



Ati Tribe's Home Sweet Home

CASE STUDIES OF COLLECTIVE HOUSING IN ASIAN CITIES SERIES • OCTOBER 2022

The Ati people are an indigenous tribe thought to be the first inhabitants of the Philippine archipelago. Decades of development pressures and environmental destruction have driven many of them from their ancestral highland settlements and into cities, where many live in terrible poverty and isolation. In this project, a forward-looking Christian pastor, who is an Ati himself, raised enough funds and won over enough allies and supporters to be able to buy a small piece of land on the outskirts of Iloilo, where he and a growing group of poor Ati families collectively developed a new and self-sustaining community.

- **Project** Ati Tribe's Home Sweet Home
- **Location** Barangay Lanit, Jaro District, Iloilo City, Philippines
- **Size** 24 households
- **Finished** 2017
- **Type** Collective housing and secure land for a new community of people who are from the Ati indigenous group, on Panay Island, in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines

CONTEXT, PROCESS AND PARTNERS

The city:

Iloilo City is situated on the southeastern Panay Island, in the Western Visayas region of the Philippines. It has a total land area of 78.34 square kilometers, where 57% of its land is classified as residential. Iloilo City is generally a low-lying area, which is why flooding occurs within the city's perimeter, particularly in low-income areas. Iloilo City is divided into six districts, with 180 barangays (sub-districts). In 2022, the city's population was about 450,000, and has a lot of poor and informal communities, where some 14,000 poor families live - many in flood-prone and disaster-prone areas along roads, rivers and the shoreline. Many of these informal communities are on land that is earmarked for government-funded infrastructure projects and some live on privately-owned land, but all face the almost certain threat of eviction eventually.

At the same time, Iloilo has a long history of community-driven action on dealing with these housing problems: land acquisition, housing, infrastructure upgrading, and post-disaster resettlement. Iloilo is also a city with a very active and mature community process. For more than twenty-five years, the Homeless People's Federation in Iloilo has been promoting community savings, developing housing and land acquisition projects, supporting infrastructure upgrading, developing cost-saving alternative building materials, and linking with other community networks in a citywide alliance of urban poor organizations. The city's mayors and municipal government have partnered with the Homeless People's Federation and other community organizations - and with a variety of NGOs and charities - to develop a range of housing relocation and disaster rehabilitation projects, with a policy of no eviction without relocation.

The Ati People:

The Ati are an indigenous ethnic group in the Visayas region, and their story is a fascinating one. The Ati were among the first inhabitants of the Philippine archipelago, and are thought to be the original inhabitants of Panay Island. Legend has it that at some point, centuries before the Spanish arrived, a flotilla of wooden *balangay* boats, carrying of a group of ten Datu chieftains from Borneo and their entourage, arrived on the island. They were fleeing from a tyrannical ruler in Borneo and seeking better fortunes. At first, the Ati were terrified of these strange-looking newcomers, but the Datus assured them that they came in peace. After some time, the ten Datus persuaded the Ati's chief, Marikudo, to sell them the island's lowlands for the price of a gold helmet and a necklace. But before Marikudo and his Ati people withdrew into the highlands, they had a sumptuous feast with the Bornean settlers to celebrate the barter, and that festival is celebrated on Panay Island to this day.

The Ati have their own distinct language, called *Inati*, though speakers of *Inati* have dwindled to a little over 1,000. Most of the Ati are poor and marginalized, and have been so for a long time, as the country's top-down, non-inclusive development has encroached farther and farther into their ancestral highlands with urbanization, agricultural expansion, timber harvesting and tourism. Because of their relative isolation, the Ati find themselves excluded from many of the country's public entitlements like education, healthcare, housing and livelihood support. Very few of the Ati have been able to access the public education system, and that partly explains why many of them cannot find decent jobs.

The Ati community in Iloilo:

Since the ethnic Malay people began displacing the Ati in the Philippines archipelago thousands of years ago and dominating the lowlands, the Ati have traditionally stayed in the mountains. Most Ati communities still live in the highlands, where they survive by practicing swidden farming, hunting and foraging. But poverty and hunger have driven some Ati to come down among the "lowlanders" and to settle in communities like the one described in this case study, located in the outskirts of Iloilo City, with 27 families and a population of about 105 people.

The Ati Tribes Mission Inc. (ATMI) was founded by Pastor Rogelio Elosendo, a native missionary and proud Ati himself. During the course of his travels around Panay, he made contact with many groups of Ati people, who later became part of the housing project described in this case study. Many of the Ati living in this community once lived on the streets of Iloilo, making a living by selling indigenous crafts like medicinal bracelets, handmade purses and herbal plants. Because their earnings were meager, many were compelled to ask for coins from the passers-by. There is a sad joke going around Iloilo that the Ati aren't begging, but are collecting a tax from the lowlanders, since the Ati are the original owners of the land. It became Pastor Rogelio's idea to develop a resettlement project specifically for all these poor and scattered Ati people, where they could form a new and more secure community of their own.

In 2010, Pastor Rogelio and his wife Sylvia traveled to the USA, where they were able to raise enough donor funds to purchase a 3,000 square meter plot of idle agricultural land on the outskirts of Iloilo, in Barangay

Lanit, in Jaro District. First they built a large bamboo and timber building, which doubled as a chapel and a collective shelter (called *bahay kubo* in the local Visayan language), where they worked with some university students to make a survey of Ati people living around the city. During the course of the survey, they invited Ati people who had been living on the streets and in precarious circumstances around Iloilo to come and stay together and be part of their new community. It didn't take long for these Ati families, who came from scattered places, to grow into a tightly-knit community, since many of them were already bound by a shared heritage and family ties. But the community remained one of the poorest in Iloilo.

As an Ati himself, Rogelio envisioned having decent living conditions for all the Ati, and building a community in which the Ati can support each other and prosper. The Ati people's work to secure land, develop themselves and build a self-sustaining community caught the attention of the mayor, the local government, NGOs, academics and other local organizations. With support from the mayor and the local government, the people established a small garden where they grew vegetables and herbs, which they began using for their own consumption and for selling in the market. With help from other organizations, they learned innovative farming techniques which increased their harvests from the garden, and many of the Ati community members go to the city every day to sell their herbs, vegetables and handicrafts. They also began raising fish in ponds, to cook and to sell. The Ati children enrolled in nearby public schools, and many began to study for the first time in their lives.

The housing project:

The Ati's housing conditions in the bamboo communal dwelling remained extremely primitive, though. And even though some of the Ati were earning a little selling their herbs and handicrafts in the city, they were a long way from being able to pay for houses of their own. That's when the mayor asked the Homeless People's Federation to help. The Federation was at that time working on a big housing project of its own, in the municipal resettlement site in Barangay San Isidro (RVHOA), and had been partnering with the Hilti Foundation to build some experimental bamboo houses in that project. The Federation leaders introduced the Hilti team to the Pastor Rogelio and the Ati community, and the foundation agreed to provide houses for the Ati for free. After that, several other organizations came in with other kinds of support. That was the beginning of the new project to build 24 houses, which would provide individual shelter for each Ati family. The people decided to call the project "Home Sweet Home."

The housing project was supported by many partner organizations in Iloilo, who signed an MOU to jointly assist the project in 2015. Besides the mayor, the Federation and the Hilti Foundation, the Ati's supporters included JCI Iloilo Ilang-Ilang, the Base Bahay Foundation, the Dinagyang Foundation, the Western Institute of Technology, San Augustin architecture students and the local and municipal governments in Iloilo.

The 24 single-story duplex houses in the project are built using an unconventional "cement bamboo frame" (*Balay-Kawayan*) building technology that was developed by Base Bahay Foundation, with walls and roof structures made of treated bamboo poles, galvanized iron sheet roofs and wall cladding made of very thinly-plastered screens made of bamboo and wire mesh. The technology makes for a light, comfortable and earthquake-proof house. Each 28 square meter house has two rooms and a toilet.

Facilities in the community include a basketball court, three deep wells, a computer shop, a "sari-sari" provisions store and a church. Because the water from the wells is not drinkable and can only be used for washing clothes and showering, the people have to buy purified drinking water from nearby private water sellers, for about 20 pesos (US\$ 50 cents) a gallon. Aside from these facilities inside the community, the facilities developed by Barangay Lanit nearby the community are also open for use by the Ati people, including a covered gym, a day care center, a barangay hall, and a health center that also operates as a maternity clinic.

Community gardens:

The Ati community cultivates their communal vegetable and herb garden on 3,000 square meters of their own community land. The local government has allowed the community to use some vacant land just outside of the community to expand their garden and grow more vegetables. They also use that government land for their fish-raising ponds and to raise chickens, for meat and eggs. As Pastor Rogelio says, "The garden really helps us a lot, so everyone can have something to eat, even if they have no money or job at all."

SUPPORT GROUPS AND PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT

NOTE: *In many parts of the world, "Inc." after a name means that the organization is a for-profit business or a corporation. But in the Philippines, registering with the Securities and Exchange Commission and getting an "Inc." after your name is the only way for community organizations, homeowners associations, NGOs and other non-profit entities to obtain the formal status that allows them to legally open bank accounts, receive funds, own land and interact with the formal system in various ways.*

Ati Tribes Mission, Inc. (ATMI) identified and selected the family-participants of the 24 houses among the Aeta community; participated in the survey, data analysis, planning, and implementation of the project in order to ensure community acceptability and approval of the project; provide the documents necessary for securing permits, licenses, and other requirements; executed the usufruct agreement in favor of the respective family-beneficiaries for the use and enjoyment of the housing unit; worked with the LGU to specify portions of the property allotted for the establishment of a road network and drainage system; and provided the manpower for the construction of the 25 housing units and other infrastructures, thereby fostering community participation during the project construction.

Homeless Peoples Federation Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI) designated focal persons tasked to directly coordinate with BBI and JCI representatives regarding the technical services provided. HPFPI assisted JCI in ensuring compliance with the requirements of relevant laws, rules, and regulations, as well as in securing the necessary permits and other pertinent documents related to the implementation of the project; assisted in the land development and construction processes through close coordination with the LGU; facilitated the provision of technical assistance in the availing of reductions and exemptions for the project, and overall streamlining of processes.

Base Bahay provided technical consultancy and related services regarding the construction, development, and manufacture of affordable alternative building materials; assisted and provided facilities to communities and other organizations involved in the construction of affordable housing and the application of alternative building materials. Provided and presented the design framework of the 24 houses for the project, including the structural design, architectural rendition, and analysis; planned and executed the construction of the houses and ensured the overall quality of the project by monitoring compliance to standards during construction in the following areas: housing foundation, bamboo sourcing, treatment, and panel production and installation.

Hilti Foundation is private philanthropic foundation based in Liechtenstein, which (among other things) promotes alternative bamboo technology in making affordable housing. Hilti works closely with Bas Bahay and assisted JCI in disseminating information about the Ati project through its website and social media.

Municipal government of Iloilo designated focal persons tasked to directly coordinate with BBI, JCI, USA and WIT representatives in relation to the technical services provided. The LGU facilitated the procurement of permits, licenses, and other requirements as well as provided assistance for the infrastructure, logistical, and technical support. Moreover, the LGU conducted a geo-hazard assessment of the project site along with the HPFPI, University of San Agustin (USA), and WIT to identify and employ the necessary mitigating measures that would ensure safety in the preparation of the site development plan; pursued regular monitoring of the project through collaboration with all other parties especially with respect to the technical integrity, maintenance, and expansion of the housing units and the overall development within the community.

Local Government of Barangay Lanit facilitated access to public services such as the construction of a drainage system to prevent flooding and the improvement of municipal and barangay roads to establish faster access to goods and services.

University of San Agustin, Department of Architecture executed the site development plan, environmental plan, and land development of the project based on the Execution Plan prepared and approved by the parties; provided faculty and student volunteers to help in different phases of the project implementation; created a suitable design of the Tourist House/Museum and other facilities that composed the cultural village, ensuring that these would reflect the unique culture and characteristics of the Aeta community; assisted in identifying and accessing potential sources of funding; and promoted public awareness of Indigenous Peoples like the Ati to further encourage community involvement, technical assistance, and volunteerism in the project.

Western Institute of Technology (WIT) identified appropriate representatives of WIT to the Home Sweet Home-Technical Working Group (HSHTWG) as convened by JCI; collaborated and assisted in creating and developing the site development plan and other civil works plan (road network plan); assisted and coordinated with the LGU in providing the electrical and plumbing plan (which included the drainage system) as set in the housing design framework.

Junior Chamber International Philippines Iloilo Ilang-Ilang, Inc. (JCI) provided community development opportunities that empowered young people to create positive change; initiated to adopt the Ati community in Barangay Lanit, under its *Langit sa Lanit* Program

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROJECT

Land tenure:

The 3,000 square foot lot that the housing project is built on is registered as legally owned by Ati Tribes Mission, and the 24 families living there all have long-term user rights to their houses, without having to pay anything for the land and houses, as purchase prices or rent. The houses are fully a grant to the families. When the Ati Tribes Mission was working out the tenure arrangements for the new houses, they decided to use a "usufruct" agreement (long-term user rights) as a legal tool to ensure the people who live in those houses can continue to stay there and will not be able to sell their houses to outsiders. The "usufruct" land-use rights for the 24 houses are permanent. In case the original holder of the land use rights dies, the right will be transferred to his or her children or relatives. The agreement also contains provisions for making each family responsible for maintaining their bamboo house. The local government has made the surrounding government-owned land available to the Ati community for the community gardening and fish ponds.

PROJECT FINANCING

Exchange rate in 2015: 45.5 pesos = US\$ 1

Project costs and who paid for what:

Land:

The 3,000 square meter lot cost 1.5 million pesos (US\$ 32,967), and was paid for by donations Pastor Elosendo and his wife were able to raise on their visit to missionaries in the USA.

Houses:

The cost of constructing the 24 semi-detached 28 m² houses (which all have individual toilets) and developing the site came to about 6 million pesos (US\$ 131,868), which was provided as a grant from the Hilti Foundation. Each 28 square meter house cost 250,000 pesos (US\$ 5,495), including materials and labor (which was partly provided by the Ati families, as their labor contribution to the project).

Infrastructure:

- **Drains:** The cost of preparing the drainage system for the whole property came to 100,000 pesos (US\$ 2,198), and was paid for by ATMI.
- **Roads:** The cost of laying the paved roads came to about 1.5 million pesos (US\$ 32,967), and was paid by the local government.
- **Water supply:** The cost of building a common deep well and pump, as the community's shared water source, was paid for by ATMI.
- **Electricity:** The cost of linking electricity connections to the community from the main trunk supply came to 100,000 pesos (US\$ 2,198), which was also paid for by ATMI.

Project support costs:

Technology-related expenses and professional support for the housing project, by the Base Bahay Foundation and the Homeless People's Federation, was provided free.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

House design and construction:

The design of the 28 square meter semi-detached houses in the Home Sweet Home project was provided by the Base Bahay Foundation, which has used the simple design in several other projects. In the unconventional construction system used for the houses, which also came from the Base Bahay Foundation, the walls and roof structure are made of treated bamboo poles, clad in bamboo panels and plastered only very thinly. This environmentally friendly construction system uses very little steel and cement, and produces an earthquake-resistant house. The Base Bahay Foundation, which was a key partner in the Ati housing project, calls this technology the *Balay-Kawayan* or cement bamboo house technology. Although the houses were built by the professional team from Base Bahay Foundation, the Ati community members all took part in contributing manual labor during housing construction, including unloading bamboo poles and carrying construction materials.

COMMUNITY AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project timeline:

- 2010:** Pastor Rogelio and his wife Sylvia travel to USA to raise funds for the project, and purchase the new land when they return to Iloilo. The adjacent lands surrounding the ATMI's lot are bought by the government.
- 2013:** Work on the church and tribal hall begins. 25 Ati children come to live in the area, and their parents join them later. More families come to live in the community.
- 2014:** Mayor surveys the community. Hilti Foundation links with ATMI and house construction planning begins.
- 2015:** Housing construction begins.
- 2017:** All 24 houses in the Home Sweet Home Project are finished in June, and Ati families move in. Concrete road into the site is built by mayor.

During the turnover ceremony, when the houses were officially granted to the families who would live in them, some gas stoves, rice cookers, and other electronic items were donated to the families by JCI-Manila. Many of these items were not really used, though, since many of the housing units weren't connected to electricity yet. Some families sold these donated items or exchanged them for rice instead.

As part of their project management, community members participate in yearly beautification projects, in which families compete with each other to showcase the most beautiful and well-kept house. Besides motivating community members to look after their houses, the event is another way to bring community members together in creative and self-benefiting ways.

Orphanage for Ati children:

There are also some Ati children with no parents who live in the orphanage that has been built in the center of the Ati community. The children are jointly looked after by the community members and ATMI. Pastor Rogelio is working to find ways that the community can accommodate more Ati children, from various parts of Panay Island.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

Social and political impacts:

There are very few examples of housing initiatives like this one for marginalized indigenous people who have migrated into the city from their rural roots. This was a pioneering project which provided secure homes for the Ati, and it has brought about substantial changes in their lives. Pastor Rogelio hopes the Home Sweet Home project will become a model for Ati communities in other parts of the Western Visayas region.

The community's social activities and religious practices have brought the people closer together. Every Sunday, community members all go to church together. A youth group is in charge of playing worship music and organizing story-telling workshops for the children. A variety of outside organizations have continued to support the community's development with community education programs, livelihood training workshops, cultural programs, advocacy seminars and community organizing.

Most of the community children now study in a nearby school which is just a 15 minute walk away. The community now has Wi-Fi access, and a computer center has been set up in the church, where community children could do their online classes during the Covid lockdowns. There are plans to establish an educational facility within the community for elementary students, with support from the Department of Education. In 2017, the Ati tribe celebrated its first college graduate, and this success is something the tribe hopes to repeat in the future, with better education and better opportunities for a community of people who have long been excluded from the country's development in every way.

Economic impacts:

Weaving dried local grasses and rags to create native craft products has become one of the community-led livelihood initiatives of the Ati community, to boost household incomes. The weaving initiative has been supported by training and marketing support from a Philippine-Japan NGO. The Ati women weave mats and bags and sell them on the streets of Iloilo, outside shopping malls, or during special festival occasions like Christmas and Dinagyang, when they can also showcase and sell fresh produce from their communal garden: papaya, spinach and various kinds of leafy greens.

Gardening is a way of life for the Ati tribe. Over the years, several organizations have helped the community members to refine their gardening skills and learn to grow vegetables and medicinal herbs organically. The community has also developed some large shaded fish-ponds on borrowed government land around the community, where they raise native catfish and other kinds of fish, to eat and to sell. Catfish usually takes three months to harvest. In order to get a harvest every month, the community has developed a system of growing the catfish in many sections, on a staggered schedule. The community sees their weaving, and their vegetables and fish production, which are managed collectively, as a potential main source of income for the people in the community.

Problems:

Some problems with the housing have emerged only after the project was finished. Poor drainage in the area has caused some flooding in the houses during very heavy rains, and the community is now looking at how to raise the floor level a bit. The houses are quite small, and for large families of five or more members, the sharing of limited space has been a challenge. Since many families still cook in their traditional way, on a wood-burning fire, cooking inside the house isn't a good idea. So many families have built covered extensions at the back of their houses, to make a more practical open-air cooking area.

Community kitchen during the pandemic:

When the Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdowns came, even those Ati community members who could earn lost their jobs or means of earning. There were very few people to buy crafts or herbs from the Ati. Things got so bad that many people in the community were only eating once or twice a day, and hunger became a real issue. That's when they decided to start a community kitchen, to make sure that every single person in the Ati community would eat at least one good meal every day. For over a year, during the worst of the Covid crisis, the Ati community ran its own community kitchen, which fed everyone in the community with one nutritious meal each day. The 24 families took turns doing the cooking, and they used fish, vegetables and protein sources from their own fish ponds and vegetable gardens, supplemented by some donated rice and other ingredients.

The Ati people have a long tradition of living on the land, and still have great skills as hunters and foragers. These skills have come in handy during the pandemic, when it came to running the community kitchen and feeding everyone in the community every single day. Many times, the protein-rich lizards, snakes, turtles and other wild game the young men caught on their hunting expeditions went right into the day's soup, along with the vegetables and aromatic herbs they grow in their garden. *Lizard soup?* some visitors may have gasped. But Rogelio always reassured them, "It tastes just like chicken, and the Ati have their own way to cook these things, to make them delicious." With all those vegetables and those nutritious lizard soups, the people in the Ati community remained remarkably healthy during the long pandemic, and by early 2022, there hadn't been a single Covid infection in the community. So sturdy has their health been that there is a joke going around that maybe the blood from the Ati people would make a good vaccine since they are so strong when it comes to resisting Covid.

STORIES FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Pastor Rogelio Elosendo: Pastor Rogelio discovered some of his Ati relatives living on the street near a shopping mall in Iloilo. Most of them were living rough in the city, sleeping on woven mats on the ground. He talked to a woman whom he later found out was his first cousin. Finding out that they were related to him

by blood made this encounter even more moving for him. Many children who lived in these areas lost their lives due to different illnesses, including pneumonia, since they had no place to live with decent facilities to take care of themselves. When Pastor Rogelio was invited by an American ministry to come to the United States in 2010, he told the Ati dwellers to pray for his success, so that he would be able to raise funds to purchase some land within the city, to make a new community especially for the Ati people. This would be a place where the Ati could live together and support each other. The houses could be very simple, but at least they would be houses the people could call their own. They would not have to sleep in the streets anymore. *(Pastor Rogelio Elosendo, an Ati himself, is the founder of the Ati Tribes Mission)*



Gina Salveo Nicor: "I consider myself lucky and really blessed because of the opportunity to live in this house; it is much better than having no house at all. Now I only have to worry about food and milk to feed my child. I am part of the weaving group. When we focus on our weaving, we find that we can sit through the entire day, without thinking about food." *(Gina Salveo Nicor, 37, is an Ati weaver from Dumarao, Capiz)*

Lorena Palacios: Lorena was one of the first Ati people to come to live in the land in Barangay Lanit, before the housing project began. When a local NGO conducted a workshop with the Ati tribe, the people were asked to write on a small piece of paper the answer to this question: What do you want to have or achieve in the next five to ten years? This was Lorena's answer: "First and foremost, I prayed for a house of my own. Next I wanted to get married. And finally, I wanted my husband to land a permanent job." *(Lorena Palacios, 29, is the secretary of the Ati Tribes Mission. She comes from Pototan, Iloilo)*



Mary Kris Magbanua: Mary Kris Magbanua, 22, from Pototan, Iloilo arrived in Barangay Lanit in 2012, together with Lorena. Four years later, she returned to Pototan to study. After giving birth to her child in 2020, she came back to this resettlement area. She is one of the youth representatives of the Ati tribe who regularly participate in activities such as preaching, singing and performing in the church when visitors come to visit the community. Mary Kris is smart and a good student. *"This house is a blessing for us since we do not have anywhere else to dwell and sleep. And here, we are brought closer to God."*

Eliane Ardenio: Eliane Ardenio, 59, from Antique Province, currently works at the Ati Tribe Mission as a cook and helper. All of her children were able to get a decent education through her own "kusog" or perseverance and determination, with only minimal help from her husband. *"It's really important to always persevere, because if you do not do anything, nothing good will come."*



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

This case study was written in 2021 by Lyn Alexandria Novilla and edited by Ericka Lynne Nava at PACSII. The case study brings together stories gathered from these members of the Ati community: Pastor Elosendo, Sylvia Elosendo, Eliane Ardenio, Emily Batsancilla, Ferminia Valencia, Gina Salveo Nicor, Lorena Palacios, Mary Kris Magbanua, Regina Magbanua, Rodel Valencia and Rowela Valencia.

Please follow these links to more materials about the Ati housing project in Iloilo:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BqSzWH6pVJBrRNdeQ2M4pJuTNMg1hGq9?usp=sharing>

For more information about the Ati tribes in general:

<https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-communities-and-traditional-arts-sccta/central-cultural-communities/the-ati-of-negros-and-panay/>

For more information about this project and other housing projects supported by the Philippines Homeless People's Federation, please contact:

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PHOTOS



The Ati people are an indigenous group who are thought to have been the first occupants of the Philippine archipelago. Many Ati communities still live together in communities in the highlands of Panay Island (above left), but some have also migrated to the cities, where many live in poverty on the streets (above right).



That's Pastor Rogelio Elosendo, with his wife Sylvia, on their trip to USA in 2010, to raise funds to buy land and make the housing project.



Once they had purchased the land on the outskirts of Iloilo, the first step was to build a communal shelter where the Ati people could stay.



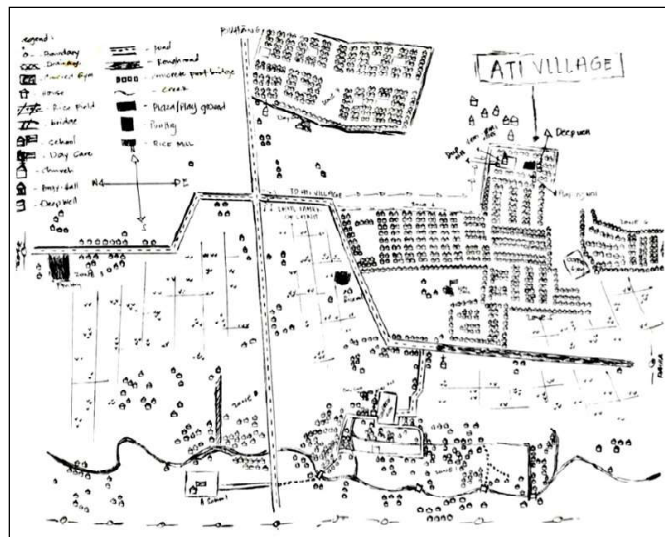
The communal shelter was built very simply and cheaply, in the traditional "bahay kubo" style, using local bamboo and timber and tin sheets.



That's Pastor Rogelio saying mass in the communal shelter, where a growing number of Ati people from around Iloilo came to stay.



That's the communal shelter from the outside. The building doubled as a chapel, school room, dormitory and meeting hall.



A hand-drawn map of the new Ati community and surrounding areas, showing their community gardens on borrowed government land.



A meeting in the Ati community with friends from the Homeless People's Federation and other allies to discuss the housing project.



A meeting with the mayor Iloilo, who became a big supporter of the Ati community and their project to build a new community.



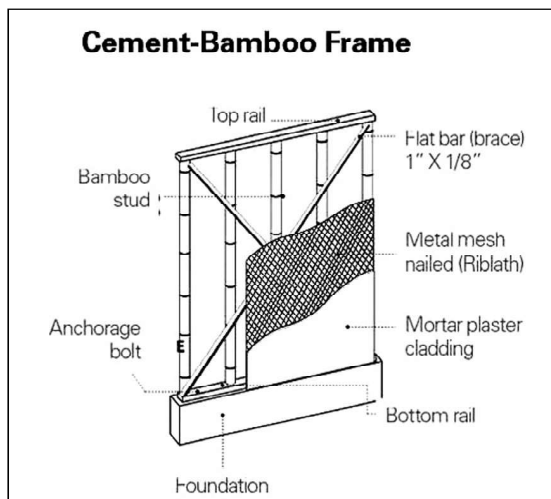
A photo from the ceremony to sign an MOU, in which the mayor, the Homeless People's Federation, the Hilti Foundation and several other supporters all pledged to work together to make the Ati housing project a reality.



Surveying and validating the new members of the Ati housing project - including lots of kids.



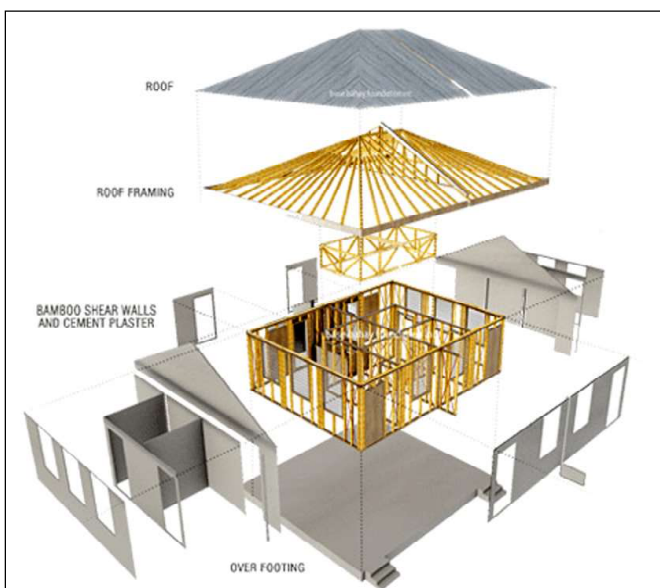
Here the community members are signing their “usufruct” land rights agreements, which give them lifelong rights to their new houses.



A drawing from the Base Bahay Foundation that explains how the thinly-plastered walls of the cement-bamboo houses are put together.



The Base Bahay Foundation has built this full-size model of a house built using their cement bamboo technology, to show how it works.



A diagram from Base Bahay showing how the concrete bamboo frame technology works.



Unloading the treated bamboo poles, which became the main structural material in the new houses in the Ati community.



Here the bamboo and timber wall sections have been put in place, on top of the concrete foundations of the duplex houses.



The plastered walls look like ordinary walls from the outside, but in fact they are made of very thinly-plastered mats made from bamboo and wire mesh.



A couple of photos of the construction site when the houses were being built. The construction was done mostly by skilled carpenters and masons from the Base Bahay Foundation, but the Ati community people pitched in with a lot of the unskilled labor.



Here the galvanized and brightly-colored iron roofing sheets are being put in place by the workers, on one pair of duplex units.



That's what the bamboo framing of the roofs looks like from the inside. On the left you can see the plastered walls between the bamboo poles.



Some photos taken in 2017, showing the almost-completed houses, with their cheerful green roofs. The sheet metal roofing even covers the parapet of the wall that separates the two units, to prevent any rain from getting in and damaging the bamboo structure.



This lovely aerial photo of the finished housing project came from video footage taken by the Base Bahay Foundation, using a drone.



This is the "turnover: ceremony, in which a big symbolic key to the finished project was handed over to the Ati families, by all their smiling helpers and well-wishers, from the local government, from support foundations and from the Homeless People's Federation.



More photos from the turnover ceremony, with ribbons being cut and votes of thanks and speeches by visiting dignitaries.



The concrete road that passes by two sides of the new housing was built and paid for by the local government authorities from Barangay Lanit. There aren't many cars going by, so the road makes a nice playground for the Ati kids.



More photos of the Ati housing project after the families had some time to adorn their new houses with flowers, shrubs and picket fences.



A couple of enterprising families with houses facing the road and the plaza have set up small provisions stores in front of their houses. These little shops are called sari-sari ("point - point") shops in the Philippines.



That's the Ati community's almost-finished orphanage and children's center, which was built after the housing project was completed.



Inside the children's center is a computer lab, with Wi-Fi, where kids could do their online classes during the Covid lockdowns.



No community in the Philippines should be without a basketball court, and here is the one in the plaza of the Ati community.



The water from the three deep wells is okay for bathing and washing clothes, but people have to buy their drinking water from nearby sellers.



Many of the women in the Ati community weave mats and make handicraft products from woven grasses, which they sell in the city and during festivals like Christmas and Dinagyang, to boost their household incomes.



Here is one of the many big fish ponds, on adjacent land borrowed from the local government, where the Ati people raise a local species of catfish and many other kinds of fish, which they use for both their own consumption and for selling.



The extensive vegetable gardens the Ati people cultivate organically - also on adjacent land borrowed from the local government - have become another crucial source of nutrition for the community members, and also a source of income.



Some photos from the days of the Covid pandemic, when the Ati people ran their own community kitchen, which fed every single person in the community with one nutritious meal each day, for more than a year, with families taking turns doing the cooking.