Impacts of Large Scale Gold Mining on Indigenous Women in Benguet, Cordillera, Philippines

Prepared by the CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

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The Cordillera is a major province of the Philippines, covering an area of 19,417 square kilometers. It is dominated by the Cordillera mountains, which are the highest in the country. The Cordillera is a region of significant economic importance, with mining activities being a major contributor to the local economy. The province is home to several mining companies, which are listed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Location in the Cordillera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Anglo American PLC (AAPL)</td>
<td>Benguet, Benga, Abra, Mt. Pinatubo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Equinox Gold Inc (EQX)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Agincourt Resources (AGK)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Lyndon Resources (LYD)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Newmont Corporation (NMY)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Impact Metals Canada (ITM)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Rich Resources (RCH)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Gay International (GAY)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Agnico Eagle Mines Ltd (AEM)</td>
<td>Benguet, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Cordillera Region is home to several mining operations, which are listed in the table above. The map on the left of the page provides a visual representation of the mining applications in the Cordillera region.
Indigenous women have played a significant role as members & leaders of indigenous communities in the Cordillera peoples’ struggle for the defense of the ancestral land.

Large-scale mining operated in Benguet, home to the Ibaloi and Kankanaey peoples, for almost a century.
THE SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN BENGUET

- Corporate mining adversely affected the traditional practice of agriculture and small scale mining—main sources of economic activity

- The lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities, destruction of natural resources force them to look for other jobs in town centers. Many apply for work as overseas contract workers, becoming vulnerable to various forms of abuse.

- No access to mine employment
The traditional roles and responsibilities are marginalized as the communities became more dependent on the cash based economy created by mine development.

- Women are responsible for maintenance of the household and bear the responsibility of finding alternative food sources including access to clean water. They also are primarily responsible for maintaining the health of the family and the community.
Women bear additional burdens caused by corporate mining – pollution of the environment, and continuing land degradation (landslides, collapse of underground tunnels) and threats of displacement and land dispossession.
INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN BENGUET AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST LARGE MINING

- Community actions against destructive mines and militarization

- Organizing, education, mobilization, campaigns and introduction of alternative livelihood projects
Drawing lessons from experiences

- Harness indigenous women’s potentials as leaders
- Need to address particular issues indigenous women confront as a result of destructive mining
- Need to appreciate, recognize the important & powerful role women play in the defense of land, resources in the community
- Broadening support from women in other sectors of society & building solidarity linkages with other indigenous women in the region, country and abroad
CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Support from different institutions, development agencies, intergovernmental agencies and the UN on the following people’s initiatives:

- Recognition of ancestral land rights by the Philippine gov’t and cancellation of mining claims, patents, permits and applications of mines in Benguet (BC, Philex, Lepanto)

- Demand for the rehabilitation of mined out areas in Benguet and just compensation to communities affected

- Guarding against the entry of mining companies in Benguet; assert the right to self determination and FPIC and women’s involvement in these
- Strengthening indigenous women’s organizations in mining-threatened areas and the continuing education and information campaign among indigenous women in affected communities

- Greater participation of indigenous women in various activities on extractive industries at local, national and international levels
Apo Kabunian, the Lord of us all, gave us this land. It is sacred, nourished by our sweat. It shall become more sacred when it is nourished by our blood.

- Macliing Dulag

“Until our right to self-determination is recognized, the struggle will not end. If it means the sacrifice of our lives to achieve freedom, so be it.”

- Rafael “Markus” Bangit