



HISGUT KALIBUNGAN

HURUHISGUTAY 5 POLICY BRIEF

9 July 2021

SUMMARY

Huruhisgutay 5 focused on mineral resources management and mining in Region 8. The panel members outlined the following set of recommendations to help local authorities and stakeholders amplify efforts to promote and support responsible mining in Eastern Visayas:

- Frame mineral resources management and conservation within the context of climate resilience.
- Enhance public participation in the mining application process.
- Review existing governance mechanisms and policies as well as the performance of ongoing and completed mining projects to develop appropriate responsible mining regulatory measures.
- Ensure comprehensive and progressive rehabilitation of mined out areas.
- Adopt eco-friendly mining technologies and best practices in environmental management and mining operations.
- Explore partnerships with concerned organizations in monitoring the operations and detrimental impact of mining projects.
- Build the environmental protection and monitoring capacity of local communities in mining areas.
- Strictly implement existing laws and policies regarding mineral resource management, utilization, and conservation.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau Regional Office 8 (MGB RO8) there is a high likelihood of finding economic mineral deposits of chromite, copper, gold, iron, limestone, manganese, nickel, pyrite and sulfur in any defined area of land in Eastern Visayas. Moreover, the region is an abundant source of bauxite, a sedimentary rock that is a primary source of aluminum. Through Presidential Proclamation No. 1615, Samar Island has been proclaimed as a Bauxite Mineral Reservation. At present, there are at least 57 mining tenements in Region 8 that are being monitored by MGB RO8, the respective Provincial/City Mining Regulatory Boards, and the granting local government units (LGUs). However, despite the high mineral potential observed in Eastern Visayas, the National Economic and Development Authority Regional Office 8 reports that mining and quarrying activities contribute only 0.1% to the region's aggregate economic output.

The extraction and exploration of mineral resources in Eastern Visayas have several environmental and social impacts, some of which are considered to be detrimental to the immediate community and ecosystems. For example, irresponsible mining activities resulted in loss of productivity and income among the rice farmers and fish cultivators in MacArthur, Leyte in 2017. In another case, deforestation due to mining led to human-induced habitat destruction in Homonhon Island, which is said to be the last stronghold of the critically endangered Philippine cockatoo in Region 8.

Mining allows the extraction of minerals and mineral products that are vital for medicine, food production, communication, fuel production, vehicle manufacture, building and construction, and energy production and transmission, among others. Our high dependence on the mining sector and its products calls for eco-friendly technologies and responsible mining practices to avoid further damage to the environment and to sustain the benefits that we gain from mining. However, local mining operators are confronted with various challenges in pursuing responsible mining and the concerned line government agencies and LGUs lack the necessary fiscal and technical resources to monitor mining activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The fifth episode of *Hisgut Kalibungan* centered on mineral resources in Region 8 and how these resources are being utilized, conserved, managed, and developed in a sustainable manner. Engr. Leo Van V. Juguan, former Regional Director of MGB RO8, served as the lead discussant. Ms. Maribel Brazil-Munsayac, Chief of the Clearance and Permitting Division of the Environmental Management Bureau Regional Office 8, and Prof. Maria Aurora Teresita W. Tabada, Associate Professor at the Visayas State University's Institute for Strategic Research and Development Studies, were the panelists.

The adverse effects of destructive mining can be avoided, minimized, or compensated for through the promotion and implementation of responsible mining. The following recommendations drawn from the discussion are presented to help policymakers, decision makers, and mining contractors promote and support responsible mining initiatives in Region 8:

1. **Frame the management and conservation of mineral resources within the context of climate resilience.** The adverse effects of climate change will exacerbate risks and vulnerabilities of immediate communities and ecosystems to natural and human-induced hazards caused by destructive mining. Thus, it is important to view the management and development of mineral resources and mining from the perspective of climate change adaptation and disaster risk and vulnerability reduction. This strategy will help build climate-resilient communities and ecosystems in and near mining areas.

2. **Enhance public participation in the mining application process.** Mining applicants are required to conduct a public consultation as part of the application for an environmental compliance certificate (ECC). During the consultation local communities should be made fully aware of the purpose and potential impacts to the immediate community and environment of proposed or ongoing mining projects. It is important for communities to be fully informed of their capacity to allow or to oppose any proposed mining project in their area based on its potential impact to their living conditions and/or the environment.
3. **Review existing governance mechanisms and policies as well as the performance of completed or ongoing mining projects to develop appropriate responsible mining regulatory measures.** This approach will help local managers and decision-makers formulate new or reinforce existing mineral resource use, conservation, and management policies. For example, LGUs may encourage or require sand and gravel mining applicants to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives (EITI), which is a global standard for good governance of oil, gas, and mineral resources. Likewise, ECC and license grantors must consider the results of the benefit-cost analysis of environmental impact assessments as guide in granting mining permits. Inputs can also be generated from the results of the monitoring of mining projects.
4. **Ensure comprehensive and progressive rehabilitation of mined out areas.** Concerned government agencies and LGUs must ensure that mining contractors will implement the terms and conditions in their permit, especially the conduct of progressive rehabilitation in mining areas and the full implementation of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program (EPEP).
5. **Adopt eco-friendly mining technologies and best practices in environmental management and mining operations.** Mining tenement grantors may develop policies that will encourage mining applicants and contractors to adopt best practices in responsible mining and use equipment and technologies that will yield minimal harmful effects to the economy and wellbeing of the locals and the health of the environment.
6. **Explore partnerships with concerned organizations in monitoring the operations and detrimental impacts of mining projects.** Considering the limited fiscal resources and personnel of monitoring teams, this approach will help the concerned monitoring organizations (i.e. MGB and LGUs) to efficiently monitor the performance of each mining project and, most importantly, the implementation of the EPEP.
7. **Build the environmental protection and monitoring capacity of local communities in mining areas.** Aside from enhancing public participation, this approach will help the locals gain additional knowledge and skills in environmental monitoring and especially those parameters that will indicate the health of the ecosystems and environment in relation to mining activities in the area. Moreover, this approach will help empower the locals to organize initiatives that will help protect their environment from the harmful effects of mining.
8. **Strictly implement existing laws and policies regarding mineral resource management, utilization, and conservation.** This recommendation highlights the importance of a functioning Provincial or City Mining Regulatory Board in overseeing the management, conservation, and use of mineral resources for sustainable development and the enforcement of existing laws and policies regarding mineral resources planning and development. A properly functioning and efficient mining board likewise ensures the monitoring of mining projects and the implementation of the EPEP and other terms and conditions in the mining permit or license.

This policy brief has been prepared by the Leyte Samar Heritage Center of UP Visayas Tacloban College based on "*Huruhisgutay 5: Mineral Resources Management and Mining in Eastern Visayas*," the fifth episode in the monthly online *Hisgut Kalibungan* discussion series, which aims to provide expert analysis of the most pressing environmental issues and concerns in Region 8.