

# **UnderMining Rights: Mining-Induced Human Rights Violations and Environmental Destruction**



**ALYANSA  
TIGIL MINA**

March 2026

By Jaybee Garganera and Rhoda Viajar



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## Introduction

The last quarter of 2025 brought to national attention an unprecedented, massive corruption scandal involving flood control projects in the Philippines. As the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee conducted investigations into anomalous infrastructure projects, the public discovered that billions of pesos had been pocketed by members of the Senate and House of Representatives, private contractors, and officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

Suddenly, Filipinos were jolted from a long stupor in which kickbacks from government projects were seemingly tolerated, if not accepted. The



gargantuan amount of taxpayers' money stolen and the systemic nature of corruption galvanized the public to take to the streets by the thousands to demand full accountability from the perpetrators.

Although there is no exact figure on the total amount of money lost to flood control and infrastructure corruption, Senator Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, head of the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee, has estimated that around 60 percent of the country's flood control funds have been stolen. Considering that the government has spent more than P1.9 trillion on flood control over the past 15 years, this means that P1.14 trillion have been pocketed.<sup>1</sup>

Amidst all this, it is not surprising that entrenched political dynasties were implicated in the budget scandal. It appears that vast power was unashamedly used to enrich individuals and advance interests.

In the mining sector, political dynasties similarly wield immense influence as they push for policies that directly benefit them, either as investors or beneficial owners<sup>2</sup> of mining corporations. Consequently, this means that rampant human rights violations and environmental destruction in mining-affected communities are ignored as government agencies fail to take action on complaints and petitions.

Throughout the long history of resistance to destructive mining in the Philippines, there has been a strong connection between corruption, political dynasties, and human rights abuses. This report presents the experiences of mining-affected communities to illustrate this relationship.

It is hoped that through this documentation, the various issues concerning mining-affected communities, particularly human rights violations and abuses, will be surfaced and eventually addressed.

This paper is divided into thirteen sections. Section 1 deals with the mining policies and declarations under the administration of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. Section 2 presents mining statistics and the dismal contribution of mining to the economy.

Sections 3 to 10 document the stories of human rights violations from mining operations in eight mining *Sites of Struggles (SoS)*, namely: Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya; Dupax del Norte, Nueva Vizcaya; Aroroy, Masbate;

Sibuyan Island, Romblon; Brooke's Point, Palawan; Homonhon Island, Guiuan, Eastern Samar; Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental; and, South Upi, Maguindanao, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Section 11 discusses the impacts of mining on women's rights, while Section 12 deals with the international engagements on mining.

The report ends with Section 13, which enumerates the demands and recommendations of Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) for the mining industry.

## I. Policies on Large-Scale Mining under PBBM

Immediately after being sworn in as the 17<sup>th</sup> President of the Philippines, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. announced through Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno that his administration would revitalize the mining industry.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the PBBM administration reinforced the pro-mining policies of Rodrigo Duterte, who governed the mining industry through Executive Order



130, which lifted the nine-year moratorium on new mining agreements. To make matters worse, before his administration ended, Duterte revoked the ban on open-pit mining.

It seems that PBBM is intent on continuing his predecessor's pro-mining policies as he sought to enact further measures that would realize his goal of achieving a vibrant mining industry.

Under the House Speakership of the President's cousin, Martin Romualdez, Congress legislated the Enhanced Fiscal Regime for Large-Scale Metallic Mining Act (RA 12253). According to environmental activists, the law heavily favors mining companies as it deviates from the original bill they supported and lowers potential government revenues.<sup>4</sup>

On February 23, 2023, barely a year into his presidency, PBBM signed Executive Order No. 18, "An Order Constituting Green Lanes for Strategic Investments". The EO streamlined the permit and licensing processes for strategic investments, including mining and mineral processing. According to reports, for 2026, the Board of Investments (BOI) is hoping to shift the focus of its investment promotion efforts to mining, mineral processing, and digital infrastructure.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, there is a proposed legislation backing EO 18 that will fast-track the development of so-called clean energy projects. The House of Representatives Trade and Industry Committee has already approved a consolidated version of various House bills to this effect.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently, the government and the mining industry have been exploiting the tragedy of the climate crisis by harping on the need for more mining activities to provide minerals for renewable energy.

At the Opening of the Mining Philippines 2025 International Conference and Exhibition, organized by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), the President posed what he considered a vital question: "How can the Philippines become a reliable source of critical minerals for a greener future?"<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, PBBM is intent on making the Philippines a top exporter of minerals, such as nickel, cobalt, and copper, by expanding mining operations.

In addition to the oft-quoted but empty and unsubstantiated concept of “responsible mining”, the PBBM administration justifies current large-scale mining projects as crucial in addressing the climate crisis. Joining the chorus are mining corporations and multilateral banks — including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) — which have rebranded themselves as part of the solutions to worsening climate change.

However, in several national and international forums, climate activists, environmental groups, and human rights organizations have strongly asserted that more mining is a “false solution” to the climate crisis.

According to the Thematic Social Forum on Mining (TSF-Mining), the so-called green or energy transition “reproduces the same extractivist and capitalist logic responsible for ecological destruction and social injustice.”<sup>8</sup>

“By placing the mining system at the center of the response to climate change, this narrative creates a false and dangerous illusion — one that hides the continuation of a predatory and colonial model exploiting people and territories in the name of decarbonization and technological progress,” TSF-Mining said in its Mining Declaration at Belem, Brazil last November 2025 during the Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).<sup>9</sup>

In other words, the so-called shift to renewable energy sources perpetuates the same system or world order that has caused catastrophic climate change. The energy transition tragically fails to address the fundamental problem of overconsumption, especially among rich nations in the Global North.

To illustrate, much of the mined minerals will be used for electric vehicles<sup>10</sup>, military technology, and weapons. Instead of transforming the consumption patterns of North countries and correcting global inequality, the shift to renewable energy will just maintain the status quo. In this business-as-usual arrangement, corporations and governments profit from the suffering of people from underdeveloped countries and the devastation of the planet.



In his same speech at the 2025 Mining Conference, President Marcos, Jr. rambled on about how his administration is committed to a “responsible, inclusive, and climate-resilient” mining sector.

“Irresponsible mining has no place in our nation. We will strictly enforce the laws against practices that destroy forests, that poison rivers, that endanger lives. Mining should build communities, not burden them,” he said.<sup>11</sup>

For those resisting the environmental destruction of mining, this pronouncement is mere rhetoric. As shown by the on-the-ground experiences of mining-affected communities, laws are largely ignored and violated by mining corporations with impunity, often with assistance from government agencies.

In the rare times that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) act on complaints, or issue Cease and Desist Orders (CDOs) or suspension of operations, the legal orders are not enforced. Most times, disgruntled community members have to set up barricades to bring attention to their plight.

These barricades are usually broken up, and the protestors are dispersed as police personnel employ violent means and unwarranted brutality. But despite being left with virtually no remedies for their woes, residents persist in exposing the ills of mining and voicing their opposition.

At present, residents in five *Sites of Struggles (SoS)* have erected barricades to oppose mining operations in their communities. These are: 1) Dupax del Norte in Nueva Vizcaya; 2) Homonhon Island in Guiuan, Eastern Samar; 3) Sibuyan Island in Romblon; 4) Manicani Island in Guiuan, Eastern Samar; and 5) MacArthur in Leyte.

All of these communities are demanding an immediate halt to mining operations and the revocation of mining permits of corporations violating various environmental and human rights laws, processes, and requirements.

## II. Mining and the Economy

PBBM’s strong support for the mining industry is illustrated by the total number of approved mining contracts under his regime. As of January 31, 2026, 31 Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSAs), 56 Exploration Permits (EPs), and 88 Mineral Processing Permits have been approved.

**Table 1. Total Number of Valid and Existing Mining Contracts and Those Approved Under PBBM as of January 31, 2026**

(Source: Mines and Geosciences Bureau)

Mining Contracts	Number of Valid and Existing Contracts	Approved Under PBBM
Financial or Technical Assistance Agreements (FTAAs)	6	0
Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSAs)	283	31
Exploration Permits (EPs)	57	56 (1 converted to mining tenement)
Mineral Processing Permits (MMPs)	123	88

In terms of offshore mining and seabed quarrying, there currently exist two FTAAs, nine MPSAs, 13 EPs, and six Government Seabed Quarry Permits (GSQPs), with many applications pending approval.

**Table 2: Offshore Tenements (as of 2025)**

(Source: Mines and Geosciences Bureau)

Mining Contracts	Applications	Approved
Financial or Technical Assistance Agreements (FTAAs)	15	2
Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSAs)	2	9
Exploration Permits (EPs)	99	13
Government Seabed Quarry Permits (GSQPs)	6	6

Despite the government’s aggressive promotion of mining and the high number of valid and existing mining contracts, the mining industry’s



contribution to the economy remains dismal. The Philippine Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (PH-EITI) reports that the mining and quarrying (MAQ) subsector represents only a small portion of domestic economic activity compared with services and other industry sectors. Over the years, MAQ's contribution to GDP has ranged from only 0.4 percent to 0.8 percent. In 2023, the industry contributed 2.5 percent to GDP, while MAQ's share was estimated at only 0.7 percent, remaining steady into the following year.<sup>12</sup>

Also, there is no truth to claims that the mining industry provides significant employment to the Philippines. Based on a study done by the International Labor Organization (ILO), employment in the mining of metal ores industry represents only about 0.2 percent of total employment in the country, with 70 percent of workers engaged in elementary occupations.<sup>13</sup>

### **III. Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya**

Didipio residents have a long historical struggle against large-scale mining that is fraught with human rights violations.<sup>14</sup>

The community's resistance dates back to 1989, when a geological survey in Didipio and nearby villages was conducted. Three years later, in 1992, exploration activities began, and deposits of gold and copper were discovered. These all led to the country's first Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) executed on 20 June 1994 – valid for 25 years and renewable for another 25.

OceanaGold Philippines Inc. (OGPI), which operates the Didipio mines, sought to extend its contract for another 25 years “under the same terms and conditions” when it applied for a renewal of its FTAA in October 2018.<sup>15</sup>

Despite not being informed promptly by OGPI of their application, the local government and residents registered their opposition to the FTAA renewal through local government resolutions, petitions, and letters to government agencies and international bodies.<sup>16</sup>

But without public consultations, the MGB immediately endorsed OGPI's application to the DENR, which allowed the company to continue its



operations.<sup>17</sup> However, the renewal process dragged on until the contract expired on 20 June 2019.<sup>18</sup>

A week later, the late Governor Carlos Padilla issued an order to stop the mine's operations due to the contract's expiration. Soon after, on 1 July 2019, residents transformed two abandoned police checkpoints into barricades to prevent the entry and exit of trucks and machinery to the mining site.<sup>19</sup>

The barricades extended until the COVID 19 pandemic lockdowns in 2020. But much to the dismay of the residents, a violent dispersal marred their otherwise peaceful protests.

On 6 April 2020, around 100 police personnel confronted the protestors at the worst possible time, as this was during the pandemic, when the entire country, and most parts of the world, were on lockdown and isolated from each other.<sup>20</sup>

"Why were there 100 policemen?" Myrna Duyan of the women's group Bileg Dagiti Babbae (Bileg) wondered. "It was mind-boggling as there were only around 30 of us at the barricades that day. Why were there so many? We were not even criminals."<sup>21</sup>



Later, the residents discovered that the police were meant to escort three gas tankers into the mining site. “We were unable to do anything because there were so many of them. We were standing by, a good distance from them, when suddenly we were being pulled apart,” narrated Myrna.<sup>22</sup>

According to her, DESAMA’s Chairperson, Rolando Pulido, sustained wounds and scratches. He was sitting on the ground when the police forced him to leave his spot. But, since the police were blocking him, he couldn’t move anywhere. So, he rolled over and went under the tanker. “They tried to pull him out, but couldn’t move him. So they kept poking him with sticks and truncheons,” she said.<sup>23</sup>

Myrna herself suffered harshly from the clash, along with others who were injured. “I was preoccupied with taking videos when three policewomen blocked my view. They tried to pull me away from where I was standing.” Suddenly, the police were stomping their shields on her toes. “They did this three times,” she said, noting that thereafter her toenails fell off. “For almost a month, I couldn’t go to work.”<sup>24</sup>

Another member of Bileg, Joan Sicoan, revealed that community members were traumatized by the police’s brutal acts. “Until now, we suffer from trauma as we saw what they were capable of, what the mining company could do: that they could use the police to disperse us.”<sup>25</sup>

“During that time, we were really scared,” Joan disclosed, noting that they were charged with violating quarantine rules soon after the dispersal. “We weren’t able to work. When our hearing date came, it was difficult for us. Sometimes, we had to bring our children to the hearing because no one could look after them,” she said while expressing relief that she and her companions eventually won the case.<sup>26</sup>

The barricades, which stretched for more than two years, folded up in August 2021, when the community learned that the national government had already renewed OGPI’s FTAA for another 25 years.

On the occasion of Earth Day on 22 April 2024, concerned residents filed a Petition for Certiorari before the Regional Trial Court (RTC) in Bayombong,

Nueva Vizcaya, seeking to compel the President to cancel the renewed FTAA on the ground of grave abuse of discretion.

According to a case briefer prepared by the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC)<sup>27</sup>, petitioners argued that the FTAA renewal is unconstitutional because it undermines local autonomy. The briefer said that mining operations are considered “environmentally-critical projects” and that OGPI failed to conduct prior consultations and obtain approval for the renewed FTAA as required by various laws. It stressed that these requirements had to be met before the President could approve the renewal.

LRC added that the renewed FTAA, as a proposed major mining project that is “separate and distinct” from the original FTAA, must undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and obtain an Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC).

Unfortunately, the petition was denied by the RTC, as it ruled that the new FTAA was not a renewal but an extension of the original agreement. Thereafter, on 19 December 2025, the petitioners appealed the case before the Supreme Court. No action has yet been taken by the higher court.

## **IV. Dupax del Norte, Nueva Vizcaya**

Violence erupted in Dupax del Norte just three weeks into this new year, when around 300 policemen dismantled the barricades of residents protesting Woggle Corporation’s mining exploration activities.<sup>28</sup>

On 23 January 2026, during the barricade’s dismantling, several people were hurt, two fainted, and seven individuals were arrested – six of whom were women – for charges that were dismissed the next day for lack of probable cause.<sup>29</sup> Those arrested were initially charged with contempt of court, obstruction of justice, resistance, and disobedience to persons in authority.<sup>30</sup>

Describing the number of deployed policemen as an “overkill”, Rene Pamplona, Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) Chairperson, called the brutal display of police force “unacceptable”.<sup>31</sup>





“For one, the residents have no other recourse but to put up a barricade to register their opposition to mining and to Woggle’s exploration activities,” Pamplona said in a statement. “Woggle Corporation and the government have utterly failed to conduct genuine public consultations and obtain the communities’ consent. No exploration activities should therefore be permitted, and the people’s resistance should be respected.”<sup>32</sup>

The dispersal of the barricade was undertaken by virtue of a court order issued by the RTC 30 in Bambang, which had granted the mining company a writ of preliminary injunction.

Pamplona expressed exasperation over the court’s decision, saying, “It is deplorable that government institutions, such as the DENR and now the RTC, have taken the side of the mining corporation to the detriment of communities and the environment.”<sup>33</sup>

Soon after the January violent dispersal, residents persisted in their fight and continued the barricade despite threats of indirect contempt from the court.<sup>34</sup>

Environmental defender Florentino Daynos II, who was among those initially arrested, said that the barricade “is a symbol of our genuine love and compassion for our children and the next generation.”<sup>35</sup>

The January 23 violent dispersal was the second attempt by police personnel to dismantle the people’s barricades. The first occurred on 17 October 2025, upon orders of the same trial court, which granted Woggle’s plea for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO). Police were able to dismantle three of the four barricades. In the process, three individuals were arrested, but later on released.

Joel Abellera, a resident of Dupax del Norte who was among the three arrested, bravely expressed his sentiments via social media.

In a Facebook post, Abellera, who posted a photo of him in handcuffs, stated “*Hnd Ako mahihiyang Makita na nakaposas ako DHL ang ipinaglalaman ko ay Buhay kabuhayan, kalikasan, at kinabukasan ng ating mga anak at mga apo. Hnd Tau magsasawang ipaglaban ang ating karapatan at labanan ang dayuhang woggle corp mining company ganun din hnd Tau takot ipakita sa mga leaders ntn na tahimik nakikipagsabwatan sa mining companies.*” (I am not ashamed to be seen handcuffed because I am fighting for life, livelihood, the environment, and the future of our children and grandchildren. I will not tire of fighting for our rights and resisting the foreign-owned Woggle Corporation, and I am not afraid to speak out against the country’s leaders who are silently conniving with mining companies.)<sup>36</sup>

It was on 7 August 2025, when MGB issued an Exploration Permit (EP) covering 3,101.11 hectares to Woggle Corporation, allowing them to explore gold and copper deposits. Thereafter, residents erected a barricade in September of 2025.

The residents of Dupax del Norte have complained about the lack of genuine consultations, uprooting or removal of trees and vegetation within the exploration area, and trespassing on privately-owned and possessed properties and residences.



They have resorted to legal measures to stop Woggle’s mining activities. They filed an injunction before the judicial court against exploration and drilling. They also filed a petition before the MGB to cancel the company’s EP.<sup>37</sup>

Jaybee Garganera, ATM National Coordinator, said, “The residents have aired out their resistance to the mining project as it endangers their livelihoods and their environment. But, their cries have fallen on deaf ears.” “It is unacceptable that those who are disadvantaged are being harassed and intimidated by state agents. Meanwhile, the violations of the mining company are disregarded and their exploitation of natural resources allowed.”

On 5 February 2026, the MGB issued a temporary suspension of Woggle’s EP, citing *force majeure* as the basis.

The government agency stated that community opposition has “resulted in the establishment of barricades and blockades along access roads leading to the exploration site, thereby impeding entry and giving rise to concerns affecting public safety, peace, and order.” MGB further said that the suspension shall “remain in force until the *force majeure* conditions have ceased and normal access and safe operation conditions are restored”.<sup>38</sup>

While the temporary suspension was welcomed by anti-mining advocates, the demand for the immediate cancellation of the EP was strongly reiterated.

## **V. Aroroy, Masbate**

In 2016, Marylou Verano was compelled to leave her beloved hometown, Aroroy, Masbate, after receiving news that a killer had been hired to put an end to her life. Marylou’s sister told her about reports that in a drinking session, a certain individual had admitted to being hired to kill her because she was a hindrance to the operations of Filminera Resources Corporation. This threat was directly linked to her active leadership in Ang Aroroy Ay Alagaan (4As) and the Marian Women’s Cooperative (MWC), organizations that challenge mining activities in the coastal town.

“I had heard of the reports about plans to kill me. But one evening, as we were preparing to sleep, we suddenly heard a series of gunshots. They were so loud we thought the bullets would pierce through our roof and hit us. The next day, I decided to leave our home as I did not want to risk the safety of my nephews and nieces,” Marylou said.

Although Marylou left town, she did not stop speaking out about the mining operations in their area. She would be invited to media programs, where she courageously exposed the ill effects of mining in Aroroy.



In 2019, two cases of libel were filed against her by Filminera, which has an MPSA with the government that allowed the company to extract gold from Masbate for 25 years.

“I thought then, why are there cases against me? Why am I being charged as a criminal? I killed no one. I stole nothing. I did not hurt anyone. All I did was help the community and fight for the environment,” Marylou recalled.

Marylou spent many sleepless nights worrying about her situation. “As an active member of the Church, I would join in their jail visits. I witnessed the morbid situation inside the jail, especially among women. I imagined what would happen to me if I were convicted. We would take turns sleeping on the bed. I would have to ensure I had medications for my health conditions. But then, I also thought that I would undertake projects while in jail to ease



the loneliness of the inmates. I kept thinking of positive possibilities until my anxieties subsided,” she shared.

For the next four years, Marylou courageously fought her legal battles with support from Tanggol Kalikasan (TK), the Alternative Law Groups (ALG), and ATM. In May 2022, she was acquitted in the first libel case. A year later, in April 2023, she received the same judgment in the second libel case. These favorable decisions proved that the charges against her were mere Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP) meant to silence her.

It is not surprising that Marylou has received threats and harassment cases, given the underhanded machinations of influential stakeholders against environmental and human rights defenders. She has been actively resisting mining for nearly two decades now, beginning from when Filminera started its operations in Aroroy.

“As early as 2005, we were already complaining about mining, especially when Filminera bulldozed our houses and destroyed our crops. When they built the tailings pond, we intensified our resistance. This made local government officials very angry with us,” Marylou said.

During their barangay *fiesta* in 2009, Marylou was verbally harassed and threatened by the Barangay Captain. “I heard my name being announced on the sound system. They gave out a warning that unless I stopped what I was doing, something would happen to me,” she said.

Despite this, Marylou and her fellow residents continued their fight against the destructive activities of the company. In 2010, they put a barricade to stop mining operations, which were affecting their livelihoods and polluting their water sources. But police forces dismantled the barricade and threatened the residents to stop them from protesting.

Yet, the impacts of Filminera’s operations worsened over time, prompting the residents to file a Writ of Kalikasan before the Supreme Court in July 2016, just after the assumption of Rodrigo Duterte into the presidency.

In their complaint, the petitioners claimed that their rivers and seas have been polluted by Filminera’s waste products, resulting in “sickly marine life” that destroyed the livelihoods of fisherfolk. Also contaminated by toxic

chemicals were the bodies of water that cattle ranches and farmlands use, leading to possible contamination of the food that eventually ended up on the households' tables.

With the filing of the Writ, the safety and security of Marylou and other community leaders were further endangered. During this period, around 10 of them were *red-tagged*<sup>39</sup> for voicing their opposition to mining. Marylou herself saw the list, which identified her and other members of 4As and the Unified Civilian Society Inc. (UCSI) as NPA members. Also, pro-mining residents repeatedly warned them not to rally or conduct any protest actions because they were going to be shot. "Raratratin daw kami," she said.

Currently, Filminera has expanded its operations to other *barangays*. Daily blastings disturbed the peace of the affected communities. The tremors were so strong that the walls of houses cracked – the residents' homes became compromised such that during typhoons or heavy rainfall, water would seep in.

Even the health of the residents was put at risk as they inhaled toxic fumes from the blasting. They developed cough and asthma that wouldn't go away. They were also constantly exposed to noise pollution.

A community resident, Rex Pineda<sup>40</sup> (not his real name), wrote letters to the local government (LGU) to complain about the blasting. But the LGU took no action and merely endorsed the matter to the MGB. The government agency, in turn, took the side of the company, saying that mitigation measures were being enforced.

"Even if there were indeed actions by the company, they were ineffective because our situation has not improved at all," he said. "They also have not paid us for the damages done to our homes."

The intolerable situation caused some residents to post photos on social media, airing their complaints. But Rex, for one, was compelled to take down his post after the mining company implied that a relative, who was working as a contractor for the corporation, might be suspended. Rex could not help but think similar threats were made to other residents, whose posts have also been deleted.



Due to the environmental, social, and economic impacts of Filminera's mining operations, the Board of Directors of 4As drafted a letter to President Marcos, Jr. They intend to formally submit their complaints and to seek an impartial and thorough investigation into the company's mining activities.

In their letter, the community reported the following impacts:

- **Water Contamination:** The nearby Lanang River, Guinobatan River, Panique River, Bangon River, Samuyao Creek, and Port Barrera have been infiltrated with heavy metals such as arsenic, cadmium, mercury, lead, zinc, and other harmful toxic chemicals, causing fish kills and destruction of marine resources. This made both the community's water and food unsafe for household consumption.
- **Deforestation and Habitat Destruction:** The company's unregulated activities have led to the destruction of forests and caused soil erosion, resulting in the loss of habitat for various plant and animal species and the degradation of natural resources.
- **Health Concerns:** Residents, particularly children and the elderly, are experiencing airborne diseases, like asthma and tuberculosis, due to the metallic dust from blasting, and fumes from the gold processing plant, as well as other pollutants generated by the mining operations.
- **Impacts on Livelihood and Culture:** The contamination of water sources, including marine areas, and the destruction of agricultural land have greatly decreased traditional sources of income, leading to economic hardship, poverty, and food insecurity among farmers and fisherfolk.
- **Calamity Strike:** During Typhoon Uwan, the Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) of the company overflowed, resulting in the added contamination of the environment by heavy metals and toxic chemicals. Residents are worried that in case of a Magnitude 7 earthquake, the TSF would collapse, resulting in more spillage of toxic chemicals.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility:** Only a few have benefited from the mining firm's Social Development Management Program (SDMP) and Excise Taxes.

- Other Concerns: The threat of mining expansion in Mount Pajo by Filminera Resources Corporation.

## VI. Sibuyan Island, Romblon

Rodne Galicha is a veteran environmental activist with two decades of experience fighting against large-scale mining in the protected-area that is Sibuyan Island, Romblon, home of the mighty Mt. Guiting-Guiting. He has worked for various non-profit organizations advocating for environmental protection and climate justice. At the international level, he has lobbied for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures for the Philippines. He is currently the Executive Director of Living Laudato Si, an interfaith movement initiated by Catholic lay people calling on Philippine financial institutions to divest from coal-related operations and other environmentally harmful activities.<sup>41</sup>

Like most environmental and human rights defenders, Rodne has been a target of harassment and bullying that were quite severe and caused him much distress and mental anguish.

“In late 2022, when we learned that Altai Philippines Mining Corporation had come back to the island to resume operations, I couldn’t sleep. I pored over documents, consumed by the mining issue. For three months, I was only able to sleep two to three hours a day,” Rodne narrated.



It came to a point that Rodne was having auditory hallucinations, such that he had to go to a psychiatrist for treatment. The doctor prescribed medications that enabled him to get enough sleep and eased his anxieties.

“The most serious effect of mining was on my mental and emotional health. I absorbed the stress of the residents I talked with. Plus, my role involved analyzing and thinking. These were the triggers for why I couldn’t sleep. I carried mental and emotional burdens;” he said.

Rodne’s health was further compromised in 2023 when their community set up a barricade against mining, as he and other community leaders experienced constant cyberbullying from fake social media accounts. They were targeted by trolls, who appeared organized and coordinated as they used the same language and tone.

“I was besieged by fears then. I worried that my companions might be charged with SLAPP cases. I was concerned that my institutional engagements would also be affected;” he shared.

Various intrigues were hurled against Rodne’s organization, accusing them of receiving huge amounts of donations. “These were untrue because the donations were quite small. Also, these all went to the expenses of the barricade, the financial management of which we had no involvement;” he said.

Apparently, trolls had been spreading rumors against the anti-mining advocates. Elizabeth Ibañez, who, like Rodne, has been a staunch environmental defender since the mid-2000s, was reported to have reversed her stance against large mining.

“The trolls spliced up video footage and manipulated these to make it appear that I had switched sides, and that I was already in favor of mining;” said Elizabeth, Coordinator of Sibuyanons Against Mining (SAM).

Like others, she has also been *red-tagged* and accused of being anti-development by pro-mining quarters. There were also several instances when suspected policemen in civilian clothes would ask about her whereabouts. As an identified leader and one of the prominent faces of the mining resistance in the island, Elizabeth’s movements were monitored.

“Because I usually accompany researchers visiting our island, I would be subjected to surveillance,” said Elizabeth, who narrated that police even entered the lodging house of an international researcher while they were not around.

Despite these, Elizabeth is undaunted. “Who else will fight against mining if not us? We didn’t start this fight only to eventually give in. We don’t want our efforts to be in vain,” she said.

Meanwhile, Fabert “Nonong” Reyes, a resident of Sibuyan, is likewise unafraid. “I am prepared to die for this cause,” he said, even when there are two pending cases of cyber libel against him by Altai Mining.

Nonong’s first case of cyber libel has been dismissed both by the Regional Trial Court and the Court of Appeals (CA) for being a SLAPP case. But Altai Mining has elevated the case to the Supreme Court. The second case of cyber libel was also dismissed by the lower court and is now pending at the CA.

“I am being targeted because I am not afraid to post my complaints, and I am among the most vocal regarding mining here on our island. They think they can intimidate me, but I will not be cowed into silence,” Nonong said.

Nonong, as well as other Sibuyan residents, directly experienced harassment when police authorities violently dispersed the barricade set up by the community to prevent Altai Mining from transporting nickel ore.

On 3 February 2023, two Sibuyan residents were hurt after policemen pushed their way through the barricade that the residents put up the week before due to the illegal mining operations of Altai. According to the protestors, the mining firm has been operating without the necessary permits. These allegations were proven true by the DENR, which subsequently issued a Cease and Desist Order (CDO) against the company.

In January 2026, the residents celebrated the third anniversary of the continuing barricade – a testament to their firm resolve to prevent mining operations on their island. The social and political awareness activities in the last three years by the residents also contributed greatly to the victory



in the May 2025 elections of anti-mining candidates, foremost of whom was Governor Trina Firmalo Fabric.

In the meantime, Altai’s mining operations were so riddled with anomalies that on 4 March 2025, concerned residents filed a Petition for the Cancellation of Altai Mining’s MPSA before the DENR. The petitioners asserted that the mining corporation violated several laws when it: 1) constructed a causeway on Sibuyan Island without the required Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC); 2) commenced its mining activities without securing the necessary permits; 3) constructed its causeway on foreshore land without any foreshore lease agreement; 4) cleared and uprooted trees without permits; 5) made false statements or omission of facts in its Environmental Work Program; 6) its mining contract violates the people’s right to a balanced and healthful ecology; 7) there is no Sanggunian (local legislative council) approval of its mining activities in any of the affected *barangays* or municipalities on Sibuyan Island; and 8) its project lacks social acceptability.

As of this writing, the DENR has yet to act on the petition.

## **VII. Brooke’s Point, Palawan**

As the Philippines’ “last ecological frontier”, Palawan is known for its high biodiversity, extensive forests, and pristine marine ecosystems. But large-scale mining, particularly nickel extraction, has caused environmental degradation and social disruption. Among the impacts of mining are deforestation, siltation of rivers, water contamination, destruction of agricultural lands, and loss of biodiversity. Mining operations have also severely damaged the livelihoods of farmers, fishers, and Indigenous communities.<sup>42</sup>

According to Atty. Grizelda “Gerthie” Mayo-Anda, Executive Director of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC), large-scale mining has resulted in violations of the people’s human right to a healthy and balanced ecology.

“When mining has been allowed to deforest and cut trees, this is already a violation of our human rights. I say this because the forests of Palawan



play a critical role in the biodiversity of our country,” explained Atty. Gerthie, emphasizing that Palawan holds 50 percent of the remaining old-growth forests, 30 percent of the mangroves, and 40 percent of the coral reefs.

She pointed out that Palawan is the only province with a special law that protects all natural forests. “No other province has a special law that provides that all natural forests are core zones or areas of maximum protection,” she stated. “But the government has issued mineral agreements and, consequently, special tree-cutting permits, resulting in the cutting of thousands of trees. This puts at risk the biodiversity of this beautiful province.”

Mining and tree-cutting have also resulted in floods during heavy rains or typhoons. “The extent to which mining has contributed to the flooding in Brooke’s Point is not recognized by the government. But the communities have conveyed that they haven’t seen such flooding for a long, long time,” said Atty. Gerthie.

Residents have also claimed that laterite from the mines has made the water reddish brown. “It’s a matter of concern as this violates the



people’s right to health, to be free from any pollutants,” Atty. Gerthie added. “Farmlands were also flooded, and houses, especially those made from light materials, have been destroyed.”

Since 2016, special tree-cutting permits have been issued by the DENR, allowing mining companies to cut trees by the thousands. For instance, Iplan Nickel Corporation (INC) has been issued a special permit to cut 27,929 trees, while Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corporation has been allowed to cut 52,000 trees.

“This is very disturbing. When you cut that many trees, it will result in deforestation. And it’s not only trees, but the soil is removed as well. You need healthy soil because they provide nutrients for plants. And then without the trees, what will happen to the wildlife like monkeys, pangolins, various birds, and pitcher plants?” Atty. Gerthie explained.

Not only are flora and fauna affected by tree-cutting, but also the people who rely on healthy watersheds. Since natural forests are also within ancestral domains, indigenous peoples risk losing their non-timber forest products, such as their Almaciga, their rattan, and their *buho*.

More than the material loss, indigenous groups risk losing their deep cultural and spiritual connection to the land, which is an integral part of their identity.<sup>43</sup> Aside from this, the voices of Indigenous Peoples actually living in the mining sites have not been given due importance, leading to their disenfranchisement in matters about the approval of INC’s MPSA.

Vic Colili, former Municipal Councilor of Brooke’s Point and an indigenous leader, lamented that the NCIP-FPIC Team “did not recognize the true owners of the ancestral lands.” He said those living inside ancestral lands were not given the right to decide on how to govern and manage their lands.

Meanwhile, the indigenous peoples in the lowlands living near the shores, who favor mining operations, were the ones recognized. “This is quite unfair because their livelihood and way of life do not depend on the natural resources of the ancestral lands. The voices of those living in the mountainous areas should have been given priority as they would be the ones most affected by mining,” he stated.

Vic shared that when he was still a *Sangguniang Bayan* member in 2022, he sponsored a resolution for a separate FPIC process for those living in the highlands. But their opposition to mining did not prevail because the government agency only had one process and decided to include the pro-mining IP majority in the lowlands.

“It was like the sentiment of the siblings not living in the house was recognized more than the decision of the real owners of the house,” Vic said as he criticized the NCIP for discriminating against those who are against mining.

The residents’ resistance against mining eventually led to the setting up of a barricade on 18 February 2023, when the protestors called on the DENR to issue a Cease and Desist Order (CDO) against INC. They asserted that INC should not be allowed to operate without a Mayor’s Permit and a Certificate Precondition, which had not been issued at that time.<sup>44</sup>

On 14 April 2023, the barricade was dismantled by security personnel, who forcibly removed several individuals, including women and seniors, from the barricade. Six individuals sustained bruises and were also detained at the police station.<sup>45</sup>

In a joint statement, Bishop Socrates Mesiona of Puerto Princesa and Bishop Broderick Pabillo of Taytay said, “Rather than fully complying with the rule of law, INC acted in blatant defiance of the law by continuously operating its mine. Worse, the company took the law into its own hands by deploying its large private security force in violently dispersing the peaceful rallyists.”<sup>46</sup>

“Some protesters were beaten up, injured, and unlawfully arrested in plain sight and with silent support of the Philippine National Police personnel, who ironically were sworn to uphold the law and maintain peace and order, without favor,” they added.<sup>47</sup>

A year later, in 2024, INC sued 22 individuals for civil damages, claiming that they were utilizing the firm’s land during the protest actions. The corporation claimed that because of the barricades, INC’s trucks were unable to transport nickel, resulting in company losses.



Six other protestors were also initially charged with grave coercion, but the cases were dismissed by the prosecutor.

“These are obviously SLAPP suits,” said Atty. Gerthie. “As an environmental advocate and a public interest lawyer, I can definitely see that SLAPP suits cause a chilling effect on the communities. It’s meant to weaken community resistance and cause division. Also, it’s discouraging protest actions -the right to freedom of assembly; the exercise of your civil and political rights.”

Despite the harassment and violation of human rights by mining companies, the people of Palawan succeeded in pushing for the legislation of a landmark ordinance imposing a 50-year moratorium on new mining operations in the province.<sup>48</sup>

On 13 March 2025, the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* approved an ordinance declaring a moratorium on the issuance of endorsements for all large- and small-scale mining applications, including applications for exploration permits, mineral agreements, and financial or technical agreements in Palawan.

“We are happy that the SP responded to the pastoral letter and the petitions from different sectors of Palawan’s society. With this ordinance, over 200,000 hectares that were under threat from new mining applications will now be protected for the next 50 years — or at least the next 25 years before any amendments could be made,” Atty. Gerthie said during the ordinance’s passage.<sup>49</sup>

## **VIII. Homonhon Island, Guiuan, Eastern Samar**

Like many mining-affected communities with limited options to express their demands and concerns, the residents of Homonhon Island organized a barricade in November 2024 and July 2025. They were protesting the expansion of mining activities by Emir Mineral Resources Corporation (EMRC) into a tenement area in *Barangay* Casuguran. Known as Mine Area 12, the area contains important water sources and is situated near the public high school. In particular, EMRC’s mining operations would impact the Tabao and San Juan water catchments, which supply water to the entire village.

According to Carmi Macapagao, President of Homonhon Environmental Advocates and Rights Defenders (HEARD), EMRC's Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) was only approved in 2024. Since 2016, the company had operated under a Special Mines Permit (SMP) that was renewed annually.

EMRC was among the companies suspended in 2017 by the late DENR Secretary Gina Lopez for various violations. However, the suspension was lifted under DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu in 2020, allowing the company to resume mining operations.

The approval of the company's MPSA led to the expansion of mining operations in the island's water sources. Without any consultations with the affected communities and despite their strong opposition, EMRC was granted tree-cutting permits and other requirements.

"We set up a barricade to prevent mining equipment from passing through. Because of this, the company was not able to operate," Carmi said, adding that the Mayor and the MGB later called for a technical conference, where it was resolved that EMRC's operations be temporarily suspended. Although the protestors were asking for a written order on the suspension, none was given. So, the residents continued with the barricade, concerned that the operations would resume once they abandoned their posts.

Carmi added that there was even an attempt by EMRC's security personnel to take over the barricade. "This happened after Typhoon Tino, when the barricade was unattended because the residents were in their



homes, tending to the damage brought about by the typhoon. At this time, the company stationed their security guards beside the barricade and set up a tent," she explained.

The protestors complained to *barangay* and municipal officials, asserting that the site was not part of the mine area that the company could occupy. As a result, the local officials did not allow EMRC to place security guards in the vicinity, so the personnel eventually left.

"Clearly, it was an attempt to intimidate those in the barricades. The guards were just beside our tents. And, they were armed with long rifles," she said.

When another typhoon struck the island in November 2025, the barricade was eventually destroyed. With the road rendered passable due to the absence of the barricade, EMRC was able to conduct clearing operations on 11 January 2026, in another mine area called Mine Area 14, which is next to Mine Area 12. Through a signature campaign and the re-established barricade, residents opposed the company's activities.

HEARD also sent a complaint and request for the immediate suspension of EMRC's clearing operations in Mine Area 14 to the DENR. In their complaint, the organization stated that there were no public consultations conducted; no tree-cutting permit; no flora and fauna assessment, including hydrological and water absorption capacity of the area; and no coordination with and no permit from the *barangay*.

In response to the complaint, an investigation was conducted by a composite team. The findings have yet to be released, but MGB-Region 8 verbally ordered a temporary stoppage to the mining activities in Mine Area 14. However, EMRC's heavy equipment is still on the site.

The residents are concerned they would lose their farmlands and livelihoods if EMRC's operations were to continue. "If this were the case, the farmers would be compelled to accept compensation from the company," Carmi said. "Right now, the farmers have their own lands, they have their own rice fields; if they get compensation for their lands, how long would it last?"

Mining activities have already affected the sea surrounding the island, which turn red especially during the rainy season because of the siltation from the mines. The fish breeding ground has been destroyed, leading to a decline in fish catch. Fresh water has also become polluted with siltation.

The residents were likewise alarmed by the entry of mine workers on the island, who contribute to the pollution of their water sources. “Our Rural Health Unit has found E. coli in our waters. This is because mine workers who pass by our water sources might have been urinating in these areas,” she said.

Since 1983, minerals such as nickel and chromite have been extracted from the 10,400-hectare historic island with a population of 5,000. From small-scale mining in the 1980s, large-scale mining has infiltrated the island since 2009.<sup>50</sup>

Presently, five of the island’s eight *barangays* have active mining operations. But while the other three *barangays* have no mining activities, an approved MPSA covers these areas.

The four mining companies with MPSAs in the island are: Emir Mineral Resources Corp. (EMRC); Nickelace Inc.; Chromiteking Inc, and Mt. Sinai Mining Exploration & Development Corp. The first three have active operations, while the last has not yet begun operations.

At present, there is a pending Prohibitory Injunction case at the Regional Trial Court Branch 3 in Guian filed by EMRC against community leaders. Leaders of the barricade assert that the case is a SLAPP suit that attempts to prohibit the community from exercising their rights to expression, access to water, and a clean and healthy environment.

## **IX. Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental**

At the height of the struggle against Midan Corporation’s exploration activities in Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental in 2022, rural women’s rights leader Luz Bador was *red-tagged* by a colonel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Unknown to Luz, the colonel visited Municipal Mayor





Peve Ligan and warned the latter that her office had been infiltrated by a communist or a member of the New People’s Army (NPA).

Luz was then working for the Mayor, apart from being an active leader against mining in their locality. She had organized residents to form Alyansa Kontra Mina (AKM), which conducted orientations and learning sessions to inform the community about the impacts of mining. As the Advisory Committee Member of Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK), she helped organize a series of fora involving women, farmers, and fisherfolk, which helped strengthen resistance against mining. All these activities were supported by the Mayor, who was against large-scale mining entering their territory.

The *red-tagging* incident did not directly name Luz, but she suspected she was the “communist” being referred to by the military official. In her view, her leadership in educational discussions and protest actions, as well as her participation in press conferences, were used by authorities to connect her to the armed rebel group.

Prior to her being *red-tagged* by the colonel, a member of the *Sangguniang Bayan* (municipal legislative council or SB) also called her and her fellow protestors “communists”. This happened during a dialogue by

the SB with representatives from the mining company, MGB-Region 7, and members of people's organizations.

Outside the venue of the dialogue, Luz and her group held a protest action, carrying placards that expressed their opposition to mining. As with any other demonstration, they were also chanting slogans such as "*Makibaka, Huwag Matakot!*" ("*Be involved! Don't be afraid!*"). Suddenly, an SB member came out of the SB Hall, fuming mad. He called the protestors "*communists*", saying that their chants were the words used by rebels.

It was three months later when the colonel made the same allegation to the Mayor. Luz's colleagues started to distance themselves from her. Participation in their anti-mining activities also started to dwindle.

But Luz refused to be intimidated, even when she experienced sleepless nights from anxiety. She patiently explained to the anti-mining advocates that they were not doing anything wrong. All their activities were legitimate and done openly. Even their protests had permits. They were merely expressing their sentiments and acting against environmental destruction and for community welfare.

In a meeting with Mayor Ligan, Luz offered to resign because she didn't want to endanger the safety of the former and to give the office more problems, but the Mayor refused to accept her resignation. Luz suspected that if she weren't connected with the Office of the Mayor, her safety and security would be more at risk.

To avoid being *red-tagged*, Luz ensured that the military was invited to the mass actions they organized. She even visited the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion Headquarters to talk to the colonel, but he was not around at the time. When they finally saw each other, the colonel invited her to give a Gender Sensitivity Training to the youth as part of the military's peace organizing efforts.

Despite her current good relations with the military, Luz is not complacent. "I still have my doubts regarding them. This is because the military views progressives differently: they associate them with the NPA despite the absence of any real evidence."



Currently, there are no exploratory mining activities undertaken by Midan Corporation due to the resistance of the community, as well as the Mayor's refusal to issue a business permit to the company. Meanwhile, the *Sanggunian Panlalawigan* (provincial legislative council) has issued a Resolution expressing its unanimous opposition to mining exploration in the three *barangays* of Sta. Catalina, and calling on the MGB and the DENR to rescind the license granted to the corporation.

## **X. South Upi, Maguindanao, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)**

In June 2025, Grace Ricaforte (not her real name)<sup>51</sup> found herself staring blankly into space as a resource person of a training workshop explained concepts pertaining to security and safety. Her mind was preoccupied with worried warnings from her loved ones and colleagues, who advised her not to return home temporarily. For days, unidentified men in her hometown have been looking for her. She became more worried when she found out that even soldiers were asking where she was. Although this wasn't the first time this happened, Grace was visibly anxious and on edge.

"Although I was participating and being cooperative during the training, I was also distressed. During the evenings, when I was alone in my room, I would think of my family. What if they harmed my children and grandchildren? I kept imagining the scenarios that I saw in *teleseryes* (television series), and I couldn't help but think these, too, could happen to us. I was really terrified," she said.

Grace found it hard to sleep. She would tire her eyes and distract herself with her cellphone until she fell asleep in the wee hours of the morning. It was only when she talked to her husband, and he assured her that they were fine, that her fears were assuaged.

She has more than enough reason to be concerned and even fear for her life. Since 2014, 103 non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIPs) have been killed in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), most of which happened in her hometown, South Upi, Maguindanao. "If we weren't careful about our safety, we could have been among the dead," she said.



The latest murder victim was Teduray leader Ramon Lupos, who was found dead in a on September 30, 2025. He had gunshot wounds and was beheaded.<sup>52</sup>

According to Grace, the killings are tied to land issues. “Indigenous lands are rich in minerals and natural resources. Many are invested in claiming and owning these lands.”

In her case, the threats against her started when indigenous groups banded together to oppose the declaration of 3,566 hectares of land as a mineral reservation area. They knew that if the declaration pushed through, full-scale mining operations would be allowed in their territories, and these would result in the devastation of their communities.

In 2022, under Grace’s leadership, the town’s residents conducted mobilizations to register their opposition to the proposal. When they learned that the BARM’s Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy (MENRE) was holding a public consultation on the issue, Grace and her fellow residents prepared to engage and were ready to attend the hearing.



“But they tried to confuse us. When they heard that we were coming to the consultation, they cancelled it,” she said.

Yet, despite the cancellation, officials from MENRE still went to the *Sangguniang Bayan* (SB) to talk with its SB members. Being vigilant and wary about any decision that might be taken, Grace and company proceeded instead to hold a rally and express their advocacies and demands. This earned the ire of a government official, who scolded the residents for holding a protest action. He went on to justify the plans for mining, saying these would bring benefits to their town.

Threats to Grace’s security worsened when they campaigned for the candidacy of Helen Benito Padua, a Teduray indigenous leader, who ran for Mayor during the 2025 midterm elections. Padua’s family is also a victim of killings, as her brother, Vice-Mayor Roldan Benito, was slain in an ambush in August 2024.<sup>53</sup>

“We wanted to support a leader who was among us, and who would also advance our advocacies,” Grace said.

The victory of Mayor Padua, unfortunately, aggravated Grace’s security threats. She suspected that the Mayor’s opposition to mining might have incensed her political opponents. Grace’s vocal and active support for the Mayor might have, in turn, jeopardized her own personal safety.

“We could not move around freely because of the threats against us. It seemed that our world had become smaller. We had to go to the office and back home in groups. Sometimes, there were seven of us riding motorcycles in convoy. We could no longer walk alone for fear that something bad might happen to us,” she lamented.

Grace recalled that there were instances when motorcycles and vehicles without plate numbers would chase them or trail behind them. Rumors also circulated that they were going to be taken in by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

At first, Grace ignored these rumors. But when her family friend, a *Barangay Kagawad* (village councilor), told her that they were on the list of individuals to be apprehended by the CIDG, she took the reports seriously.

She sought help from the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). “We could not go to the police as we were afraid of them,” said Grace.

PAHRA wrote to the PNP-Human Rights Affairs Office (PNP-HRAO) so they could validate the reports. The PNP in BARMM conducted an investigation, which Grace questioned because the authorities asked people whom she claimed did not know of the incidents.

Through PAHRA, Grace’s group –Task Force Bantay Kalikasan (TFBK) –was later able to link up with the CIDG Regional Director, who dispelled notions that they were going to be taken.

The CHR also went to the community to ask about the security threats against certain residents. Forms were filled out, with the CHR promising to raise the issue at the national level and to refer the situation to the right agencies. However, no action has yet been taken as of this writing.

## **XI. Impacts of Mining on Women**

Mining operations affect women in unique ways because of their varied roles in society. In addition to being homemakers, many women earn an income to support their households. They are also vital community members, often serving as environmental and human rights defenders in areas impacted by mining. When mining harms the environment and local communities, these multiple responsibilities become even more challenging for women.

Mining’s impact on water resources particularly disproportionately affects women. In community discussions, women even joke that their relationship with water is closer than with their spouses.

“How women spend their daily hours is intimately linked with water. From the moment they rise in the morning, to meal preparations, to caring for their family, up to their agricultural work or their livelihoods, women use water”, said Che Polutan of LILAK (Purple Action for Indigenous Women’s Rights). “So, if there is a water shortage, contamination, or floods, it greatly affects the women.”





According to ATM's Christel Yparraguirre, floods specifically bring additional burden on women. "For example, we have to think about where to get money to buy fertilizer when the soil and crops have been damaged. On top of that, we have to think about how to clean our homes. It would take months just to get mud off the house, the furniture, and the clothes. And then another typhoon comes along before the problem is over," said Christel. "It seems women are in endless trouble."

Meanwhile, Myrna Duyan of Brgy. Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, added that when roads are rendered unpassable by floods, farmers have to take long detours to bring their crops to the main markets.

She narrated that when the mine tailings flooded their farm roads in 2017 during a typhoon, they were unable to get to other parts of the province or nearby areas. "For nearly one and a half months, we couldn't use the roads going to Quirino. It was very difficult for farmers to get agricultural products out of Didipio," she said.

Flash floods, water contamination, and reduced availability and access to water collectively lead to significantly lower crop yields and decline in fish catch, compromised food safety, and increased financial insecurity.

When men experience a significant reduction in income due to these circumstances, women are left with the responsibility of either increasing the family's income or managing their limited earnings. In such situations, they often resort to borrowing or sacrificing meals for the sake of their

children. Unfortunately, government support is minimal, if not virtually absent, during these challenging times.

“In cases when the family is heavily indebted and without sufficient food on the table, this severely impacts women’s psychology and mental health,” Che shared. “For instance, when creditors come to collect, it’s the woman who has to deal with the difficulty of facing them, because she is usually the one at home. This is quite burdensome.”

The resulting poverty among households and the presence of mine workers may have also led young women and girls to resort to prostitution. Initial reports from mining communities in Mindanao indicate prostitution activities involving young women with foreign nationals employed by mining companies and itinerant fishermen.

“Young women secretly travel by boats to meet with their customers, such as fishermen. They meet with them in various villages because fishermen move from place to place,” Christel shared, based on reports gathered. “Meanwhile, students frequent boulevards where they have contacts and meet with them. Or they go to restaurants or eateries, which offer a so-called ‘menu’ to customers. This ‘menu’ refers to the girls.”

Emma Hotchkiss of Baywatch Foundation noted that most of these incidents are not monitored or reported to authorities. “Related to this, there are also incidents where young girls and students abandon babies,” she added, indicating the link between prostitution and unwanted pregnancies.

Beyond the clear impacts on their livelihoods and economic rights, women’s socio-cultural connections or informal interactions are also disrupted. For example, rivers serve as gathering places for women in rural areas to wash clothes or fetch water as part of their caregiving responsibilities. When these rivers run dry or become polluted, and women can no longer gather, they lose important opportunities to build and maintain relationships. This loss can negatively affect their mental health.

Also, mainly due to the feminization of care and the unpaid work women do, women likewise traditionally take charge of the health of family members. So, when household members become sick, this becomes the woman’s problem.



“When women’s children become sick due to contaminated food and water, the mother becomes distressed. How will she bring the children to the hospital or the clinic? Where will the family get the money for the doctor’s fee or medicine?” said Marylou Verano.

Women have also felt unsafe due to the influx of mine workers from other places.

“This is especially true among indigenous communities, which are generally tightly-knit. Because of mining, their ancestral lands have become open to people they do not know. They no longer have control over people entering their communities. This contributes to a feeling of insecurity, particularly among women,” said Che.

Myrna shares an incident where a woman was walking alone at 4 a.m. on her way to work. Suddenly, someone started chasing her. Luckily, she managed to run until she saw someone, so nothing happened to her. “But since then, she has become worried for her safety such that her husband had to accompany her to work,” said Myrna.

Another issue about the safety and security of women involves their role as environmental and human rights defenders. Many women community leaders are at the frontlines of the resistance against mining. They organize community discussions and learning sessions, as well as guard barricades and speak out in protest actions and media interviews.

Because of their role in the community, women become targets of harassment, arrests, *red-tagging*, and SLAPP suits. “There is no truth to the perception that women frontliners will not be hurt in violent dispersals just because they are women,” said Che, referring to the recent arrests of six women in the Dupax del Norte barricades, as well as to the injuries suffered by women leaders during the Didipio barricade dispersal in 2020.

Overall, mining violates the whole range of women’s rights, from civil and political to economic, social, and cultural. Not only is their physical well-being affected, but also their safety, social connections, and mental health, making their struggles uniquely complex and urgent.

## **XII. ATM International Track on Challenging Destructive and Irresponsible Mining**

### **A. The Increasing Pressure from Rising Global Demand for Transition Minerals**

Demand for nickel, cobalt, and lithium is being driven by the growing use of lithium-ion batteries in the production of renewable energy, digitalization, and electric vehicles. However, critics have also pointed out that these transition minerals and other critical minerals eventually end up in the military and security industries of wealthy nations as well.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), clean energy technologies will be the fastest-growing segment of demand for these minerals, as well as for other metals like copper and aluminum. As stated in the Net Zero Emissions (NZE) Scenario, over 90 percent of lithium demand by 2030 will be attributed to electric vehicle battery storage. Lithium demand is expected to increase eightfold from current levels by 2040, while nickel and cobalt demand will increase twofold. Additionally, according to the Sustainable Development Scenario (SDS), lithium demand has the potential to increase over 40 times by 2040, driven by a surge in battery deployment.

According to the World Bank, a material-intensive “green” technology future may ultimately undermine climate goals if resource extraction and



processing do not occur in a sustainable manner. On the other hand, while the United States Geological Survey (USGS) states that nickel, cobalt, and lithium are found abundantly throughout Earth's crust, the extraction and processing of these materials create significant environmental and supply chain risks. This is particularly due to the geographic concentration of their deposits in countries such as China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Australia.

Meanwhile, according to both the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), developing countries have significant mineral reserves; however, they require additional investment to support this development. Specifically, UNCTAD identified a required \$180–\$270 billion in investments needed by 2030 to achieve net-zero emissions. This would include approximately 80 new copper mines, 70 lithium/nickel mines, and 30 cobalt mines—many of which will be located in developing regions.

Collectively, these institutions justify the opening of more mines and additional, rapid extraction to demonstrate the urgency of establishing diverse, sustainable, and resilient supply chains to meet the increasing demand for these essential minerals.

## **B. Environmental Risks and Threats of Expanding Mining for Transition Minerals**

Mining lithium, cobalt, and nickel poses significant environmental risks, as highlighted by multiple authoritative sources.

According to the IEA, refining these minerals is associated with high environmental risks due to a reliance on coal-based electricity in key processing regions, contributing to elevated greenhouse gas emissions. Around 10 percent of global copper production (a key co-mineral) faces drought-related supply risks, underscoring water-stress concerns.

The United Nations (UN) reports that lithium extraction consumes up to 2 million liters of water per tonne, threatening water-scarce regions where 50 percent of global lithium and copper production occurs. This process, known as dewatering, can deplete local aquifers and harm ecosystems.



The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN News highlight that mining drives deforestation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss, particularly in tropical regions. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which produces 70 percent of the world's cobalt, mining has led to soil and water contamination with toxic metals, including radioactive elements like uranium.

The World Resources Institute (WRI) notes that mining contributes to 8 percent of global carbon emissions, with lithium and cobalt mining each emitting over 1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. Habitat destruction and toxic runoff further threaten ecosystems and human health.

The earlier sections of this report have already covered the negative effects on human rights when nickel mining is expanded in the Philippines. For the Philippines, the following international trends in the mining industry pose the most serious threats and challenges to environmental protection and the promotion of human rights:

- ASEAN Minerals Cooperation Framework
- US-Philippine Critical Minerals Agreement (and other trade agreements covering transition or critical minerals)
- Proposed Indo-Phil nickel corridor



- The return of mining investment portfolios to International Finance Institutions (IFIs) and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)

The discussions and critiques of policy frameworks and agreements are addressed in other papers and will not be covered in this report. However, ATM has consciously engaged in different global and regional platforms to contribute to exposing and challenging the rollout and implementation of these policies.

## C. Key Engagements and Reports (2025)

1. **Bogota, Colombia (June 2025):** ATM participated in an international conference to discuss the role of the Catholic Church in responding to mining and extractivism. This supported the evolving rollout of *Laudato Si'* activities. The proceedings were published in October 2025: *Catholic Approaches to Mining: A Framework for Reflection, Planning, and Action*.<sup>54</sup>
2. **Milan, Italy (May 4-7, 2025):** ATM joined a delegation organized by the NGO Forum on the ADB to engage with the ADB Annual Meeting. ATM participated in panel discussions and bilateral meetings where civil society organizations (CSOs) pushed for broader implementation of ADB Safeguards and questioned the bank's proposed Critical Minerals investment framework, within its current efforts to amend its own Energy Policy Framework. A briefing paper, "Reinvention of a Troubled Legacy,"<sup>55</sup> was co-published with NGO Forum on the ADB, GAIA, ATM and LRC.
3. **Nairobi, Kenya (July 8-11, 2025):** ATM participated in the Global Members' Gathering of the Coalition for Human Rights and Development to reflect on the past ten years of the coalition's work and craft its Strategic Plan (2026–2030) and Regional Action Plan.
4. **Bangkok, Thailand (Sept 16-21, 2025):** ATM, together with Asia-Pacific Gathering on Human Rights and Extractives (AP Gathering) participated in the UN Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights (UN RBHR). It also co-organized the AP Gathering Assessment and Planning, where an action plan for the campaign work and engagement in COP 30 was formulated.
5. **Belem, Brazil (November 7-17, 2025):** ATM engaged in the People's Summit and the Thematic Social Forum on Mining (TSF-Mining). During

the People's Summit, ATM supported a main gathering that discussed Extractivism and the People's Alternatives. It also participated in other side events around mining issues. TSF-Mining also participated in the global march against climate change. Separately, TSF-Mining held its assessment and planning session. In September, TSF-Mining was instrumental in supporting the issuance of a joint statement among the confederation of bishops' conferences in Africa, Asia and South America about climate justice.

#### **D. Research Partnerships and Publications:**

In 2025, ATM hosted research projects focusing on human rights and transition minerals in partnership with Amnesty International, Global Witness, and Climate Rights International.

**Amnesty International - Philippines:** *What do we get in return? How the Philippines nickel boom harms human rights.* - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa35/8607/2024/en/>

**Climate Rights International:** *Broken Promises: Philippines Nickel Mining Causes Rights Abuses and Increases Climate Vulnerability.* <https://cri.org/reports/broken-promises/>

**Global Witness:** *Power, Corruption, and Reprisals in Philippine Nickel Mining: How Philippine communities pay the price for Europe's electric vehicle boom.* <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/power-corruption-and-reprisals/>

### **XIII. ATM Demands and Policy Recommendations**

1. Stop the mining operations of companies documented to have violated environmental laws and regulations, skipped legal processes and requirements, and failed to comply with their own contractual obligations, especially in areas where there are ongoing barricades.
2. Uphold the right of communities and Indigenous peoples to say NO to mining and other destructive projects, ensuring Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). Cancel or revoke the mining permits of companies



found violating (FPIC) guidelines and consultation requirements, legal processes and obligations, and environmental and human rights standards.

3. Investigate cases of human rights violations and abuse in mining-affected areas. In particular, ensure that residents and environmental human rights defenders can express critical views publicly without fear of reprisals.
4. Revoke EO 130 and re-impose a moratorium on mining projects and contracts, withdraw the categorization of mining as a Strategic Investment in the Strategic Investment Plan, and re-impose the ban on open-pit mining.
5. Repeal the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 (RA 7942) and replace it with the Alternative Minerals Management Bill (AMMB). Legislate equally important bills such as the National Land Use Act (NLUA), Sustainable Forestry Management Bill (SFMB), Right to Information (RoI) law, Rights of Nature (RoN) law, and a law that would protect environmental human rights defenders.
6. Compel mining corporations to prioritize the rehabilitation of destroyed ecosystems and habitats due to their operations.
7. Uphold and support local autonomy in protecting the environment against extractive corporations. Support local legislation for environmental protection.
8. Establish a comprehensive public registry of beneficial owners of all companies holding or applying for extractive licenses to prevent corruption and money laundering.
9. Legislate an Anti-Political Dynasty Law that prohibits political families from holding multiple government positions simultaneously. Specifically, ATM supports the proposed bill that prevents the election of relatives up to the 4<sup>th</sup> degree of consanguinity or affinity.
10. Ensure that affected communities are part of the decision regarding access, management, and benefits derived from their natural resources.

Community members must be properly and adequately informed of the costs and benefits of the investment or the project, whether it involves minerals, timber, water, or food. This includes generating a cost-benefit analysis that clearly reflects the true costs of extractive projects. This analysis of a mining project should not be simply about the cost of operating the mines and how much profit is expected from selling the minerals. The more significant costs, such as environmental, social, cultural, and health costs, must be included.

11. Update laws on mining, energy, and land use management to capture the current reality of climate change and extreme weather events. Investments and development projects should be held accountable for their contributions to climate change. Their climate impact, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, or carbon footprint must be recorded and considered when crafting laws and enforcing policies. The Just Transition Framework (JTF) of the Philippines must clearly reflect and address the impacts of continued fossil-fuel use, expansion of extraction of transition and critical minerals, and the loss and damage brought by extreme weather events.



12. Improve transparency and governance by strengthening civil society engagement in the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI).

13. Prohibit "sacrifice zones", where more mining is justified to extract the transition minerals or critical minerals to deliver the requirements of electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies, even if this means more deforestation or the displacement of indigenous communities. The Philippine government must also ensure that critical minerals extracted in the country do not end up in the military or security industries of



rich countries, only to be used in warfare. There should be more “no-go zones” in recognition of planetary boundaries.

14. Craft policies and implement programs regarding a circular economy. The concept of degrowth should be seriously considered as well as a push for fundamental societal changes that would reduce unsustainable material consumption.
15. Promote a fair global consumption of metals and minerals. Advocate for the reduction of the consumption by the Global North of metals for the mobility or transport sector, among others. We reject the recently-signed Critical Minerals Agreement between the US and the Philippines, as this will unnecessarily tie our country’s mineral resources to unspecific industries of the US, without clearly establishing the benefits for Filipinos.
16. The Philippine government must support the international call for a moratorium on deep-sea mining. Clear guidelines on offshore mining and seabed quarrying must be based on science and include adequate and meaningful consultations from affected communities and local governments. A moratorium on offshore mining and seabed quarrying must be in place, until all the necessary precautions on these projects are properly established

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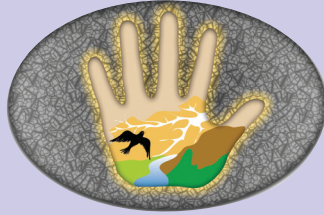
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