is part of several campaigns for the passage of pro-poor bills like the National Land Use Act led by its partner KAISAHAN.

Although ever present and industrious, the people available for legal assistance are likewise insufficient. Very few lawyers take up alternative law as a long-term profession, much less dedicate their lives to peasant causes. Doing a good job of lawyering for peasants require research, writing of critiques on flawed laws, handling case documentation and litigation, which take too much time. Overstretched and underpaid, lawyers often move on to another

field of law. This of course applies not only to lawyers, but also to most people into development work.

AR NOW! also realizes it is not consistent in the depth of its analysis of certain issues it advocates. AR NOW!, to some extent, agrees with criticisms that there is short-sightedness in some of its strategies due to lack of access to critical information that could aid clearer and correct analysis for strategizing activities. There is a need to beef-up its research base and ability to generate good critiques and studies on emerging trends and issues in agrarian reform advocacy such as the Market Assisted Land Reform Strategy. These shortcomings in drawing up analysis are attributed to a lack of resources, especially able personnel, to focus on priority research issues of the campaign coalition.

V. CONCLUSION: Facing New Challenges

In retrospect, AR NOW! was a product of historical processes. Though it is small and does not project a broad configuration of peasant groups, these factors worked to the network's advantage as it was easier to come up with a consensus and work cohesively as a group. Because the composition of AR NOW! was more homogenous compared with earlier coalitions or alliances, it proved to be a faster vehicle for agrarian reform advocacy.

AR NOW! has contributed significantly in putting agrarian reform back on the national agenda through the promotion of local issues at the national level and with the general public. It has also successfully pooled together key actors to work together tactically.

Looking ahead, the coalition vows to continue pursuing people's advocacy of local agrarian cases and elevate policy questions through lobbying at the national level. Its main concern is to assist local communities, especially those that still face physical, legal and policy threats to their right over land under the government's agrarian reform program.

There is a high demand for campaign-type advocacy for agrarian reform implementation due to existing local, bureaucratic and policy threats. But AR NOW! is aware that it has a low absorptive capacity to assist all areas which will ask for help given the lack of financial and human resources. AR NOW! acknowledges its limitations and knows that these weak points need to be addressed.

The coalition thus needs to build the capacity of its members and local partners in several key areas to address these shortcomings. AR NOW! can work to enhance the skills of its member organizations and local NGO partners in adopting new strategies for local-to-national campaigns, especially in judicial advocacy and legislative lobbying. It can also develop its second liners at the national level to sustain the coalition's activities in areas with land tenure conflict. Research and analysis needs to be strengthened within the network for clearer campaign direction and management.

As to financial sustainability, projects aimed at building a central fund for those interested to support the activities of farmers struggling to reclaim their land and revive its productivity are now underway. Also, AR NOW! is now aware of the need to integrate a fund-raising strategy in future campaigns to continue activities as well as provide support for affected farmer families. Creative and effective

strategies are all the more necessary to get donations for a not so-popular public issue as agrarian reform.

AR NOW! members have been involved in the long-term struggle for agrarian reform at the ground level. Each institution has worked for almost two decades to build a strong mass base for agrarian reform rooted in sound political and socio-economic activities at the field level. Focus on productivity and socio-economic activities have been given greater emphasis in organizing and developing partner communities. Yet, these organizations still recognize the need and the value of advocating for concrete land claims to strengthen national advocacy of agrarian reform. Hence, AR NOW! maintains that it will continue to operate and adhere to a "Grounded advocacy" framework.

A common thread among the AR NOW! organizations is the mandate to pursue agrarian reform, from land tenure to sustainable productivity and community empowerment. For as long as this dream is shared, AR NOW! as a coalition will continue supporting landless farmers in their struggle for agrarian reform. #

LIST OF AR NOW! MEMBERS AND THEIR ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|---|
| AADC - | Agri-Aqua Development Coalition |
| ANGOC - | Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development |
| ASIADHRRA - | Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas |
| BMFI - | Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc. |
| CARRD - | Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development |
| ICSI - | Institute on Church and Social Issues |
| PAKISAMA - | Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (National Peasant Federation) |
| PARFUND - | Philippine Agrarian Reform Fund for National Development |
| PASCRES - | People's Alternative Study Center for Research and Education in Social Development |
| PDAP - | Philippine Development Assistance Programme |
| PHILDHRRA - | Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas |
| SALIGAN- | Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (Alternative Legal Assistance Center) |
| UNAC - | Upland NGO Assistance Council |
| WAND - | Women's Action Network for Development |

LIST OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

| | |
|--------|---|
| DA - | Department of Agriculture |
| DAR - | Department of Agrarian Reform |
| NIA - | National Irrigation Authority |
| HLRB - | Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board |
| LBP - | Land Bank of the Philippines |
| SC - | Supreme Court of the Philippines |
| LGU - | Local Government Units |
| RTC - | Regional Trial Courts (under the Department of Justice) |
| PNP - | Philippine National Police |

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

1. Mr. Vicente Fabe, National Council Chairperson, PAKISAMA, February 3, 2000, PAKISAMA Office, Quezon City, Philippines
2. Mr. Rainier Almazan, Executive Director, PAKISAMA, February 12, 2000, PAKISAMA office, Quezon City, Philippines
3. Jose Noel Olano, Executive Director, Philippine Development Assistance Programme (PDAP)-Philippines, February 28, 2000, PDAP office, Quezon City, Philippines
4. Gerardo Bulatao, Senior Consultant, Institute for Politics and Governance (IPG), March 22, 2000, Quezon City, Philippines
5. Former DAR Secretary Ernesto Garilao, April 14, 2000, Makati City, Philippines