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# **Between the Volcano and the Well: A Review of the Outcomes and Impact of the Tomas Project for the Mag-Antsi Aeta of Anupul, Bamban, Tarlac, Philippines**

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## **Abstract**

In 2003, the University of Santo Tomas Office for Community Development, through its Aeta Integrated Development Program (AIDP), with the Mag-Antsi Aeta of Bamban, Tarlac (Philippines), sought to help in the recovery from the severe effects of the Mt Pinatubo eruption in 1991. The Tomas Project was designed and implemented in response to the Aeta's expressed needs and problems at that time. The title of the study depicts its overarching intent to carve a path for the dispossessed and displaced people that hopefully will bring them from the volcano to a better place of choice and opportunity as symbolized by the well. Close to eight years after its implementation, a comprehensive assessment of the Tomas Project seemed timely in order to take stock of its successes and failures. The central underlying question in this endeavor was, "Did the Tomas Project work?", and applies participative action research and triangulating data-gathering techniques in search of answers. Data suggests that the Aeta continue to struggle with the combined impact of displacement from their ancestral land and the needed socio-economic adjustments they must make in the resettlement areas. In some respects, the desired tangible and sustainable outcomes of the Project have not yet led the Aeta to a "geography of opportunity" that can at least approximate the hospitable mountains and forests that Pinatubo once provided. In spite of its unquestionable organizational commitment, proven capacity, good funding, and substantive control of the development process, it appears that the Tomas Project remains a work in progress and has not made a significant or sustainable impact on Aeta living conditions. This research concludes with two important lessons and recommendations.

Keywords: community development, indigenous people, evaluation

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Among the people living within the tri-boundary region of the provinces of Zambales, Pampanga, and Tarlac (Philippines), the indigenous groups known as the Aeta were the hardest hit by major eruptions of Mt. Pinatubo on June 14-16, 1991. In addition to the loss of many lives, its lahars and mudflows destroyed the natural dwelling places of the Aeta, and devastated many of the associated rivers and streams that provided potable water and served as a primary source of livelihood. One observer described it as a disaster beyond description that destroyed their living and created turmoil in their psychological and socio-cultural universe (Micalat-Teves, 2004). The once friendly and caring Pinatubo

metamorphosed into a near and present threat that forced the Aeta to evacuate and search for a place where they could begin to rebuild their lives. They became, as one of their leaders noted, “like leaves on the water”.

Since that time, the Aeta embarked on a long and arduous path that eventually led them to relocate and resettle in the nearby provinces of Zambales, Pampanga, and Tarlac: areas where living conditions were much harsher and more inhospitable than the Aeta homelands. In order to survive, the Aeta were required to strike a healthy balance between meeting their more pressing daily needs and preserving their way of life as an indigenous people (Doma, 2002; Hernando, 2009). As Doma (2002) found in his study, the Aeta were left with few choices, typically requiring the sale of ancestral lands to lowland traders and merchants in order to cope with the harsh realities of displacement and very limited opportunities. As a result, the Aeta’s notions of land tenure began to shift from traditional concepts of communal ownership to ones of private ownership, and from collective farming practices to individual operations.

Some twenty years after the eruption, the Aeta of Bamban, Tarlac are still in the seemingly unending process of rebuilding their shattered lives. As is the case for many other local indigenous people, they are struggling to survive in a world that seems inexorably bent on embracing “progress” with little regard for their indigenous way of life. They are experiencing a transition period, between the peaceful life they once enjoyed around the Mt. Pinatubo area and the journey they must make to find and reach a state of wellbeing once again.

To address their impoverished and harsh conditions, government and non-government, local and foreign, faith-based and human rights organizations swiftly intervened to provide housing, livelihood opportunities, education, and health services, while assisting in the preservation of Aeta culture. Studies of the Aeta’s situation, both by individuals and groups (Hernando, 2009; Tima, 2005), have demonstrated that many such intervention efforts have proven to be extremely difficult and challenging.

## **2.0 Background of the Study**

A number of studies have helped to identify the real and pressing needs of the Aeta, clearly outlining what is required to stimulate and facilitate developmental interventions (Campbell, et al., 2007). Capones (2000), in her study of the key areas of IP Empowerment, proposed the following questions to evaluate developmental interventions among indigenous people such as the Aeta:

- Did it [the intervention in question] increase their capacity to avail of basic social services, such as better educational assistance, adequate health services, agro-technical services, and socio-economic services?
- Did it enable them to participate in local governance, give them a voice in the decision-making process in the community and in the wider environment?
- Did it enable them to have adequate representation in the decision-making body, not only in their community but in the wider world?
- Did it help them know their rights as IPs? Did it help promote their rights, especially their right to their ancestral domain?
- Did it promote social justice among them?

In 2001, the University of Santo Tomas (UST) through the Office for Community Development (OCD), launched the Aeta Integrated Development Program (AIDP) that aimed to facilitate tangible and sustained development within the communities of the Mag-Antsi Aeta tribe who had resettled in Anupul, Bamban, Tarlac a few years after the eruption. Through its so-called “Tomas Project” (TP), the OCD designed and implemented a strategic plan that clearly reflected the Aeta’s pressing and comprehensive needs and problems. After conducting a mapping and assessment that involved members of the communities, its Community-Based Health Program sought to address their immediate and long term health-related problems, such as malnutrition among children and pre-natal care for mothers. In seeking to meet the basic needs of food and sustenance, its Sustainable Upland Agriculture Program offered livelihood opportunities through agri-business ventures, including cash-cropping and animal dispersal planting.

To ensure that the communities would have the capacity for sustainable development and protection of their ancestral domain, the TP established and mobilized the Organizing and Empowerment Program and the Justice and Peace Advocacy Program. These programs were to reach out and establish fruitful, relevant relationships within and beyond the communities proper, while additionally tapping and establishing links with concerned civil representatives. In 2001, the TP also allied with the Colleges of Education and Engineering at UST and their associated Distance Education Program. This alliance sought to enhance the human capital among the Aeta through the implementation of a functional literacy program, a scholarship program, and leadership training. Over the years, the Tomas Project of the OCD has allotted and disbursed a considerable amount of effort and resources, both human and financial, not only to help address extreme poverty, chronic hunger, and debilitating malnutrition of children, but has also enabled them to rebuild their lives through self-help programs that are sustainable and productive.

The OCD not only seeks to comfort the afflicted and protect the vulnerable, but is also concerned about its own performance and the impact it seeks to create in the lives of its intended beneficiaries. Self-monitoring and evaluation has enabled the OCD to assess its performance and outcomes in relation to its orientation, operation, and activities. This evaluation process is also a potential source of empowerment for the target communities if they participate in such a reflexive and pedagogical process that allows them to regain their humanity and overcome their condition (Freire, 1970); thus, simultaneously functioning as a mechanism or tool for change.

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

Presented here is a descriptive-evaluative study that aimed to investigate the outcomes and impact of the Tomas Project on the Mag-Antsi Aeta of Bamban, Tarlac in the Philippines, approximately ten years after its initial implementation. A mix of qualitative and quantitative data-gathering techniques, such as focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and paper-and pencil structured measures, were employed to determine whether long-term and short-term objectives were achieved.

## 4.0 Findings

The TP produced many tangible intermediate outcomes for the seven target sites of Anupul, Bamban, Tarlac. When asked what UST has done for them, participants were unanimous in stating that UST had done great things for them: “UST has done great things here. We cannot thank the OCD enough for its sacrifice, for the time and the life it has shared with us. The NGOs cannot do what UST has done.” Table 1 presents a summary of the activities and outcomes achieved by the TP in the seven sites. Among them, only Site Haduan and Site Mabilog remained purely Aeta communities, while a mix of Aeta and lowlanders resided in four of the remaining sites. It was only at Site Layak that almost all residents were migrant lowlanders from the nearby provinces of Zambales and Pampanga.

Table 1. *The Intermediate Outcomes/Goods and Services delivered by the Tomas Project*

	Ancestral Domain	Scholarship Program	Distance Education & Day Care	Livelihood	Health/ Sanitation	Enviro Protection	Leadership Training	Housing
Buok (2003)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	n/a
Santa Rosa (1996)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	n/a
Malasa (1994)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	n/a
Mabilog (2002)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
San Martin (2002)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	n/a
Layak (1995)	n/a	√	√	√	√	√	√	n/a
Haduan (1996)	√	√	n/a	√	√	√	√	n/a

### 4.1 Ancestral Domain

The preservation and protection of the Aeta’s ancestral domain provides the core of the Tomas Project. To the Aeta, they are one with the land and do not distinguish themselves apart from such locales (Hernando, 2009, 72). The primary issue is not only how to protect their lands from interested parties who are out to take advantage of the desperate situation in which the Aeta find themselves, but also concerns how to make their land productive and supportive of their daily needs. Ninety percent of their ancestral domain in Mabilog and Malasa is now owned by lowlanders. The TP joined and supported the Aeta in their struggle to promote and protect their ancestral domain from such land grabs: “UST was with us in our fight for our ancestral lands, in ordering the documents, in protecting our legal rights, gave us legal trainings. It fought the unconscionable Aeta 789 MOA with Mr. Angeles of Angeles University Foundation and had it voided.”

#### ***4.2 Scholarship Program***

The TP scholarship program (2000), which covered tuition fees, books and additional school supplies, school uniform, monthly rice allotments, and transportation allowances, initiated from a realization that providing the Aeta with an education might serve a way out of poverty. To qualify for the scholarship, parents of the scholars were to render service in return to the community and cover 50% of all expenses. Unfortunately, only a handful of the scholars managed to complete the long and arduous qualification process. The odds seemed heavily stacked against them, as elementary students from Mabilog had to walk three kilometers to the school site in Malasa, and learning became much more difficult when they were tired and hungry. The more pressing need for food and the lack of adequate financial support forced scholars to stop in their pursuit of studies and simply work for a living. Cultural practices, such as early marriage, also prevented many scholars from pursuing higher education: “The scholarship program gave us hope. The Aeta marry early, but this practice has been lessened because of the new opportunity that UST provided to our young to study.”

#### ***4.3 Distance Education and Daycare Center***

The change from subsistence economy to cash economy, influenced by their encounters with lowlanders, brought about a need for the Aeta to be able to count and learn how to conduct required transactions. The TP recognized this as part of the overall community development framework, and the distance education program was an entry point for a wider and more comprehensive effort on their part. As stated in the program objectives, The Distance Education Program objectives were stated as follows:

Contribute to the overall development of the community by increasing educational opportunities among the marginalized communities, particularly the indigenous peoples. Beyond improving their competence in reading, writing and arithmetic, the participants were expected (1) to apply and integrate the principles and concept learned in the modules, (2) to initiate community organizing and (3) to facilitate the community development process in their communities (Songco & Tan, 2000).

As a result of the program accomplishments, a participant noted: “We don’t feel ashamed of ourselves anymore, learned how to speak, and talk and deal with others. We learned a lot through distance education: how to read, write, count, weigh. We cannot be easily deceived or fooled anymore when we do business with the lowlanders”.

#### ***4.4 Livelihood Program***

Since its inception, the TP has provided the Aeta with many livelihood opportunities to assist in addressing the urgent problem of poverty and hunger in their communities: “Life is harsh around here.” Prior to initiation of the TP, the Aeta were eking out a living by selling low-cash crops and charcoal in the nearby markets and at the now defunct Clark Air Base. During the Christmas season, some of them would come down from the mountains to beg for alms on the busy

streets of nearby cities and municipalities; as a result, the TP provided them with regular and generous seminar-trainings on organic farming and marketing of products, seedlings for tree planting (coconut, mango, peanuts, cashew nuts), backyard and communal gardening, breeding and livestock care (pigs, goats, poultry), baking and sewing (in Layak), banana chip-making (in Buok), and even provided some communities (Haduan and Mabilog) with 10,000 pesos of capital to establish and control small *sari-sari* stores at the sites.

The aforementioned livelihood programs helped the Aeta survive for some time; however, several factors contributed to their ultimate failure. A lack or complete absence of agricultural production support, such as irrigation systems, farm tools, farm inputs, and farm-to-market roads, was compounded by high transportation and marketing costs that eventually ended the livelihood initiatives. A lack of budget to sustain the projects over extended periods ultimately led to the failure of these programs that were designed to alleviate poverty: “Due to lack of water, they did not last long. It’s only during the rainy season that we can plant. Just a few manage to raise their living. We are mostly the same just as when they first arrive: logging, charcoal-making and planting root crops.”

#### ***4.5 Health, Medical Care, and Sanitation***

One of the challenges faced by the TP was the Aeta’s lack of access to health and sanitary services, compounded by the scarcity of potable water. The water pumps, originally installed by the TP to address these basic needs, were no longer functioning. As there were no government health clinics in the neighborhoods, the Aeta resorted to natural and indigenous medicines to treat water-borne diseases such as diarrhea. The Aeta also relied heavily on rain water alone for their agricultural and planting needs. To address the associated pressing health and sanitation needs, the TP drilled wells and provided flush toilets and irrigation systems. The program also provided health and nutrition seminars through the Colleges of Nursing and Education, and doctors from the College of Medicine and Surgery conducted annual medical and dental checkups.

#### ***4.6 Environmental Protection***

Traditionally, the ancestral domain of the Aeta not only referred to the land itself, but included all living beings that resided within: trees, plants, animals (wild and domesticated), rivers, rocks, and spirits. This made the protection of the overall natural habitat as important as the ancestral mountain land itself. Over time, sustained contact with the lowlanders influenced the Aeta’s way of relating to nature, and often led to the disregard and/or casting aside of traditional ways of hunting and gathering food. Moreover, the inadequacy of food and limitation of livelihood opportunities forced the Aeta to resort to environmentally unfriendly slash-and-burn methods of farming and charcoal-making. A goal of the TP was to help the Aeta regain a sense of respect for the natural and experienced (sacred) environments.

#### ***4.7 Housing***

In 2003, the TP built 40 concrete houses for the Aeta in Mabilog through the Action Camp for Tomasian Students, in cooperation with the Colleges of Engineering and Architecture. A daycare center was also built for distance learning and where information campaigns on health, sanitation, and maternal care

were conducted for mothers and children. Unfortunately, the center was mainly deserted on weekdays due to the lack of water and livelihood opportunities. As stated by one informant, “Life is difficult around here.” Men travelled frequently to Baguingan, some three kilometers away, to plant/harvest crops and to make charcoals for sale to lowlanders for a hundred pesos per sack.

To help further gauge the extent of the TP’s efforts and activities to improve the living conditions of the Aeta in Bamban, Tarlac, a self-constructed survey questionnaire was administered to a randomly selected group of 247 residents from the seven communities (7% margin of error). From March 16 to April 10, 2011, the respondents were asked to gauge the extent of the goods and services provided by the Project over the course of its implementation.

Among the goods and services that the TP provided in the seven communities, the following were perceived to be the most adequate or satisfactory: the protection and promotion of Aeta’s human rights (net satisfaction score of +64, with 82% of respondents indicating *satisfaction* and 18% indicating *dissatisfaction*), the protection of ancestral domains (net score of +46, with 73% of respondents indicating *satisfaction* and 27% indicating *dissatisfaction*), assistance with becoming self-reliant (net score of +42, with 71% indicating *satisfaction* and 29% indicating *dissatisfaction*), the education and culture appreciation initiatives (net score of +38, with 69% indicating *satisfaction* and 31% indicating *dissatisfaction*), and the building of community and/or social bonding (net score of +30, with 65% indicating *satisfaction* and 35% indicating *dissatisfaction*).

The next cluster of goods and services included those that were perceived as a little more than adequate: the participation in community political life (net satisfaction score of +18, with 59% of respondents indicating *satisfaction* and 41% indicating *dissatisfaction*), the protection of culture and way of life (net score of +10, with 55% indicating *satisfaction* and 45% indicating *dissatisfaction*), the promotion of health and hygiene (net score of +6, with 53% indicating *satisfaction* and 47% indicating *dissatisfaction*), the protection and promotion of the environment (net score of +4, with 52% indicating *satisfaction* and 48% indicating *dissatisfaction*). It should be noted that most satisfaction fell within capacity-building measures. Overall, the TP received a net score of +48, with close to 74% of respondents indicating *satisfaction* and 26% indicating *dissatisfaction*.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned achievements, the respondents believed that the TP had not done enough with respect to the following concerns and needs of the communities: need of food (net satisfaction score of -22, with 61% of respondents indicating *dissatisfaction* and only 39% *satisfaction*), need of water (net score of -16, with 58% indicating *dissatisfaction* and 42% indicating *satisfaction*), the addressing of livelihood issues (net score of -14, with 57% indicating *dissatisfaction* and 43% indicating *satisfaction*), need of jobs (net score of -28, with 64% indicating *dissatisfaction* and 36% indicating *satisfaction*), need of electricity (satisfaction rating of -36, with 68% indicating *dissatisfaction* and 32% indicating *satisfaction*). These categories all fell within poverty-alleviation measures that only provided temporary relief, proving to be short-lived and unsustainable. Table 2 presents results of the perceived extent of outcomes of the TP activities.

Table 2: *Summary on the perceived extent of TP’s Intermediate Outcomes*

	<b>3-Enough</b>		<b>2-Lacking</b>		<b>1-None</b>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Protection of Ancestral Domain</b>	180	73%	67	27%	0	0%
<b>Protection of the Environment</b>	130	52%	117	48%	0	0%
<b>Promotion of Indigenous Culture</b>	137	55%	110	45%	0	0%
<b>Education</b>	172	70%	73	30%	2	0%
<b>Self-Valuing as Indigenous People</b>	171	69%	76	31%	0	0%
<b>Livelihood Program</b>	96	39%	114	46%	37	15%
<b>Provision of Their Basic Human Needs</b>	--			--		-
<b>Food</b>	84	34%	151	61%	12	5%
<b>Water</b>	21	8%	142	58%	84	34%
<b>Housing</b>	56	22%	80	33%	111	45%
<b>Electricity</b>	37	14%	42	18%	168	68%
<b>Health and Sanitation</b>	131	53%	103	42%	13	5%
<b>Jobs</b>	88	35%	127	57%	32	8%
<b>Human Rights</b>	202	82%	44	18%	0	0%
<b>Community- Building</b>	159	65%	88	35%	0	0%
<b>Capacity- Building</b>	176	71%	71	29%	0	0%
<b>Participation in local governance</b>	145	59%	52	21%	50	20%

## 5.0 Evaluation of the End Outcomes

The intermediate outcomes consisted of the completed program activities, which in themselves have little intrinsic value but are desirable in that they lead to the end outcomes. Community Development Projects generally aim to achieve two end outcomes for their target or intended beneficiaries: to help them get by and/or get ahead. Arriola (1995) refers to the programs adopted to achieve such goals as “poverty-alleviation measures” and “measures toward self-reliance”, respectively. The latter aim to provide beneficiaries with opportunities for attaining or increasing self-reliance and self-confidence and helping to gradually alleviate poverty, while the former are provided based on necessity. These two sets of measures may be distinct but are also complementary. As Arriola (1995) notes, “the maximization of the gains from poverty alleviation measures can increase the number of those who can avail of assistance toward self-reliance and empowerment”.

### 5.1 Measures Toward Self-Reliance

Among the end outcomes achieved by the TP within the seven communities, three clearly stood out as having been the most effective and enduring: distance education for adults and pre-school children, the scholarship program for high school and college students, and the Kamanlalakbay leadership formation program. The distance education allowed many Aeta to become literate and to learn basic arithmetic. It also enhanced the participants’ sense of worth and self-confidence, in that it provided the ability to communicate and deal effectively with lowlanders.

The Aeta were very much aware and grateful for the impact provided by the distance education program in their lives, saying that it had empowered them and enabled them to live with greater awareness of their human rights and dignity. The scholarship program also gave their children the opportunity to move ahead in life: Three completed their college programs and began working as teachers in their own communities. The Kamanlalakbay (co-sojourner) Leadership Training Program also produced deeply committed and able leader-partners for the TP.

Overall, the TP created and implemented opportunities for the advancement of the participating Aeta, beginning with basic education, providing training and necessary knowledge and skills, and awarding children with scholarships. These were expected to help the Aeta over the long term and emphasize a path toward *kasaghawan* (wellbeing) for the communities, particularly within an ever increasing globalized society. The Tomas Project was able to build on pre-existing assets, resources, and commitments of the Aeta toward achieving self-reliance and self-development. What explains TP's success in the implementation of programs designed to build self-reliance? Education was the focus of the university's expertise, and almost all of the participants and volunteers with the Project were themselves teachers; as such, the long-term success in enhancing Aeta self-reliance was built in large part on this strength of the University of Santo Tomas team.

## ***5.2 Poverty Alleviation Measures***

Various livelihood projects, such as root-crop planting, animal husbandry, medical and health missions, the building of water pump systems and sanitation facilities, assisted greatly in poverty alleviation. Unfortunately, many of these ventures were not sustainable due to several factors, including a lack of infrastructure support; lack of water and irrigation (particularly during summer); lack of external funding; the wear and tear from daily use; and a more urgent need to care for one's own family or kin as oppose to those of others.

A lack of water took the greatest toll on Aeta life: a deprivation so profound that they would wait for the rainy season "like watchmen wait for sunrise". The lack of piped water in the resettlement area was particularly problematic. The Human Development Report notes that "Not having access to clean water is a euphemism for profound deprivation... The crisis in water and sanitation is above all a crisis for the poor" (United Nations Human Development Program, 2006). The lack of water not only limited the Aeta in achieving sustainable agricultural production, but also affected the health and sanitation conditions of children (the most vulnerable to water-borne ailments).

Overall, the TP did not completely achieve its noble attempts to stimulate the socio-economic life of the Aeta. The livelihood programs and projects, as numerous and well-intended as they were, did not significantly assist in the elimination of poverty. The programs did move the Aeta from the Type B to Type C segment of poverty, where they would have regular, albeit very low, income (minimum wage and below). Despite such a shift, the Aeta are still barely making ends meet, living a hand-to-mouth existence in a place where opportunities and choices are few and far between.

## **6.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

Based on the data gathered from the in-depth interviews, the OCD Tomas Project at its outset employed a need-based or deficit model of development, and thus asked the target beneficiaries questions such as “What do you need?” or “What is it that you don’t have?” These interviews focused on what participants lacked rather than what they had as a point of entry, highlighting and targeting their felt-needs, deficiencies, and problems. As part of its initial activity, the TP conducted an inventory to determine what could be done for the Aeta and what improvements they would have the OCD provide. As a preliminary step in CD, the would-be helpers assessed the Aeta’s needs and deficiencies toward breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty.

The implementation process of the TP was top-down: Subsidies and resources were amply provided and funds were allocated for projects such as housing, distance education, scholarship, livelihood, healthcare, etc. Such an approach has built-in advantages, as it is the conventional way of doing CD and it produces an immediate and tangible impact on the beneficiaries. On the other hand, this same approach is not without its fair share of criticism and disadvantage. It may be quite costly, causing any organization running on a limited budget to become unsustainable over the long term. A need-based approach to community development may also encourage degrees of paternalism and dependence on an external source.

It appears that over time the TP adopted the traditional model for providing assistance, which could not be sustained in the long run due primarily to a lack of social capital. Considered more broadly, the strategy of solely addressing the immediate needs and problems of the Aeta, trapped the program in the conventional mold of seeing the dynamic of community development as involving only the beneficiaries and the benefactors. Building alliances is a vital component of project sustainability, and how well or adeptly the COD/TP did this would determine how effectively and sustainably it carried out its programs.

Did the TP successfully build bonding and bridging capital? UST did try to create social bonding capital for the Aeta by forming and organizing the Bamban Aeta Tribal Organization (BATA), Kakawan in Malasa, Kasighawan in Mabilog, BATARISAN in San Martin, and LUKTA in Hadwan. It also attempted to establish cooperatives in all seven sites. The TP also bridged the Aeta with government units (NICP) and legal advocates (PANLIPI and lawyers from Ateneo de Manila University). Unfortunately, the TP did not successfully bridge the Aeta with those who might have provided them with financial and economic assistance to control and sustain the livelihood programs.

When asked about extending social bridging capital to local government units and non-governmental organizations, the informants answered that UST did not want the project to be politicized. The problem was therefore not that UST did not want to do things for the Aeta, it was that UST did not want to do things with particular others who would have been more than able and willing to help. In light of well-established findings that networking or building relationships with other entities, both public and private, inside and outside the community, is an essential requisite of successful and sustained community development, the lack or absence of such bridging by the TP was one of the most unexpected findings of the current study. That being said, it was evident that with respect to the other four components, the

TP demonstrated a capacity to plan and strategize effectively; to secure the required human, financial, and technical resources; to develop a strong internal management and governance; and to deliver a full range of programs and activities.

The Aeta of Bamban, Tarlac, continue their daily struggle even twenty-some years after the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. A close examination of their living conditions reflects the many positive political and economic changes that have swept through the country, but seem to have passed them by. Those who survived the disaster continue to face an uphill battle in rebuilding their broken lives. Like the majority of the Filipinos, they have dreamed of a day when their personal and collective lives will once again be abundant and stable for the next generation.

One way of achieving such stability is through the strengthening of Aeta political leverage through the organization of their communities. The Aeta must be activated politically in order to catch the attention of those who currently wield all the power. To achieve such organization they must become independent of the charity of others, no matter how helpful it might be in the short term. Anything less than the control over their own destinies will not and cannot be expected to bring them out of their current conditions and into a brighter future.

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