

Regions

Asturias Industries gives TCTs to 626 families in Batangas town

BusinessMirror March 7, 2017 · 4.9K views · 3 minute read



HUNDREDS of families in Calatagan, Batangas, can now look confidently into the future, knowing they own not only the houses they live in, but the land these are built upon.

This was after stakeholders in Calatagan, Batangas, led by Asturias Industries Inc. (Asturias), owned by businessman Ramon S. Ang, ended over 20 years of land dispute, by awarding transfer certificate of titles (TCTs) to families at relocations sites in the progressive town of Balayan.

The awarding of TCTs was the culmination of a sustainable-relocation program that Asturias, the local government and community members initiated. The program took into consideration both the social and economic needs of the beneficiaries and the benefits of development to the rest of the province.

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More than half of the 626 families have received their respective TCTs, representing ownership of the lots they now occupy. The sites were chosen due to their proximity to their proximi and services. They also provide community members easy access to employment, livelihood and development opportunities.

Way back in 2005, the Supreme Court (SC) upheld that the Asturias property, which the company legally acquired from its original owner, is mineral land. This nullified the titles issued by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to occupants of the land. The same decision was upheld by the SC in its 2009 decision.

In 2015 the same petition for the property to be placed under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was denied with finality by the SC, reiterating the property is mineral in nature.

Amid the long and arduous process to end the land dispute, Asturias has kept its door open to dialogue with the community. Eventually, this helped both parties to agree on a sustainable resettlement program for the settlers in the property of Asturias.

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"I am very happy that after several years, you now were able to get titles that are all yours. I remember when I was fighting with you in 1998 and now this bore fruit," Calatagan Mayor Peter Oliver Palacio told the residents who used to occupy lands in barangays Baha and Talibayog, Calatagan, where the formal turnover ceremony was held recently.



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town will host the relocation sites at Barangay Palikpikan, Santol, Sambat, and Barangay Caloocan in Balayan, Batangas.

The awarding of the TCTs was attended by Palacio, Balayan Mayor JR Fronda, former Balayan Mayor Manny Fronda, representatives from the departments of Environment and Natural Resources and Social Welfare and Development, department heads of the municipalities of Balayan and Calatagan, Public Attorney's Office, led by Remedios Berena; and Asturias officials, led by Project Manager Micaela Rosales.

"The Asturias Foundation is committed to help the relocated settlers as long as they need it. We have educational and medical assistance, and we will continue to guide you where you have resettled," Rosales told the residents, adding it will continue to provide support even after the relocation process is completed to improve outcomes and help their community flourish.

One recipient, Renato Villarin, said: "After a long time, my dream came true. This is the happiest day of my life. When I go home, I will give this certificate to my wife. This is victory that I have been telling you. Before we were walking in the dark and did not know where to go. Now, we have a home. This is the start of change and a new life."

Asturias provided financial and technical support in the relocation of legitimate occupants, who owned houses in the 507-hectare property that form part of the 808 hectares owned by Asturias.

The support includes P300,000 financial assistance, payment of the appraised value of each house, assistance in the relocation of the said houses, retrieval of reusable materials for construction and the delivery of these to the relocation sites, assistance in the purchase of relocation lot and acquisition of titles and provision for water and electricity facilities.

Rosales said to date, 300 houses had been successfully relocated and had received valid titles on their relocation lots. Social workers from the Asturias Foundation will continue to provide support and social services like livelihood, capability building and financial literacy training and educational assistance.



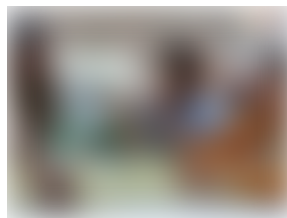
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Mary ann bucalan hernandez
November 22, 2020 at 9:30 pm

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