



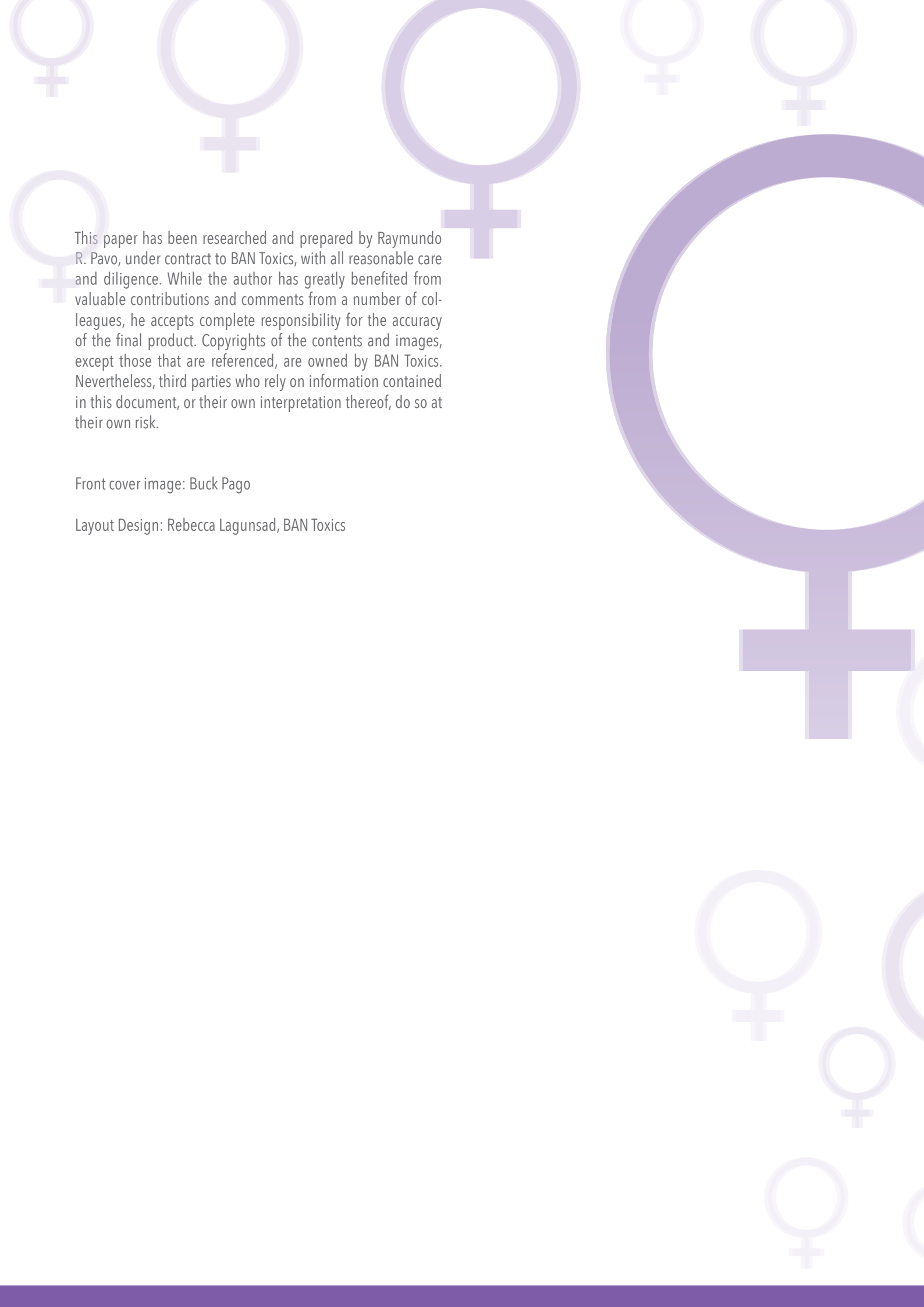
THE SITUATION AND ROLES OF WOMEN IN ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING COMMUNITIES

in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga

September 2014



Swedish Society for Nature Conservation



This paper has been researched and prepared by Raymundo R. Pavo, under contract to BAN Toxics, with all reasonable care and diligence. While the author has greatly benefited from valuable contributions and comments from a number of colleagues, he accepts complete responsibility for the accuracy of the final product. Copyrights of the contents and images, except those that are referenced, are owned by BAN Toxics. Nevertheless, third parties who rely on information contained in this document, or their own interpretation thereof, do so at their own risk.

Front cover image: Buck Pago

Layout Design: Rebecca Lagunsad, BAN Toxics



CONTENTS

I. Introduction	1
a. Poverty and Gender	
b. Artisanal Mining and R.A. 7076	
c. Objectives, Methodologies, and Research Design	
II. Geographic and Cultural Description of Field Sites	7
a. Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	
b. Balbalan, Kalinga	
III. The Situation and Roles of Women Engaged in ASGM in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	10
a. Spaces of Women	
b. Women and the Household	
c. Women's Livelihood Engagements	
d. Women and Gender-based Violence	
e. Women's Dreams and Aspirations	
f. Summary	
g. Photo Documentation	
IV. The Situation and Roles of Women Engaged in ASGM in Balbalan, Kalinga	32
a. Spaces of Women	
b. Women and the Household	
c. Women's Livelihood Engagements	
d. Women and Gender-based Violence	
e. Women's Dreams and Aspirations	
f. Summary	
g. Photo Documentation	
V. Comparative Analysis	52
a. Women in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	
b. Women in Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga	
c. Summary	
VI. Conclusion	59
VII. Validation and Recommendation	61
VIII. References	63

ABOUT BT

BAN Toxics! (BT) is an independent non-profit, environmental organization that is devoted to preventing toxic trade - wastes, goods, and technology, and upholding the rights of developing countries to environmental justice, with particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region. We achieve our goals through organization, education and advocacy.

BT works closely with local, national, and international environmental, academic and trade institutions using both local and international campaigning, capacity-sharing, and bridge-building between activists in the Asia-Pacific, and throughout the world.

SUMMARY

Women in the Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) perform major roles and contribute significantly in the development of the sector. Yet, the gender dimensions of ASGM largely remain unknown and undervalued. This study aims to shed light on the contextual realities of the differentiated access to resources and opportunities associated with ASGM and how they are affected by it.

At length, the study highlights the situation and roles of women engaged in ASGM in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga. A comparative analysis of the various context and roles women perform in these two mining areas are given to provide intended users with a paradigm and deepened understanding of their challenges and aspirations. The primary data for this research were sourced out from qualitative interviews using Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with key informants from both mining locations. In Jose Panganiban, eight women representatives from various barangays involved in ASGM enlisted and participated in the FGD in the municipality. In Balbalan, nine women who regularly do or perform ASGM from Ga-ang mines joined and partook in the FGD. Secondary data were also used from related articles, and researches to discuss and magnify identified women's issues, and to describe the geographic and cultural locations of Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, as field sites of this research project.

The participants of the study recognize the value of sharing their stories so as to formulate policies and ordinances that address the issues they face in the community. And in many cases, their stories may also serve as well of inspiration for women miners and communities in other parts of the country and the world for the advancement of women's interests and protection of women's rights and privileges.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author of the study, Raymundo R. Pavo, is grateful to the following individuals and institutions for helping him conduct the study:

1. The women miners who participated in the research - the Women of North Poblacion (Patiao), Jose Panganiban; Women of Luklukan Norte, Jose Panganiban; Women of Sta. Rosa Sur, Jose Panganiban; Women of Sta. Elena, Jose Panganiban;
2. Local Government Unit of Jose Panganiban (Mayor Ricarte "Dong" Padilla and the Sangguniang Bayan);
3. The staff of Jose Panganiban Municipal Library;
4. BT's ASGM team led by Executive Director Atty. Richard Gutierrez, Programme Manager Evelyn Cubelo, area coordinators Jimbea Lucino, Aiza Baluyan and Arlene Galvez; and
5. BT's communication team led by Angelica Carballo-Pago and assistant Jezreel Belleza.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This study narrates the situation and roles of women in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) communities in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte and Ga-ang Mines in Balbalan, Kalinga. The author, Raymundo Pavo, has been contracted by BAN Toxics to design a methodology that can effectively capture women's role in ASGM through narratives. To ensure its accuracy and relevance, BT and the author presented and validated the findings for final round of feedback and recommendation to the participants of the study.

This study is intended for use by ASGM partners, civil society groups, donor partners, government agencies and local government units involved in mercury reduction and elimination activities in the Philippines.

This study is also intended to further bridge the dearth of information on the development issues and challenges confronting ASGM communities in the Philippines in general and the marginalization of women in a setting where their welfare is oftentimes at stake and their contribution undervalued.

This study is part of the BT project under the United States Department of State (USDOS) Development of National and Regional Approaches to Environmentally Sound Management of Mercury in Southeast Asia, Award No. SLMAQM-11-GR-0027.

KEY FINDINGS

The situation and roles of women in ASGM in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte showed the kind of space that women occupy in the informal economy, the consequent feminization of labor, the multiple burden that women carry, and the tragic presence of gender-based violation of women's rights. The narratives in the focus group discussion reveal the marginal, and often unbecoming locations that women are forced to fill-in and bear for the sake of the welfare of their family. Subsistence somehow encapsulates the interfacing issues and problems of women in Jose Panganiban. Subsistence, maintenance, and survival all synonymously describe the core of women's reality in the municipality, and condition their reasons for unwearingly upholding ASGM. The use of mercury also gives the impression that it provides the easiest way of panning gold from less marketable ores, and thus, is reckoned as an ally that makes their task less difficult, and less labor intensive.

The situation and roles of women miners in Ga-ang mines importantly revealed the overarching presence of an enabling collective spirit – the community's assertion of their right to self-determination. By virtue of the Banao Tribe's ancestral domain, and the constitutionally conditioned rights accorded to the community in defining and deciding their activities, the Ga-ang mines has been transformed into an empowering host to the efforts of women who take part in artisanal small-scale gold mining as an entry point to other economic opportunities. In this community, a participatory and united association, Banao Bodong Association, also functions as an effective and gender sensitive ally that underscores and upholds values, and that can guarantee and safeguard the interests of women.

Between women miners in Ga-ang and Jose Panganiban, the former begins with the economic need to engage in ASGM to provide for the needs of the family. This entry point, however, has been built upon and used as stepping-stone in unlocking new livelihood opportunities that they would want to experiment on. This means that from ASGM, women in Ga-ang mines have steadily carved economic opportunities that make their stay in the mining area more productive. But in the case of Jose Panganiban, women miners who are involved in ASGM are unfortunately trapped in the situation. This goes to say that their hard work does not reward them or open-up new economically enabling spaces. It appears that the mining habits and structures in the community and municipality bind and trap them to the daily grind of small-scale gold mining.

Should ASGM be equated to a space of women discrimination? The case study of the mining communities in Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang, Balbalan reveal diverging locations and experiences of women miners. In the case of Jose Panganiban, ASGM do stand as a space of gender discrimination, since women have assumed such activity out of poverty. Clearly, the rights of women miners to enabling options and safe working conditions are violated. In the case of Ga-ang mines, ASGM do not necessarily account as a space where women are violated and prejudiced. The socio-economic pillars of the indigenous community function as the enabling host to the needs and concerns of women. This is a location where ASGM only serves as an entry point to other livelihood and meaningful opportunities.

ABBREVIATIONS:

4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (Conditional Cash Transfer Program)
ASGM	Artisanal Small-Scale Gold Mining
BBA	Banao Bodong Association
CAR	Cordillera Administrative Region
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IPRA	Indigenous People's Rights Act
LGU	Local Government Unit
MLGU	Municipal Local Government Unit
Php	Pesos (Philippine currency)
PR	Public Relations
R.A.	Republic Act
VAWC	Violence Against Women and their Children

THE SITUATION AND ROLES OF WOMEN IN ARTISANAL
AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING COMMUNITIES

in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga



PART I

INTRODUCTION

Poverty and Gender

Poverty intensifies and aggravates gender issues. This is one of the pronouncements of the Philippines in its report at the 36th session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, August 2006. In this account, the government specifically ascertains how poverty constricts or limits women's choices in the areas of employment, health, and education. The government adds that unless traditional or stereotypical perspectives on women are changed, and these modifications will be translated into structural opportunities, women's spaces will remain peripheral.¹

The need to rectify biases and structures that push women to the margins encapsulates the appeal that many women in mining communities in the country keep and carry. Such a reflective stance somehow sums up the message, which women miners emphatically share, and want to convey to their community, and the government. While the state knows that poverty is the ground upon which many women's issues take root, areas where women do not have gainful opportunities particularly in communities ran by large mining companies in the country persist. In such locations, poverty forces women to engage in artisanal small-scale gold mining (hereafter, ASGM). In these spaces, women miners also regularly face health, security and economic risks.² Since many women in mining communities do not have viable opportunities, does this also mean that their efforts to earn a living, and the roles that they fulfill in the household and the community are unrecognized, largely ignored, or treated with less or depreciating value?

The marginal role of women in a mining community can be initially gleaned through the characteristics of artisanal small-scale (gold) mining. The activity, according to World Bank Group's Oil, Gas, and Mining Unit, share in these features: (1) It covers informal and/or formal arrangements or agreements, (2) It is heavily conditioned by poverty and lack of real economic choices-alternatives, (3) Participation in small-scale mining is almost proportional to needs and prices of products, (4) When informally done, it often involves scavenging, as it exists alongside with large-scale mining operations, (5) It is also seasonal and/or done alongside other regular economic activities in a community, (6) It is labor intensive, (7) It uses manual tools that require simple technology, (8) It is largely an uncertain source of income, (9) It commonly has negative impacts to the integrity of the environment, (10) It usually entails local and unregulated buyers of stones-metals in the community, and

(11) It comprises the extraction of stones-metals such as gold, diamonds, and silver.³

Against the backdrop of such features, ASGM as an activity shows key conditions that situate the kind of struggles women are forced to deal with, and the burden that women in many mining communities patiently carry through. More specifically, the characteristics of ASGM point to the reality of marginal economic space that women fill-in, and put on view the concomitant risks that women regularly face, and the uncertainty of economic compensation that women deal with in the conduct of the small-scale gold mining. With these features, ASGM as a term, hence, puts women issues in mining communities in perspective: as a result of the absence of viable and empowering opportunities, and the silent treatment of women's contributions in mining communities.

However, the term artisanal small-scale (gold) mining may also be a blanket concept that fails to consider the victories and successes of women especially in self-regulating and self-initiating organizations. In mining communities where land is communally owned, e.g. in ancestral domains, are there instances where women who take part in ASGM regard their mining endeavors rewarding and economically fulfilling? Given the features of ASGM which were earlier itemized, is there a possibility for social structures that are sensitive and responsive to the voices and experiences of women wherein ASGM does not automatically imply violation against the contributions and dignity of women? If such mining communities are existent, these questions are in order: What lessons can be learned from them? How can its social-communal structures serve as model upon which women realize that they are empowered, and that they are not pushed to the brink of anonymity?

Another question is in place: Should ASGM be considered as a gender issue? It seems that in most mining communities, ASGM signals the absence of real economic option for women. This means that ASGM is closely affianced with women discrimination. But this universalization, may need further qualification if particular communities can show that ASGM has helped women cultivate their capacities, and gave them real economic freedom. Do such instances exist? Perhaps, a reflective immersion with women in indigenous mining communities may serve as a viable entry point for such a possibility.

¹ From the statement of Hon. Esperanza I. Cabral, Secretary of Department of Social Welfare and Development, Republic of the Philippines, at the 36th Session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 15 August 2006. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/36sess.htm>, accessed on November 26, 2014.

² Judy A. Pasimio, *Mining and Violence against Rural and Indigenous Women in the Philippines*, (Quezon City: Lilak - Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights, 2013) 6-10.

³ Adriana Eftimie, Katherine Heller, John Strongman, Jennifer Hinton, Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, Nellie Mutemeri, *Gender Dimensions of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: A Rapid Assessment Toolkit* (World Bank Group's Oil, Gas, and Mining Unit, 2012), 19.

Artisanal Mining and R.A. 7076

There is a law in the country that governs artisanal small-scale mining. The apprehension, however, is if the law gives specific attention and protection to the issues and concerns of women. In the Philippines, Republic Act 7076 stands for the *People's Small-Scale Mining Act of 1991*.⁴ This law contains these relevant stipulations:

- (a) Small-scale mining refers to *mining activities, which rely heavily on manual labor using simple implements and methods and do not use explosives or heavy mining equipment*,⁵
- (b) Small-scale miners pertains to *Filipino citizens who, individually or in the company of other Filipino citizens, voluntarily form a cooperative duly licensed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to engage, under the terms and conditions of a contract, in the extraction or removal of minerals or ore-bearing materials from the ground*,⁶ and
- (c) Traditional small-scale miners denote *Filipino citizens who have a distinctive socio-economic cultural tradition with a subsistence base focused on small-scale mining. They live in stable sedentary communities and employ a mining technology that is labor-intensive and simple; and employs physical separation methods for the extraction of mineral/s and/or metal/s from the ore*.⁷

If paraphrased, the first stipulation underscores the contrast between mining that entails manual labor and the use of simple equipment, and mining that involves manual labor, and the use of heavy mining equipment or explosives. By presenting this contrast, the difference between small-scale mining and large-scale mining operations can be maintained. With regards to women and mining, the kind of mining that they do generally falls within the first category – which entails manual labor, and simple equipment. This is because in many cases, equipment in ASGM is made of assembled planks of wood, uses readily available materials, and is not difficult to operate. Nevertheless, the simplicity of the equipment does not in a way capture the manual labor required to successfully engage in ASGM.

In restating the second stipulation, it looks at small-scale mining as a licensed and state regulated activity. Through a contract, the parties agree on the kind of ore that will be extracted and the extent of the mining activity. The formation of a recognized entity, be it an individual, or organization, however, does not entail a change in the nature of small-scale mining as an activity that uses manual labor and simple equipment. With regards to women and ASGM, the requirement to register is generally not followed. This perhaps has to do with the nature of extraction that women do – panning in river streams, and shallow sections of the sea. The concept of a contract as to the kind of ore to be extracted also does not appear sound, since ASGM is usually coupled by uncertain compensation. As women work hard for hours, there is no guarantee that the gold that they can sift – the term extraction may not even suffice – will be enough to merit any monetary exchange.

In relation to the third stipulation, rewording the text may mean that it pertains to small-scale mining in cultural communities. This may specifically apply to ancestral domains, which are governed by unique cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices. The stress on subsistence and sedentary lifestyles, however, imply that mining in such communities is simple or is not that extractive. Mining, in this regard, may be assumed as part and parcel of other livelihood engagements in the community. In contrast to the second stipulation in the People's Small-Scale Mining Act, there is no mention of contracts between the government and the individual or organization. This non-presence may be a foreshadowing of the right of indigenous groups to assert self-governing mechanisms highlighting values like autonomy, and collective-participatory decision-making processes. Will women who do artisanal small-scale gold mining in this community contradict the seemingly readily accepted relation between poverty and gender issues? Do communal values guarantee the dignity and enabling economic options accorded to women in indigenous mining communities? These are some of the questions that can be thought of in ascertaining the roles of women miners in ethno-linguistic groups.

⁴ Republic of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 7076: People's Small-Scale Mining Act, 1991.

⁵ R.A 7076, section 4.25.

⁶ R.A 7076, section 4.26.

⁷ R.A. 7076, section 4.29. Moreover, Presidential Decree 1899 specifies the scope and limit of the law, and applies to areas not declared as People's Small Scale Mining area (PSSSMA) under RA No. 7076. The Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao Inc. (AFRIM), *A Background Study on the Small-Scale Mining Operations in Benguet and South Cotabato and their Impact on the Economy, the Environment, and the Community* (Bantay Kita, 2012) 12.

Objectives, Methodologies, and Research Design

This study aims to describe at length the situation and roles of women engaged in artisanal small-scale gold mining in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga. The primary data for this research were sourced out from qualitative interviews via Focus Group Discussions (FGD)⁸ with key informants from both mining locations. In Jose Panganiban, eight women representatives from various barangays who do or have done ASGM enlisted and participated in the FGD in the municipality. In Talalang, Balbalan, nine women who regularly do or perform ASGM from Ga-ang mines joined and partook in the FGD. Secondary data were also used from related articles, and researches to discuss and magnify identified women's issues, and to describe the geographic and cultural locations of Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, as field sites of this research project.

The barangays where the participants from Jose Panganiban come from are as follows: Santa Elena, Luklukan Norte, and North Poblacion or *Patiao*. In the FGD in Talalang, Balbalan, these barangays were represented: Pantikian, Salegseg, and Talalang, and one participant is from Tabuk City. The participants in the FGD also share in this profile: at least 30 years of age, has at least ten years of residency in the community, is a mother or a wife, and has experienced ASGM. These characteristics help establish the substance-depth-complexity of the stories and data that can be derived from the narratives and discussions of the participants.

The conduct of FGD is guided by a pre-determined format. This format or design is made-up of five overlapping domains, namely: (1) Women's mind map of the community, (2) Women in the household, (3) Women in livelihood spaces, (4) Women and gender-based violence, and (5) Women's dreams and aspirations. The multiplicity of these dimensions are intended to help validate the emergent findings, given that one dimension is expected to overflow, hence, interface with the other's domain.⁹ The activity, aims, guidelines, and expected output are specified per domain:

(1.) Women's mind map of the community

Activity: Mind Mapping

Aim: To articulate a map of the community from a women's perspective

Instructions:

- This group activity shall be composed of 6-8 participants;
- Draw a map of the community and highlight the spaces, areas, and locations where women usually stay and cite the reasons why women inhabit such spaces, areas, and locations. Participants are encouraged to use local terminologies in giving place names.

Note: It is encouraged that the map will also distinguish the parts/months of the calendar year when women inhabit such spaces, areas, and locations.

Output: 6-8 individual mind maps

(2.) Women in the household

Activity: Listing of daily, weekly, monthly charts in the household and articulate household narratives

Aim: (1) To describe and identify the activities in the household on a daily/weekly/monthly timetable, and express household based narratives, (2) To address this inquiry: Is the household a shared space between women and men?

Instructions:

- A participant is asked to list the activities that are usually part of a regular daily schedule, or weekly tasks, or responsibilities that are done on a monthly basis that take place in the household;
- Write stories on the following points: (1) sources of income, (2) budgeting, (3) rearing of children, and (4) decision-making/planning;
- The use of local terminologies in naming household activities is encouraged.

Output: 6-8 daily, weekly, monthly charts of household activities, and 6-8 narratives on the role of women in relation to (1) sources of income, (2) budgeting, (3) rearing of children, and (4) decision-making/planning.

(3.) Women in livelihood spaces

Activity: Narrating/writing of stories in livelihood spaces

Aim: (1) To describe the experiences of women in the community as they earn money, barter goods, or receive compensation, and address this query: (2) What is the nature of the economic/livelihood experience of women in the community?

⁸ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed., (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009) 325.

⁹ The combination of these categories also reinforces the concept of multiple approaches for the purposes of data triangulation-validation. Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 4th ed., (Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, 2001) 4-5.

Instructions:

- A participant is asked to describe livelihood in terms of the following points: (1) kind/nature of work, (2) salary/income or exchanged goods, (3) working hours, (4) hazards – health, safety, harassment, instances of deception, (5) livelihood options;
- Sharing of Stories: ‘Struggles’ and ‘Victories’;
- The use of local terminologies within the frame of livelihood is encouraged.

Output: 6-8 descriptions of livelihood experience of women and stories of economic options/struggles/challenges/victories

(4.) Women and gender-based violence

Activity: Mind Mapping

Aim: To identify spaces where women experience gender based violence and a list of such forms of violence

Instructions:

- Using their mind maps, identify spaces where women experienced gender-based violence (harassment, rape, verbal abuse, etc.);
- Persons who experienced gender-based violence and the perpetrators need not be named;
- The use of local terminologies in naming the kind of violence is encouraged;
- The participants will only use one color and the group will agree on a symbol to identify the spaces of gender-based violence.

Output: A women’s mind map of the community, which specifies the places/spaces where gender based violence took place.

(5.) Women and their aspirations-dreams

Activity: Listing of dreams for the self, family, and community.

Aim: (1) To facilitate the expression of women’s aspirations of a better community, and (2) A list of proposals/suggestions to make such dreams concrete and operative.

Instructions:

- List of dreams for the self, family, and community;
- A list of proposals/suggestions that can transform such visions into reality.

Output: 6-8 symbolic lists, and a consolidated list of dreams that may lead to suggestions to cause concrete and empowering changes in the community.

The first module of FGD invites the participants to draw an image of their communities. The strength of this approach is it immediately provides the cue that the FGD has already begun. This is because the activity puts the entire FGD in perspective as the participants mentally re-visit their community, and identify the spaces where they usually pour their time and efforts. In so doing, they are reminded that the FGD is about women’s spaces and experiences. The activity also validates the claim that they are engaged in ASGM. Sections of rivers, and or sea are usually present if women are involved in ASGM, since it is a consistent aspect of their schedule.

Another strength of the mind-map is it does not rely on readily available maps in the barangay, which were formulated for administrative reasons. While these maps in the community primarily highlight institutions of education, health, seat of government, church, and public spaces, the mind-map activity initially disaggregates the spaces that men and/or women occupy. In communities where men dominate the decision-making space, usually women gather in spaces of health, and education, which are considered as extensions of women’s responsibility in the household, and to their children. This is a duty that has been traditionally apportioned to women.¹⁰

The second module of the FGD magnifies the space in the household. The cultural bias in a Filipino family is that women should know how to manage the household. This is because culture dictates that it is the primary responsibility of women to clean the house, prepare the meals, wash the dishes, do the laundry, rear the children, and budget the family’s finances. Such tasks, however, fall within the purview of unpaid work, since the household is treated as a private space. This is one reason why men in Filipino communities generally do not feel obliged to fulfill household chores. Often, they do selective household activities that are commonly done outside the family’s abode. The great divide between public and private space largely accounts for society’s in-ability to recognize household work as real work.

¹⁰This is one reason why the Women’s Convention or CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) was approved by the UN Assembly in 1979, and was put into force in 1981. Ellen-Rose Kambel, A Guide to Indigenous Women’s Rights under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 2nd ed., (UK: Forest Peoples Programme, 2012) 8.

Guided by such discussion points, the participants in this module are invited to itemize their concerns on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. The specification of such tasks helps demonstrate how women manage their time to accommodate household work. Another interesting angle to look at is if there are spaces where women can rest, or even engage in leisure activities. In communities where women are often left with the burden of doing the majority of the household work, it is usually difficult to find time to rest, or even take part in leisurely pursuits. This is the reason why conducting additional livelihood projects to women may even open doors for further oppression, since their week-ends are now consumed for extra work leaving them with practically no space for rest or recreation. As persons, having no space for rest and leisure may imply that the person's work and contributions in the household, or community are not valued, and respected. Its absence may further mean that women, despite their multiple tasks in the household, are still not formally considered as working-productive members of the community.¹¹

The third module zooms into the livelihood spaces that women miners occupy in their communities. This is where the participants in the FGD share the details of the daily grind of ASGM, the reasons why they habitually perform such work, and the risks that they are forced to regularly face. By magnifying its phases and processes, the labor-intensive features of ASGM are un-packed. The thorough and comprehensive description of their experiences also magnifies the question on how women balance their acts between household work, and the roots of the necessity to engage in livelihood work, like ASGM. Are women justly compensated for their hard work? This is a recurring interest in the discussion for this module.

Moreover, women's livelihood engagements in mining communities are repeatedly categorized as part of the economy's informal sector. This means that women are self-employed as they take on the challenge of providing income for the growing needs of the household. The decision can either mean that women miners are *resilient* or they clearly do not have enabling livelihood options in a mining community.¹² Besides the economic uncertainties surrounding ASGM, some women are transported into situations where they become vulnerable to un-fair arrangements, and unbecoming exercise of power

relations. These are the kinds of dehumanizing transactions, wherein livelihood, for instance, begins to precariously interface with prostitution. Hence, for the third module, the participants are asked to describe their experience of ASGM, and identify the reasons why they find themselves in such scenario. Is ASGM changing the economic status of women, and the way the household is governed? Does ASGM empower women to assert their spaces, give them a platform to argue for work options, and suggest enabling working conditions in the community and municipality?

The fourth module centers on women and gender-based violence. The presence or absence of gender-based violence is an informative measure of the power relations in a community, how instances of subjugation and discrimination take place, and the capacities of women and women's organization to squarely face such violations. The absence of gender-based violence in a community may also imply two things: (a) Women are empowered and men have disciplined their actions towards women, or (b) Women are not free enough from the shackles of male dominion that they are yet to muster the courage to complain and file cases against perpetrators of gender based violations.¹³

In this module, the participants will be asked to take a closer look at their mind-maps, and pinpoint spaces where women were or are currently harassed, abused or violated. By assigning a symbol, e.g. asterisk, such locations can be distinguished. The sharing of these stories will also reveal if women themselves justify the acts of perpetrators if they will resort to victim blaming, or if they are yet to understand the cycle of violence, or if they treat violations in the household as part of the family's private space. With this checklist, one can estimate and assess the kind and level of leverage that women in the barangay invoke as they are reminded of the presence of gender-based violence within the neighborhood.

The fifth module centers on women's dreams and aspirations. In this section, the participants in the FGD are invited to articulate their vision of the future for themselves, their families, and the community as a whole. By requesting the participants to share their wishes, the activity also provides another way of describing their present situation. This is because their aspirations

¹¹ A conformist stance on stereotypical roles between men and women that lead to discrimination and subjugation is in violation of Article 5 of CEDAW.

¹² The absence of equal and equitable employment opportunities for women violates Articles 11 and 13 of CEDAW.

¹³ Gender based violence clearly goes against the principles of women dignity and the right to be protected from perpetrators of such crime as stipulated in Articles 6 and 15 of CEDAW.

can be a contrast to the problems that they are currently facing. Instances of gender based violence that were unarticulated in the previous module may even be expressed at this point, since dreams can speak of the changes that you would want to happen in family relations.

By asking the participants to imagine, their visions may reveal the kind of spaces that would want to fill-in, the possible sharing of space in the household, the type of livelihood engagements that are more stable and risk free, the absence or reduction of instances of gender based violence, and the type of life that they would want to see themselves, and their children in. Through these prophetic accounts, insights to possible solutions to the women's problems and issues may be teased out or may clearly unfold in the course of the FGD.

Through the five modules, the participants in the FGD are disposed to share their narratives, clarify concerns, and issues that may sufficiently reveal and describe the present situation and roles that women accomplish as they take part in artisanal small-scale gold mining in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga. With their narratives, a subsequent comparative study is conditioned where the similarities and dissimilarities between communities can be further described and looked into. This type of analysis will further push the inductive approach in interrelating the themes and descriptions in the study.¹⁴ To also assist in providing the context to the narratives and experiences of the FGD participants, photo-documentation will be included in the presentation of the study. These photos are roped in to help provide images, and aid in the process of visualizing the nuances of the situation and roles of women in the two mining communities.

Finally, the results of the study will be presented to the community for validation. In this activity, the participants and important members of the community will be gathered where questions, and point of clarifications shall be articulated. For the section on women miners in Ga-ang mines, Kalinga, the participants in the FGD, and the members of the Board of Trustees of Banao Bodong Association shall be invited to attend in the validation activity in Tabuk City. For the research on women in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, the FGD participants shall be gathered in a validation exercise, and it shall be held in the municipality. Lastly, the successful validation of key results in the research on the situation and roles of women in ASGM in the two communities shall hopefully be capped by the participants' consent for the publication of the study, which shall be circulated in the local, national, and international communities.

¹⁴ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed., (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009) 329.

PART II

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND CULTURAL DESCRIPTION OF FIELD SITES:

JOSE PANGANIBAN, CAMARINES NORTE, AND GA-ANG, BALBALAN, KALINGA

Jose Panganiban

The municipality of Jose Panganiban is part of the province of Camarines Norte. The province falls within Bicol Region-Region V, and is part of Southern Luzon. The previous name of Jose Panganiban is *Mambulao*, a word derived from *Mabulawan* or bountiful gold. It was subsequently replaced with and renamed as Jose Panganiban in honor of Jose Maria Panganiban in December 1, 1934. He was a homegrown *Bicolano* patriot, and an ardent member of Jose Rizal's Propaganda Movement. Jose Panganiban is also 34 km northwest of *Daet*, the provincial capital of Camarines Norte. With regards principal languages, Tagalog and Bikol are spoken in the municipality, with the former predominantly used in their communication practices.

Politically, the town is subdivided into 27 barangays, with large-scale and small-scale gold mining as the primal economic interest. The earliest recorded mining activity in this area was between the 1750s and 1800s. For the past century, a significant number of large mining companies have been stationed in various parts of the municipality taking advantage of its predictive gold deposits. Some of these mining companies are the defunct Philippine Iron Mines and J.G. Reality and Mining Company, which stayed for extended phases in the locale. In periods where gold mining is consistently productive, the economic atmosphere in the municipality proportionately increases. In periods where mining tunnels are no longer progressive, the municipality's economy also plunges. This roller-coaster ride with mining excavations somehow describes the advantage and disadvantage of mining dependent communities like Jose Panganiban.¹⁵

Since Jose Panganiban is part of Bicol, it also falls within the typhoon belt. This means that typhoons regularly visit the place and can cause havoc in the months of June until December. This natural phenomenon is one reality that mining activities – either large-scale or small-scale, seriously consider in relation to the safety of miners and

mining activities in the municipality. The presence of typhoons also mean that ordinary employees and informal women miners would need to look for other sources of income, since mining activities may be shelved, required to take a short respite. After the typhoon, mining tunnels might also need extensive repair, which even extends the number of days where men and women miners have no work, and no income. In the public market of Jose Panganiban, one can also see numerous stores selling items-small equipment necessary in the conduct of mining. The presence of these stores validates the significant number of households engaged in mining. Moreover, one can find stores that lend money or appraise-buy gold products like earrings, bracelets, necklaces with interest. These stores extend temporary relief for miners in need of money, but also lure them to agree to paying-schemes that commonly imply bigger returns for storeowners, creditor, or financier.

Camarines Norte in the Archipelago



Description: The photo shows the location of Camarines Norte, which forms part of Southern Luzon, and is facing directly the Philippines Sea (Photo from: <https://www.google.com.ph/search?q=map+of+san+jose+panganiban,+camarines+norte>, accessed on November 13, 2014).

¹⁵ Camarines Norte, retrieved from: <http://www.camarinesnorte.gov.ph/index.php/12-municipalities/113-jpanganiban>, accessed on November 13, 2014.

Jose Panganiban in Camarines Norte



Description: Jose Panganiban is closely situated with the municipalities of Labo and Paracale, and Daet, the provincial capital of Camarines Norte (Photo from: <https://www.google.com.ph/search?q=map+of+san+jose+panganiban,+camarines+norte>, accessed on November 13, 2014).

Balbalan, Kalinga

The municipality of Balbalan is located within the land locked province of Kalinga. This province is politically part of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) of the Luzon group of islands. It is 33 kilometers west to Tabuk City, the provincial capital. The municipality is administratively subdivided into 14 barangays, with one barangay standing as the center of the town – Balbalasan, Balbalan Proper, while the rest are located in outlying areas. The other 13 barangays in this town include: Maling (Kabugao), Ababa-an, Talalang, Dao-angan, Mabca, Tawang, Buaya, Pantikian, Gawa-an, Poswoy, Poblacion (Salegseg), and Balantoy.

Since Balbalan is in Kalinga, its physical landscape is likewise marked by rugged and sloping topography coupled with mountain peaks ranging from 1,500 to 2,500 meters in height. In the country, the province has one of the best land resource suited for rice farming. In its lower regions, sprawling rice fields are built and maintained, and rice plots-terraces are even carved in mountainous sections. Its highlands are also filled with extensive tropical rain forests, which accounts for its high level of bio-

diversity. Another obvious natural attraction in the area is the Chico River, which can host to a four-hour white water rafting adventure with its extensive rapids. The presence of tropical forests and healthy river systems are but few of the many conditions that sustain biodiversity in Balbalan, which intersects with the Balbalasang-Balbalan National Park.¹⁶

Kalinga in the Archipelago



Description: Kalinga is a land-locked province in the northern part of Luzon (Photo from: <https://www.google.com.ph/search?q=map+of+kalinga+province>, accessed on November 13, 2014).

Before 1992, Kalinga Apayao used to refer to one province. This large political territory, however, was divided into two – now known as Kalinga and Apayao. Tribal membership and loyalty to one's family and kin conditioned common tribal conflict, and caused unrest between ethnic groups. The decision to split the province into two was a result of the effort to solve, if not at least mitigate the problem.

¹⁶ Philippine Islands, Balbalan, retrieved from: <http://www.philippine-islands.ph/en/balbalan-kalinga-philippines.html>, accessed on November 13, 2014.

Balbalan in Kalinga



Description: Balbalan is one of the eight municipalities of Kalinga Province (Photo from: <https://www.google.com.ph/search?q=map+of+kalinga+province>, accessed on November 13, 2014).

Culturally considered, the Kalinga province is home to thirty-one sub-tribes of the Kalinga ethno linguistic groups. From this number, there are six sub-tribes in Balbalan municipality, which are as follows: (1) Alingag (Salegseg), (2) Banao, (3) Buwaya, (4) Dao-angan, (5) Gobang, and (6) Mabaca.¹⁷ From this list, it is the Banao Tribe who has primary claim over the territory of Ga-ang mines, since it falls within their ancestral domain. This right to self-administer is stipulated under Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) Law of 1997.

The members of the Banao ethnic group are also located and dispersed in these Barangays: Pantikian, Talalang, Balbalasan. Amongst these barangays, it is in Talalang where one finds Ga-ang mines, which is a storehouse of large gold deposits. It is also in Talalang, where one finds the sole gateway to the mining area specifically located is in one of its Sitio, Sesec-an. By having one point of entrance and exit, the number of persons who go to Ga-ang is regulated, and all items brought to the place are regularly checked and screened by a marshal. These are some of the policies enforced by the Banao Bodong Association (BBA), which aims to strictly regulate activities, transactions, and relations in the mining community. This is a self-initiated and self-governing organization and is considered as the main reason why applications from large-scale mining companies in the area are rejected, and in principle, already disallowed.

Sitio Sesec-an, Barangay Talalang



Description: A tarpaulin placed near the entrance of Sitio Sesec-an, which is a kilometer away from the Golden Gate station of the Banao Bodong Association. In 2012, the association and the community banned the use of mercury in the mining area. (Photo taken by Gelli Aiza Baluyan).

¹⁷ Kalinga, retrieved from: <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts>, accessed on November 13, 2014.

PART III

THE SITUATION AND ROLES OF WOMEN IN ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING COMMUNITIES

IN JOSE PANGANIBAN, CAMARINES NORTE

An Overview

This section of the project seeks to provide a phenomenological description of the situation and roles of women in artisanal small-scale gold mining communities in the municipality of Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte.¹⁸ To address this aim, a focus group discussion was organized where women representatives from various barangays in the municipality freely shared and described experiences and narratives on small-scale gold mining in their communities. The FGD took place on October 2014; and the Señerez Building at the Municipal Library which houses the Jomapa Museum, functioned as the venue of the activity. Eight women representatives from some mining communities in the municipality, a community organizer, a documenter and the facilitator took part in the scheduled two-day workshop. The FGD was guided and conditioned by these themes: (1) women's mind map of the community, (2) women in the household, (3) women in livelihood spaces, (4) women and gender based violence, and (5) women's dreams and aspirations. Such themes served as guideposts in eliciting the participants' stories and insights as they deal with socio-economic conditions and challenges that are heavily influenced and shaped by gold mining pursuits in the municipality. The validation of the key results of the study also took place on December 2014, and it was participated in by the participants in the FGD. The validation exercise took place in the session hall of the municipality, where the participants clarified concepts, and raised queries. After some fruitful discussions, the participants agreed in the proposed publication of the research.

In *Jose Panganiban*, the barangays where ASGM significantly figures in the socio-economic engagements of women members of the community include but are not solely confined to: Santa Elena, Luklukan Sur, Luklukan Norte, Santa Rosa Sur,

Santa Rosa Norte, San Isidro, San Rafael, and North Poblacion, also known by its traditional name *Patiao*.¹⁹ From the eight women participants, three are from Luklukan Norte, two from Santa Elena, and three from North Poblacion. As key informants, the participants were selected because of their experiences in ASGM, and the extent of their knowledge of the involvements of other women also engaged in ASGM in their respective barangays. The participants also share the following profile: at least 30 years old, minimum of ten years residency in the community, and a single or married mother with children. Five of the participants are directly engaged in small-scale mining or *pagkakabud* (the local generic term for mining), while the other three work in the local government occupying various positions such as the barangay captain, a barangay councilor/*kagawad* and a former barangay captain currently working in the budget arm of the municipality.

The focus group discussion also did not officially start in the absence of the participant's consent. The facilitator presented the reasons why the workshop is organized. The participants in turn expressed their views and shared questions on the wisdom of the whole exercise. Why are we privileging women? Where will the output of the focus group discussion be used? Will the data from the discussion be properly used and will not be a case of misrepresentation? These are some of the crucial questions formulated by the participants. After a thorough response to the queries, and the curiosities were fairly addressed, the participants gave their consent to conduct the activity and expressed their desire to help articulate the stories of women and describe women's situation in ASGM communities in the municipality. This is their unanimous response, which consolidates their stance on the amenable conduct of this research.

Patiao, Luklukan Norte, and Santa Elena: Notable Features

Barangay North Poblacion is located at the city town center, and is situated beside the Mambulao Bay, while Luklukan Norte and Santa Elena are positioned in the hilly parts of the municipality. As the center of Jose Panganiban, North Poblacion houses the basic institutions of the town – the primary hospital, gymnasium, an old church, a school and the municipal hall. These social, political, academic, and religious establishments are concentrated in the municipality's center that a ten-

¹⁸The presence of gold mining activity in *Bikolandia*, which includes Camarines, is mentioned in Scott's *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (1994). Scott noted that *Bikolanos* mined gold by 'excavating or by panning in streams'. William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 1994) 180.

¹⁹The number of barangays involved in gold mining activities may explain why the municipality of Jose Panganiban is sometimes glossed as 'the gold town of Camarines'.

minute walk will suffice to get acquainted with the structures. The close arrangement of these institutions also conditions the variety of economic transactions that take place in the area. A simple fishing port near the center even adds to the economic activity in North Poblacion as fishing boats from nearby places can dock and bring their goods to this community. Such economic opportunities, based on the narratives of the women participants, will uniquely figure in the lives of women engaged in small-scale mining in *Patiao*. This is a point, which will be magnified in ensuing sections of this paper. But unlike *Patiao*, Luklukan Norte and Santa Elena have less varied economic activities. This may have to do with the reality that such communities are heavily conditioned by large-scale mining, which functions as the primary basis for the livelihood opportunities and monetary transactions in the two barangays. This dependency on mining borne and mining related relations, as the narratives of the women participants hold, distinctively shape the lives and choices of women who live in mining communities.

Amongst the three barangays, it is important to note that bodies of water naturally connect North Poblacion and Luklukan Norte: *Patiao* River in North Poblacion and *Tacoma* River from Luklukan Norte. More specifically, *Tacoma* River meets river *Patiao* in North Poblacion, which is then released into the *Mambulao* Bay. This natural relation between bodies of water is the reason why women participants from *Patiao* sometimes remark that gold from *Mambulao* Bay is comparable to *alika-bok* or dust – a term which connotes lesser quality and value, since gold is perceived as only incidental to the place. In their conception of things, gold mined in *Mambulao* Bay are but excesses from other mining communities like Luklukan Norte.²⁰ While *Tigbi* River in Santa Elena does not directly intersect with either *Patiao* or *Tacoma* Rivers, its water, however, flows into the *Mambulao* Bay. In this sense, *Mambulao* Bay serves as the catch basin of majority of water streams from the three barangays and from other mining communities in the municipality. From an environmental point of view, *Mambulao* Bay may host to a lot of unwanted tailings. The positionality of the area, however, for small-scale gold miners in *Patiao* grounds the impression that its sand will always be ready to receive run-off gold carried by tributaries that come in contact with gold mining activities from the hilly parts of the municipality.

A comparable social-economic feature is also shared between Luklukan Norte and Santa Elena. Both communities are weightily shaped by this hierarchical social structure: Land Owner, Financier and Players. To summarily discuss such structure, the landowner can decide to open and delineate hectares of land for gold extraction like tunnel mining. Since land is privately owned, the owner also has the privilege to suggest monetary arrangements with a financier, and operator. According to our participants from Santa Elena, a 10% share from mining operations is usually reserved and accorded to the landowner. This arrangement, as stressed by the participants, makes the role of the landowner relatively easy and worry free. This is because the landowner will not be involved in any monetary risk, and will be relieved from any moral and legal responsibility.²¹ The financier, however, has higher monetary stakes, since there is no guarantee that a mining operation can recompense the invested money. For this role, the financier usually has two options: (a) lend money to the operator, or (b) be directly involved in the operations. When the financier opts to loan his/her money, choosing the workforce or players will be the sole responsibility of the operator. If he/she decides to work closely with the operator, then the financier will have a say in selecting players who are contracted for manual labor. Lastly, the players are the employees who exchange manual labor for regular/irregular wage. The risks that these individuals face vary but are usually intimidated by different levels of threats to survival. In unregulated mining excavations, for instance, health and security measures are sometimes waived and sacrificed. This is one of the many causes of the number of deaths and instances of accidents that are vividly yet anxiously narrated by the participants when talking about some of the perceived dangers of gold mining activities.²²

Women in Luklukan Norte and Santa Elena do not predominantly figure in the landowner, financier and player scheme. A few exceptions, however, need articulation, since there are some women who are landowners and financiers although their count remains marginal. Also, in the class of players, women are not contracted or employed given the difficult conditions in tunnel and compressor mining. The women participants in the FGD explain that it is almost impossible for them to endure and overcome the inexplicable risks that men face when directly

²⁰ Pavo, FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

²¹ Pavo, FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

²² Pavo, FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

engaged in tunnel or compressor mining. Images of narrow-pit like tunnels where tubed oxygen is a miner's only lifeline, and dangerous under water compressor mining operations in *Tigbi River* in Santa Elena were described with obvious discomfort. While men are forced to endure such practices, the unsafe mining procedures leave majority of women worried that they may end up supporting their family and kids on their own. This cause for concern plus the other realities of poverty motivate women to regularly engage in small scale gold mining along the shallow parts of the river,²³ which they can perform near their households, while watching over their kids and perform other familial concerns.

Amongst the three communities, barangay Santa Elena appears to be the busiest in relation to mining. The mind map of the participants from this community specifically gives the impression that currently, individuals and groups work and flock near the compressor mining spaces of such barangay. Supported by the narratives of the participant, she expressed that to date, there is a festive atmosphere along *Tigbi River*, which signals the presence of high-grade (at least 18 carats) gold. What is special about this high-grade phenomenon? The participant retorted, '*kaya niyang magdala ng isang buong community sa lugar na may hi-grade*' (high-grade gold can attract and bring a community to a single place).²⁴ While men may be forced or motivated to take more risks in compressor mining in *Tigbi River*, women are no strangers in this rush for gold. Regrettably, the festive activity in the area point to a different kind of interest and participation: the steady increase of prostituted women, who the participants stressed are from other municipalities. As identified by the participants, the *butukan* or the makeshift houses that male miners build beside the tunnels, assume a new role in such occasions. Some *butukan* specifically become temporary mini motels for another kind of rush – pleasure for quick cash or for rocks with gold.²⁵ In this case, women are still considered within the fold of entertainment and recreation.²⁶

Luklukan Norte, despite its less busy mining activities compared to Santa Elena has had its eventful days. In those times when some members of this small community had their fair share of high-grade gold, many flocked to this place. The abandoned gates of a mining company, and an empty *butukan* in *Purok 6* seem to function as wilting reminders of such peak moments in the life of the community. One can also reconstruct the hype surrounding the area given the big and highly corrugated holes in the nearby hill where people stuck their tools and excavated tons of soil just to get a shot at high-grade gold. And while looking at the hills beside *Tacoma River*, one can also estimate at least three thoughts that crossed the minds and hearts of the members of the community: (1) the vivid memory of joy in finding lucrative gold in the area, (2) the vindication that high-grade gold does exist and it is something that can be mined, and (3) the sustained hope that one day other community members will have their turn in finding one. These are the thoughts that some women in Luklukan Norte expressed as they endure the daily grind of small-scale gold mining in anticipation of that chance at high-grade gold.

With the notable features of the represented barangays, one can take notice that the spectrum of women's choices in *Patiao*, Luklukan Norte, and Santa Elena are heavily regulated by these concerns and worries: (1) adequate sources of income, (2) the survival of the family, and (3) hope that one day they will be freed from the uncertainties surrounding the toiling conditions of mining. These concerns and worries, in retrospect, reveal the shared interests of women in the three barangays, and in Jose Panganiban in general – daily subsistence. It is this fundamental unease, which pushes a significant number of women in the municipality to continuously engage in small scale mining in the *Mambulao Bay*, or in the shallow parts of *Tacoma* and *Tigbi Rivers*, endure the attendant risks in doing such work, and for some women from other municipalities, forced to stay in Jose Panganiban to engage in unwanted transactions like prostitution. In Gender studies, such realities sadly account for the feminization of poverty.²⁷

²³ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

²⁴ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

²⁵ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

²⁶ Judy A. Pasimio, *Mining and Violence against Rural and Indigenous Women in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Lilak – Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights, 2013) 6.

²⁷ National Commission on the role of Filipino Women, *Filipino Women Issues and Trends* (Mandaluyong City: Asian Development Bank, 1995) 21-22.

Women's Mind Map

The participants in the FGD made a mental map of their respective barangays. They were asked to draw an image of their communities, since such accounts reveal a more personal articulation of the way women represent their place in contradistinction to readily available maps of the community. The mind map, in this respect, follows the ground-up approach versus the topographical entry point. Such a difference is reckoned to have the capacity to share and reveal the spaces that women may usually find themselves in, the institutions that they work with, and the roles that they play and usually fulfill. Here are three selected mental maps of Patiao, Luklukan Norte, and Santa Elena.²⁸

Mind Map A - Patiao



Description: This mind map shows the basic institutions in Patiao and the Mambulao Bay where some women engage in small-scale gold mining. (Photo by Arlene Galvez)

Mind Map B - Luklukan Norte



Description: This mind map shows the basic institutions in Patiao and the Mambulao Bay where some women engage in small-scale gold mining. (Photo by Arlene Galvez)

Mind Map C - Santa Elena



Description: This mind map shows the kind mining activities in Santa Elena where one can find akawan and compressor mining in Tigbi River, and tunnel mining. (Photo by Arlene Galvez)

The sharing and discussion of the participants' mental maps of their respective communities paved way for the identification of these places, spaces and roles of women in the three barangays:

- 1) Women usually stay near the school and day-care centers. The participants pointed out that mothers frequent these spaces to accompany their children to school and stay there, wait for their kids or comeback just before class dismissal. A participant specifies: '*nasa gilid lang sila ng paaralan, nag-aantay na matapos ang klase, bawal na kas-ing pumasok habang may klase pa.*' (Women are no longer allowed to stay inside the school; they just wait outside until classes end). When asked why women basically do such function, one response was that mothers have more regular schedules unlike their husbands, who at times will stay for extended periods in mining areas. Another reason is that mothers are socially expected to take care of the children and ensure that children are brought to school.²⁹
- 2) Women assemble in lending institutions. For this phenomenon, the participants hold that generally women apply for credit loan to help defray household expenditures. The participants specified that such financing schemes, given the simple requirements that lending institutions stipulate, and the flexible payment plans, can easily lure women. They narrated that payment should be done within six months, while interest rates are from 10% to 20%. The unfortunate side to this simple lending arrangement is that some women apply for credit loan just to pay pre-existing debts. This is why our participants observe that: '*nabubuhay na sa utang ang ibang kababaihan, tapal-tapal lang ang ginagawa*' (Some pay-off by applying for another loan from a different lending group, women subsist in debt).³⁰

²⁸ FGD notes and drawings, October 3, 2014.

²⁹ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³⁰ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

Another participant adds that other women are so stressed and anxious that when the lender goes to the house to collect monthly dues, '*parang sinasangag sila*' (They feel as if they are roasted over fire)³¹ This is how she described women who are at a loss on how to pay their debts.

- 3) Some women gather in areas where simple betting games are put-up. One example is *Ripa* – a type of gambling activity where grocery items/goods, food or Php 1,000.00 cash are its usual prizes. The participants in the FGD confirmed that gambling of such type is specifically invented for mothers who are easily enticed to gamble by buying a ten peso worth digit for possible bigger returns. Asked where this type of gambling is played, the participants shared that it usually takes place in ordinary streets in the barangay, and/or sometimes in the wet market area where women also congregate.³² Given the scarcity of economic resources, it can be said that *Ripa* has taken a foothold in some of the activities of women. Meanwhile, a participant from *Luklukan Norte* adds, that aside from *Ripa*, one can also take part in a simple gambling game in North Poblacion – *sa pula, sa puti* (red or white), where one only needs to side either color and bet. She narrated that recently, her twenty-peso bill ballooned to six hundred pesos in one night, which she immediately used to buy rice and food. The co-participant from *Luklukan Norte* was later asked if she will also take part in such betting game, then she opined that she may need to start with a lower amount, a five peso coin to be exact so lady luck will pity her and transform her five peso money into a bigger sum.³³
- 4) Women gather in health centers and in elementary school's clean-up drive. These spaces, mothers frequent the health center for the children's regular check-up and many are involved in community activities in schools. The FGD participants clarified that while such engagements are good and noble, they were quick to point out that women also avail such services in the health center and take part in the school's cleaning activity to fulfill some of the requirements of the 4 P's (*Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program*) of

the government.³⁴ As recipients of conditional cash transfer package, its recipients are expected to fulfill specific obligations, which include regular visits in the health center and participation in clean-up drives in schools where their children study. In broad strokes, the 4 P's gives an estimated monthly support of Php 1,000.00 to the mother, and an additional Php 300.00 for every child who qualifies for the said program. The receivable amount is deducted when mothers or parents fail to follow the program's stipulated conditions. The participants noted that it is women who usually fulfill all requirements expected of them by the 4 P's.³⁵

- 5) Women work in stores as tinderas or sales-persons. The participant from North Poblacion observed that the majority of the stalls and stores in the municipality center have women sellers. She said, *parang pabrika ang bilang ng mga babae* (Women work as if they are all part of a big factory). These stores, where women find employment usually sell snacks, clothes and ukay-ukay (used clothes shipped from other countries and sold at very cheap prices). The participant from *Patiao* clarified that single/unmarried women fill-in such roles. It is rare to find married mothers working in these roles given their responsibilities in the household and the number of children to take care of.
- 6) Women occupy spaces in *Tacoma* and *Tigbi Rivers* or in *Mambulao Bay* for small-scale mining. In *Patiao*, some women spend hours in the sea shoveling and sifting sand for gold just before high tide fully sets in. They bring with them an *akawan* and an *akyatan*, which are strategically positioned in a *bangka* (small boat). Since women mine in the middle yet shallow parts of the sea during low tides, they would need to brave through natural elements like wind, waves, and sometimes, lightning. Two of our women participants from *Patiao* are directly involved in such routine and mentioned that they need to work fast to ensure that they can sieve 80 to 100 shoveled sand.³⁶

³¹ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³² *Ripa* is a local term for gambling, which generally follows these rules: (1) between numbers 1-75, a person chooses a digit for the amount of ten pesos, (2) the owner eliminates one number at a time until one number is left, (3) the remaining number wins the prize, (4) in some cases, the owner of the last pair of numbers can agree to split the prize so both can at least take something home, (5) in cases when no one owns the last digit, the owner of the *Ripa* wins the prize. FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³³ Some betting games are put-up in North Poblacion in October especially during the municipality's celebration of the town's feast. These betting games are reckoned more as leisure activities. In these occasions, some women reckon such engagements as opportunities to double or triple their money, which they can use to buy rice and food for the household. FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³⁴ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³⁵ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³⁶ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

In Luklukan Norte, women also earn money through ASGM. The participants from this community also perform such daily grind in the *Tacoma* River. Located just behind their houses, these women spend an estimate of 5-8 hours a day to shovel and sift soil, sand, mud and rocks from the river's base. At times, they would need to be extra careful, since some pieces of broken glasses can be dug from the river. They cited that such objects are from the thrown beer bottles of male miners from a nearby mining company.³⁷ In Santa Elena, the participants from this barangay narrated that some women also engage in small-scale gold mining. Along the shallow parts of *Tigbi* River, they also shovel and sift sand through the akawan. While in areas where tunnel mining operate, some women gather near the butukan waiting for miners to give them excess rocks, which they skillfully smash and sift for possible traces of gold.³⁸ From the accounts of the women representatives, it is clear that women in their communities are involved in small-scale mining. This interesting space, however, will be described in detail in the third theme of the FGD where the topic on women and livelihood is accounted for.

With the sharing and discussion of the mind maps of women representatives, the FGD for the first module reveals that women in mining communities in Jose Panganiban generally occupy these spaces: (1) School and Day Care Centers, (2) Lending Groups/Institutions, (3) Areas of Betting Games, (4) Health Centers and School's Clean-Up Drive, (5) Stores (*Tindahan*), and (6) Sections of *Tacoma* and *Tigbi* Rivers, and *Mambulao* Bay. For these spaces, one can initially sense the over-all location of women in mining communities in the social structures of Jose Panganiban Municipality – the periphery. While it should be acknowledged that there are women municipality councilors, barangay captains and *kagawads* in the local government, and women financier and landowners in gold mining operations, women in Jose Panganiban still generally occupy marginal and less influential positions. This is a point, which will be initially validated, as we look into the roles and functions of women in a more particular location in the ensuing discussion – the household.

Women and the Household

This section aims to magnify the domestic roles and issues of women within her home and family. Is the household a shared space between men and women? This is the core question, which the second theme in the FGD will try to confront and tackle. The primary instruction for this section is to invite the women representatives to describe their usual 24-hour schedule. In this way, the women participants can re-construct how their day begins, the activities during the day, the late night concerns before retiring, and her reflections over her schedule. The sharing and discussion on the 24-hour schedule paved way for the identification of these key points:

- 1) Women should not get sick, *bawal magkasakit*. This statement declares two significant meanings. One is it connotes the intersecting roles and burden of women in the household. The participant from *Patiao* shared a short list of such concerns: waking-up early around 3:00 am, preparing the food for her simple food business, setting aside food for the family's breakfast, proceeding to *Mambulao Bay para sa pagkakabud* (for small scale gold mining), returning home after spending around 4-5 hours shoveling and sifting sand for possible gold, returning home for meals, preparing food for lunch, rest for an hour, proceed to do the laundry, clean the house, prepare food for dinner, watch TV, prepare food for the next day's routine, and retiring at 10 pm. Because of the crowded and packed schedule of this mother, she underlined the need that mothers should not get sick. Otherwise, the household chores will only pile-up and possible income from her livelihood engagements will unfortunately be lost. The other participants agreed on such point, and one expressed this line: *pinakamahirap ang nasa bahay ka dahil walang katapusan ang trabaho mo* (It is most difficult to stay in one's house because work is endless).³⁹ The other meaning of the statement that women should not get sick is couched in this view from another participant: *ang reklamo ng babae, di maintindihan ng lalake* (Men generally do not understand the problems of women). In the discussion, such line was clarified and meant that men do not see the burden of women while taking care of the needs of the household.⁴⁰ This implies that while women work hard, men do not usually see such efforts and remain unappreciative of women's work. Our inference from this meaning is that perhaps men in the household of the participants do not regard women's work as real work.

³⁷ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³⁸ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

³⁹ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

⁴⁰ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

(2) Women's income is additional income. The participants' sharing also revolved around the interesting concept of *abuno* (to augment or add). According to a participant from *Patiao*, a husband's take home pay while working in a mining operation may be around Php 400.00 a day. She pointed out that such an amount is never enough to adequately support the needs of her family of six. This is the reason why she is also into small-scale mining in *Mambulao Bay*, and sometimes sells cooked food for snacks and meals. With her economic engagements, she can earn more than her husband's daily wage. But despite her bigger daily revenue, she laments that her income is still reckoned as *abuno* or as additional income of the household. The participants from Santa Elena furthered the point that when mining operations stop for a week due to power shortages, men do not earn anything and it is women who look for alternative sources of income. She said, *nangangarag sa paghahanap ng pera ang mga babae* (Women try all sorts of things just to earn money).⁴¹

Another participant from *Patiao* reinforced women's resourcefulness when she opined: *madiskarte at maparaan ang mga babae, workaholic pa sila* (Women are creative, resourceful and are even workaholics).⁴² Despite women's earnings, the participants were uncomfortable with the thought that their income is still considered additional income. When asked for the possible reason of such perception, they suggested this answer: *ang lalaki kasi kung maka-jackpot sa minahan, malaki talaga ang pera nila* (Men, if they get lucky in mining operations, can get high-grade gold, which is equivalent to huge sums of money).⁴³ In hindsight, this last statement seems to condition the notion that women's income will only be additional income. Will this justification mean that the women participants are not yet that empowered to fully acknowledge and assert their economic contributions in the household?

(3) Budgeting. The financial management in the household, which entails planning, costing and accounting within the bounds of the family's needs and available money is another primal responsibility of women in the household. This is perhaps the background against which women endeavor to try all sorts of means just make sure that their

families will not get hungry, and that the kids can at least finish secondary education. But an interesting topic in the discussion centered on the idea of monetary savings. The participants recalled that their husbands, despite the meager money that they give to the family, sometimes raise this question: *may natabi ka?* (Did you save any extra money?). The participants, in general, laughed at the nerve of some husbands to ask such question and even said that husbands often say this line: *kulang o sobra, bahala ka na* (Whether it is enough or more than enough, it is up to you on how you budget it).⁴⁴ But the reality is, stressed by the participants, that women often need to source out money to provide for the family. As the participants reiterated, such reality is something, which men in general do not really care to see and understand. *Kung ano lang ang maibigay* (Men just give any amount), this is the concluding line that the participants mentioned to characterize men's location in budgeting sphere in the household.⁴⁵

4) Women are like unpaid house helpers. The participant from *Patiao* mentioned this term to characterize the experience of women in the household: double pain.⁴⁶ When clarified, such expression has many meanings. One is the feeling of women that are forced to do such responsibilities in the household because they are women. It is what the community expects them to fulfill. In this case, women believe that they actually not have other options. The participants from Luklukan Norte and *Patiao* connected such forced situation of women to the notion of *camote* miners (small-scale gold mining). *Camote*, which is associated to a poor person's root crop, is used to analogically describe their type of mining – as ordinary, and unrewarding. This depreciating attribution of their contributions in the household hovers around the image of house helpers who work hard and remain unpaid. As a participant from Luklukan Norte expressed, house helpers are better off, since their labor is paid.⁴⁷ Unlike mothers and housewives, whose work abound and are limitless, they are expected to even work harder and render more sacrifices.

In summary, the participants in the FGD expressed that women engaged in ASGM have multiple burden and multiple tasks in the household. While women perceive men

⁴¹ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

⁴² FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

⁴³ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

⁴⁴ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

⁴⁵ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

⁴⁶ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

⁴⁷ FGD notes, October 3, 2014.

as not generally considering the household as a place of work, women in the three barangays seriously and squarely face the challenge of balancing the needs of the family. In this regard, such dedication to household work may be interpreted as sign of women's strength, and resourcefulness. From another perspective, however, such commitment can be taken to mean as a form of resignation – acceptance that the household can never be a shared space between the husband and wife. Although some of the participants narrated stories of men assisting them in doing household chores, the assumption that the household is the primary responsibility of women still regulates the almost categorical delineation of tasks between men and women as in the case of small-scale women gold miners in Barangays North Poblacion, Luklukan Norte, and Santa Elena. These points do not even interface with the social issue on household work as unpaid work.⁴⁸

Women in Livelihood

The livelihood activities of the participants in the FGD can be classified into two: (1) self-employed work through vending and small-scale mining, and (2) employed status in local government units (barangay captain, barangay *kagawad*, and in the budget office of the LGU). Between these groups, the latter group lean towards financial stability, which can be ascribed to the regular income that they receive from their posts. While some of these participants are engaged in mining activities, they do not engage in small-scale community mining. To say the least, they may figure or their husbands in other categories such as buyers of gold, financier of mining operations or as previous operators of ball milling. The eight participants, however, agreed to focus on the experiences of women in small-scale gold mining. This is the reason why the presentation in this section will focus on the livelihood of the other group of the women participants – small-scale mining, and other activities that help mitigate the financial needs of the family. From the eight participants, five are directly involved in *pagkakabod* in *Tigbi River*, *Tacoma River* or in *Mambulao Bay*. This is a common source of income which these participants maintain alongside other livelihood arrangements such as doing laundry for a family in North Poblacion, a small sari-sari store, selling of cooked food, or raising animals like goat. In Santa Elena, short narratives on the experiences of women that intersect with SGM and financed mining operations in their community were also shared.

- 1) Small-scale Gold Mining in *Patiao*. Two of the women participants from this community have been engaged in *pangkakabud* in *Mambulao Bay* for more than a decade. This livelihood activity has provided modest monetary gains that have at least helped them deal with some financial needs of their families. The nature of such work, however, exposes these women small-scale miners to specific health and safety risks. The use of *asoge* (mercury) to be exact and direct exposure to fumes while cooking the extracted gold cause health risks to themselves and their families. To magnify the burden accompanying this type of work and its associated risks that some small-scale mining in *Patiao* deal with, here is a thorough description of such mining activity.

With a *bangka* (small boat), the women of *Patiao* paddle to the shallow section of *Mambulao Bay* at low tide, which is usually 20 meters away from the shoreline. This small boat, which can only accommodate two persons, also carries the *akawan* – a makeshift tool for sifting sand, and an *akyatan* – a stepladder used to elevate the *akawan* as the tide rises. This small-scale mining activity normally starts at 5 am and ends around 10 am just before high tide fully sets in.

The women in *Patiao* target 80 to 100 shoveled sand, which are then placed or dispensed into the *akawan*. While doing this grind, another person – in the case of our participant, her daughter, will pour sea-water into the *akawan* so sand will cascade through the filtering box. This is the first stage of the gold filtering process, which aims to separate blackish sand called *margaha* from the rest of the sieved sand. Placing a specific kind of cloth – *cordoruy*, which is strategically placed beneath the sluice box fulfills this initial task. *Margaha*, according the participants from this community, contains specks of gold, which sticks or attaches to the cloth.

After filtering 80 to 100 shoveled sand or ten sluice boxes, one can notice a difference in the cloth's color. From maroon or dark brown, black spots start to colonize the cloth. And just before high tide fully envelope the sea, the participants carefully remove the layers of cloth, which are transferred to a big plastic container. The women small-scale miners also start placing their tools, the *akawan* and *akyatan* in their small boat and paddle towards the safety of the shoreline, which signals the end of the labor-intensive part of the

⁴⁸ Jeanne Frances I. Illo, "Prospects for People Living in Poverty to Participate in Growth-Oriented Enterprises," in *Review of Women's Studies: Special Issue on Gender, Globalization, Culture, and the Economy* (Quezon City: UP Center for Women's Studies, 2005) 10.

small-scale mining process. The second step of the mining activity now aims to gather and fuse all collected black-sand deposits. The local term *pagpag* is used to characterize this step, which refers to the careful removal of *margaha* from the cloth. Using seawater, the layers of cloth are rinsed and washed to ensure that no *margaha* is wasted and are completely drained off into the plastic container.

Akawan-Slide Box in Patiao



Description: *Kabudan-Akawan in the shoreline of Mambulao Bay (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)*

Sampling is the third short step in the small-scale mining process. With a shovel, one mimics the motions of panning to assess if gold linings are readily visible. If the sampling process shows visible gold linings, then it usually raises hope that more gold can be recovered. Although sampling is not constitutive to the whole mining process, the participants reckon this phase as a breathing space where the miners can relax for a few minutes to estimate their rewards.

The fourth step is *pabirik* or panning. For this stage, the women miners proceed to their house where they have small panning areas. A visit to the residence of the two participants will show households having small panning areas (*pabirikan*) commonly located beside their entrance doors or at the back of their houses. In the case of our participant from *Patiao*, they have a small panning space at the back of their residence, which is one foot deep and filled to the brim with seawater. The participant mentioned that they use seawater instead of fresh water to avoid mosquitos from breeding. She also specified that she usually does the panning, but sometimes asks her husband to do the *pabirik*.

In the group's immersion to their community, she first took a small black container from their household, which contains the *asoge* (mercury) and kept it in her pocket. The participant asked her husband to get the tool for panning, which is an oval shaped wood with a dent at its center. Her husband then started scooping water from the plastic container, which has the collected *margaha*, and began moving the pan to initially remove seawater from the black sand sediments. Once the *margaha* is ready, her husband mixes the mercury in and resumes the panning motion. When asked why *asoge* is used, the participants retorted that mercury separates gold from other impurities in the black sand deposits. To them, it attracts and captures gold. This is the main reason why they use mercury for gold panning.

Moreover, it was observed that panning with mercury is done with bare hands. The women participants are aware of the health risks of mercury but they specified that gold does not attach itself to human skin. In this case, they are more worried over the possibility of losing money if gold attaches to synthetic gloves. Also, panning with mercury commonly takes around ten minutes to complete. This short period of time is another reason why women small-scale gold miners continue working with *asoge*. Finally, when gold dusts are visibly attached to the *asoge* and the person panning is somehow convinced that mercury has already come in contact with the entirety of the *margaha*, panning is almost complete. Upon reaching such belief, the husband of the participant poured the *asoge* into a synthetic cloth so he can force and squeeze out the *asoge*. Through bare hands, mercury was removed and transferred back to its black container. With the *asoge* removed, the participant showed to the group the raw gold, which was comparable to the size of a rice panicle.



Description: *This photo shows gold panning with asoge using bare hands in Barangay Patiao. (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez).*

The fifth step involves smelting. The participant from *Patiao* immediately proceeded to her neighbor who buys gold and is offering a space where potential sellers like her can smelt their raw gold. Just beside the buyer's sari-sari store, a smelting station is waiting for the process to begin. The participant then placed her raw gold on a small yet uniquely shaped clay pot, starts the fire, and peppers the pot with borax. As smelting continues, an unpleasant smell hovers the station and white fumes are readily visible. To protect herself from the fumes, the participant covered her nose with a handkerchief while waiting for the smelting process to end. After a few minutes, one can observe a change in color in the smelted/cooked object – from yellowish hue to bright gold color. The participant then removed her gold with a metal clasp, and dipped it in faucet water.

Smelting Station in *Patiao*



Description: This photo shows gold smelting with *asoge* using bare hands in *Barangay Patiao*. (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez).

The sixth step now begins – selling. The participant placed her gold on a weighing scale in the sari-sari store, and the store manager said that her gold was equivalent to a quarter of *bahay* or five *palay*. In this community, one *bahay* or house is equivalent to 20 *palay*, a term associated to the shape of rice panicle. This is the unique weighing equivalency used in the community for gold. For that afternoon, the participant was given Php 162.00, which she immediately gave to her daughter to buy rice and food for the family.⁴⁹

- 2) Small-scale Gold Mining in *Luklukan Norte*. Two of the participants from this community are currently involved in *pagkakabud* in *Tacoma* River, while the third representative from this area used to mine in the river for additional income but she now focuses her time on another livelihood activity, a modest cooking business in their *barangay*. The visit in this *barangay* paved way for the identification of three kinds of small-scale mining, namely: (a) *pagkakahon* (uses the sluice box and the slide), (b) *plaser* (filtering rocks through waterspray), and (c) *palispis* (a specific section of the river is controlled and channeled to pass through a filtering section). Amongst these types of small-scale mining, women usually choose the sluice box method or *pagkakahon*.

In the FGD, the participants from *Luklukan Norte* shared that they were exposed to this type of mining as kids in the community. One participant mentioned that her parents taught her such skill at the age of 7; she is now 32 with two kids. Since the houses of the two participants are located near *Tacoma* River, they consider *pagkakahon* as part of their daily schedule. The participant added that around 20 women members in the community regularly stay in the river for 5 to 8 hours to mine. The number, however, increases when the due dates for loans and debts are forthcoming. Since *pagkakahon* is part of the community's activity, the other participant said this thought-provoking line: *halos binaligtad na ang sapa sa paghahanap ng ginto* (The river has almost been inverted or overturned in the search for gold).⁵⁰

The participants from this community added that shoveling in *Patiao* is relatively easier because in *Tacoma* river, one has to deal with rocks, sand, mud, and at times, broken pieces of glass/bottles, which makes shoveling extra challenging or labor intensive. Also, they would need to take care of their kids, cook the meals, and tend their animals in between mining. With their husbands leaving early for mining operations, the participants specified that they would need to address all sorts of work in the household. In hindsight, one participant expressed that it is still better to work near their residence especially in times of domestic emergency, since this allows her to easily attend to such needs, especially if it concerns the well-being of her children.

⁴⁹ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁵⁰ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

Akawan in Luklukan Norte



(Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)

The women in this barangay target around ten sluice boxes per day. They shovel sand, mud and rocks, which are placed inside the sluice box of the *akawan*. Since rocks are included, the participants also try to take a sharp look at rocks that may contain traces of free gold. Through time, they have developed this capacity to distinguish gold linings from other ores that can be mined from the area. The participant shared that some members of the community were once lucky to discover rocks with free gold, which gifted them with quick cash. This may also be one reason why other members in the barangay spend their free time pounding small rocks within the vicinity.

While mining, the participant even caught site of potential free gold in a small rock, which she quickly brought to their house. She then went back to the river to continue shoveling. Interestingly, our participants from this community work together to make the task of *pagkakahon* easier. While one shovels, the other pours water into the sluice box to filter the sand from mud and rocks. After a while, filtered rocks, and other objects accumulate, which are scooped from the box and thrown at river borders. This somehow explains the presence of small heaps of rocks surrounding *Tacoma* River. After shoveling and sifting around ten boxes, the second step of the mining process begins.

Beneath the sluice box, layers of *barani* (a specific part of a banana's trunk) have been arranged to seize and sift black sand or particles from sand, mud and rocks. The participants specified that a *barani* is more effective than the corrugated lines found in corduroy cloth. But to ensure that they can snatch more of the *margaha*, they combine the *barani* with the corduroy cloth. The participants were asked how the use of *barani* in their community started. They responded that its something that they have seen their parents use.

Barani beneath a Sluice Box



Description: *Barani* is from the trunk of a mature banana, which is used to sift *margaha* or black sand, which will be panned for possible gold. (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)

The second step continues by removing the *barani* and cloth, which are transferred to an empty container, and rinsed (*pinapagpag*). This step is carefully done to ensure that all black particles/sand deposits are in the container, which will be brought to one of the panning areas in the neighborhood. After rinsing, the participants said that they need to bring the sluice box and the entire *akawan* to higher grounds, otherwise, *Tacoma* River might wash away their tools if water levels go up at night.

The third step is panning. Here, water in the container with the black sand sediments is gradually transferred to a panning tool. As this step proceeds, water is gradually removed

until what remains are black sand deposits. At this stage, a neighbor offers her mercury, which is then folded into the mix. With the use of bare hands, mercury is hard pressed against the *margaha* to ensure that gold dusts or pellets are obtained. In *Luklukan Norte*, only a handful of women know how to pan gold. Mostly, men do the panning for women for free: *nakikisuyo lang kami sa kapitbahay*.⁵¹

The fourth step commences when mercury with gold dust/specks is poured into a thin cloth and is squeezed out. Once extracted, the *asoge* is placed back to its black plastic container. On the cloth, one can also see a fragment of raw gold, which the participant tightly held in her hand. In a nearby panning area, the group passed by a young couple who were also about to finish the whole process of separating gold from the black sand sediments. The participant observed and commented that the mercury they are using is almost sleeping or no longer moving, *natutulog na yata ang asoge*.⁵² This statement is taken to mean that the couple collected a good amount of gold, since the couple smiled and were excited knowing that their hard day's work will pay off.

The fifth step involves smelting of raw gold. In *Luklukan Norte*, the gold buyer has a smelting area, which potential gold sellers can use for free. The smelting station in the community also has a small chimney to ensure that white fumes will not hover near the ground. Fire was switched-on and borax was mixed. A few minutes lapsed, and gold was plucked from the clay pot using a metal clip then dipped in water. Unfortunately, the size of gold that was produced that day was not enough to merit any monetary exchange. To use the line a participant, *minsan wala, minsan meron, lutot ang tawag pag walang nakuha. Nakakaawa yung minsan ang daming dalang bato tapos lutot naman* (At times, after toiling for a day, the mined gold has no value).⁵³

(3) Small-scale gold mining in Santa Elena. The participants from this barangay said that the steps in *pangkakabud* in their community are similar to that of *Luklukan Norte*. They however, specified that some women smelt their raw gold inside their houses. Also, *patnaw* is done prior to the shoveling phase. In this regard, *patnaw* refers to a way of

dealing with hard mud, which women try to break off by way of pounding with bare feet: *naka-paa para malusaw ang putik*.⁵⁴ These are two experiences of women in small-scale mining in Santa Elena, which according to the participants from this community were not mentioned in the other two barangays.

After discussing women's experiences in small-scale mining, the FGD centered on risks that women face in their effort to look for livelihood activities. The sharing revolved around these points:

- 1) Risks or Threats from Places of Work. For this part, the women small-scale miners in *Patiao* shared that the *Mambulao Bay* is giving them more skin irritation in recent years. Specifically during summer, they experience more skin stings and rashes. Also, around September to January, the strong and cold winds, and surging tides make their stay in the sea extra challenging. In *Luklukan Norte*, the participants also complained about skin irritation. One participant disclosed her previous experience of having severe itch all over her body for four days. She was just relieved to note that on the fifth day, the itch totally disappeared. The participants from this community also mentioned the possibility of developing fungus given that their feet and legs are submerged for 5 to 8 hours in river streams. To remedy such troubles, some women wear boots while shoveling sand, and rocks along *Tacoma River*.⁵⁵
- 2) Risks or Threats from Mining Methods. In this section, the participants from Santa Elena talked about *patnaw* and the pain that women feel as they stamp and pound mud by way of bare feet. Shoveling also challenges the lower and upper backs, which is the usual location of pain that women in the three barangays experience and complain about. While doing *akawan* or sand sieving, the participants took notice of their nails eventually chipping off, which also becomes more sensitive to pain.⁵⁶ Another back pain causing method is panning. The participant from *Patiao* inserted her experience that it took her time to adjust to such method, since balancing the panning tool is a challenge because of its weight and the need to sustain the motion for at least ten minutes while on a squatting position.

⁵¹ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁵² FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁵³ FGD Documenter's notes, October 4, 2014.

⁵⁴ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁵⁵ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁵⁶ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

3) Risks or Threats from the Use of Chemicals/Substances. For the participants, the use of mercury is a serious cause of concern. They all agree that pressing the *asoge*, while panning will mean exposure to the substance, which the body may accidentally absorb. The participants also recognize the danger of inhaling white fumes while smelting raw gold, which they connect to the increasing number of respiratory illnesses in their respective communities. Some of the participants also mentioned stories of neighbors experiencing stomach pains for short intervals and recurring headaches, which they also ascribe to the use of *asoge* in gold mining. The participants even made special mention of the relation between mercury and the bodies of water in their municipality. For them, the *Tacoma* and *Tigbi* rivers and Mambulao Bay are also affected by the use of *asoge* in mining activities. They can still recall those days when they used to bathe freely in the rivers and seas in the municipality. Today, the participants no longer recommend swimming in such rivers and sea. As much as possible, they only immerse in any of the three bodies of water if they are into small-scale gold mining. The participants also shared their concern over the number of chimneys where raw gold is smelted and its impact to the kind of air that the participants and their families breathe in their communities. While only a few participants are directly engaged in smelted raw gold, they suspect that the air they breathe is becoming more polluted and toxic because of the increasing number of smelting stations for small-scale gold mining activities, and large-scale mining operations in Jose Panganiban.

(4) Risks or Threats of Losing One's Livelihood. The participants from *Patiao* expressed concern over the unofficial news of banning pangkakatubod in Mambulao Bay. As one participant reacted, *bakit puro salita na bibigyan ng livelihood tapos wala naman, eh hanggang December na lang ang pagkakatubod?* (The government talked about livelihood projects but there are no clear alternatives, and they say that mining in Mambulao Bay will only be allowed until December of this year).⁵⁷ As a consistent source of income, the participants are hoping that the local government will provide trainings for alternative livelihood programs if ever the proposed ban pushes through. The participants from Luklukan Norte also notice the gradual

decline in the quantity of gold that they harvest from their regular small-scale mining in *Tacoma* River. This perceived reality causes a sense of unease over their future in the community. In Santa Elena, some women also start avoiding the tunnel areas for fear that they might be associated to prostitutes camping near the miner's *butukan*. The local women residents are worried that they maybe sexually harassed, which leaves them with a difficult choice of searching for other means of earning money.

(5) Risks or Threats to Children. The participants from Luklukan Norte and Santa Elena clearly expressed their concern over the safety of their children in an environment that is becoming toxic and polluted. The participant from Luklukan Norte mentioned this line: *kawawa ang mga bata kasi kung saan ang ina, nadoon din sila*. This statement was mentioned when the participant was doing the grind of mining along *Tacoma* River where her son was also playing. She tried her best to warn her kid not to play near the water given her intuition that *Tacoma* River is no longer safe. With her kind of work, she is upset seeing her son exposed to all sorts of toxic that the river may carry.

In Santa Elena, the participants also magnified the danger of smelting raw gold inside the house as the process releases white fumes, which children may inhale. In *Patiao*, the sari-sari store, which displays and vends items that attract children, houses the smelting station for raw gold. Its location unfortunately directly exposes children to white fumes as they buy items from the store. As a participant from Santa Elena expressed, *yung usok, nalalanghap nila dahil wala din silang proteksyon. Karaniwan din na nasa loob ng bahay yung lutuan ng ginto kaya karaniwang nagkakasakit yung mga bata* (Women are exposed to white fumes because they do not wear any protective gear, which they also accidentally inhale while they smelt raw gold; some mothers even smelt gold in their house, which explains why their children easily get sick).⁵⁸

Based on the sharing and discussion of the participants on women and livelihood, one can discern the on-going tension and struggle between livelihood and health concerns. The women small-scale gold miners in the three barangays clearly

⁵⁷ FGD Documenter's notes, October 4, 2014.

⁵⁸ FGD Documenter's notes, October 4, 2014.

understand the processes and skills required to acquire gold through *pagkakabud* and the health risks that they are forced to confront. Given such situation, they hope that other less risky livelihood options await them in the near future. This reversely means that women in this municipality play marginal roles in the community. Their situation reveals that they are economically misplaced and displaced.⁵⁹

While the participants demonstrate determination and will in finding ways to support the needs of their household, they too desire for more stable livelihood engagements that can provide adequate sources of income. *Pagkakabud* is labor intensive and is something, which the participants would not want to see their children do when they grow up. But in the absence of real economic options, the participants cannot see themselves out of the rivers and the Mambulao Bay. With regards the health risks of the use of *asoge*, the participants give the impression that they need an extra push to be finally convinced to opt for toxic-free methods in small-scale gold mining. Especially if such change will secure the health and well being of their children, the participants will be ready to find time to listen. However, there remains a lingering sentiment that they would want to be finally relieved from ASGM. Until there are no real options for them, mitigating the health risks by abandoning mercury in gold panning maybe still met with a sense of lethargy.

Mother and Child in Tacoma River



Description: A mother in Luklukan Norte engaged in small-scale gold mining in Tacoma River while her youngest son keenly observes. (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)

Women and Gender-based Violence

The articulation and identification of various forms of gender-based violence (hereafter, GBV) against women and children engaged in ASGM in the three barangays is the primary aim of this section. Two steps were involved to help the participants share stories on this sensitive matter:

- 1) Using the mind maps that the participants created in the first module of the FGD, they were asked to identify in their maps the spaces where gender form violence against women and children happened or is/are currently taking place;
- 2) After the first step, the participants were asked to deal with these queries: (a) Have you experienced GBV?, (b) Have you witnessed or heard of GBV in your community;
- 3) If yes, what specific forms did you or your neighbors experienced?;
- 4) How did you respond to such forms of GBV? The participants located specific spaces in their community where GBV was committed or is presently happening.

Here are three sample maps that specify the spaces where GBV was committed or is currently happening in Barangays *Patiao*, *Luklukan Norte*, and *Santa Elena*.⁶⁰

Map of GBV in Patiao



Description: The spaces with asterisks speak of households where gender-based violence against women took place. In this mind-map, at least three cases of GBV were identified and discussed. (Photo taken by Raymund Diaz)

⁵⁹ Pasimio, *Mining and Violence against Rural and Indigenous Women in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Lilak, 2013) 7.
⁶⁰ FGD notes and drawings, October 4, 2014.

Map of GBV in Luklukan Norte



Description: In this mind-map, four cases of gender-based violence were identified. The discussion revolved around these kinds of GBV: physical abuse, economic abuse, and verbal abuse.

Map of GBV in Santa Elena



Description: Seven households are marked with an asterisk, which stands for spaces where gender-based violence against women has taken place. (Photos taken by Raymund Diaz)

With the GBV maps and the FGD, the kinds of gender based violence and the emergent themes in the discussions are as follows:

- (1) **Abused Wife.** In Santa Elena, the participants recounted a mother's burden over her husband who is a drug addict. With an unemployed and shabu dependent husband, this mother's ordeal involves a painful mix of physical, psychological, economic and emotional abuse. The officials in the barangay strongly encouraged her to report her husband to the police, but she is terrified to file a formal complaint. To make ends meet, she sometimes engages in small-scale gold mining, sells all sorts of goods like food and other items just to survive – *pasan ang pamumuhay* (The survival of her family is entirely upon her).⁶¹ Her children are also into selling to at least help their mother. Despite the trauma and phobia, the participants are agitated that this person still does not have the courage to leave her husband. When asked for the possible reason, they recounted that this person is petrified over her husband's threats that he will kill her and their kids if he is to be reported to the police. While this woman is struggling to deal with all the pain and difficulty that she can carry, the participants added that her husband even insists that his family should leave him some money for shabu. In the discussion, the participants recognized the ordeal of this woman from Santa Elena as a clear violation of RA 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act (VAWC). Since VAWC is a public crime, the participants discussed the role of the community and the barangay. The participants, however, were unsure if they can file an affidavit of complaint against the husband to the barangay, and if the barangay should meddle and intervene to provide a safe space for the mother and her children.
- (2) **Incest.** Also in Santa Elena, the participants narrated a case where a father raped his three daughters and a niece. The niece, however, fought back and struggled against the perpetrator. Regrettably, this teenager was killed after the perpetrator smashed her head with a large stone. With her death, the community looked for her for three days until the perpetrator reported to the barangay the exact location of her body. Within the three-day search, a person who was seen passing through the scene was accused of the crime and was imprisoned. This prompted the per-

⁶¹ FGD notes, October 4, 2014

petrator to divulge the place where he actually hid the teenager's body. A year passed by and the three daughters confided to their mother the real story behind the rape and crime incident. They were witnesses to the crime. This prompted the mother to report her husband to the police and that the case against the suspected man be lifted and demitted. As the police started the search for the real criminal, the rapist and killer died because of a vehicular accident. This incident, according to the participants, was a result of *karma*, but other participants expressed dissatisfaction over the criminal's sudden death. They added that he should have first suffered in prison.⁶² In the short discussion on the laws that govern incest, the facilitator shared some points from RA 8353: Anti-Rape Law, which stipulates that rape is no longer considered as crime against women, since it is already classified as crime against humanity.⁶³

- (3) Battered Wife. In *Patiao* and *Luklukan Norte*, incidents of battered wives were shared in the discussion. In one of these barangays, the participant spoke about a neighbor who is constantly physically maltreated by her husband. To quote her, *hindi na kontento na di-makasuntok ng asawa* (The husband is no longer satisfied if he does not batter his wife).⁶⁴ Such episodes usually take place at night where the screams and bowls from their household can be heard. In *Luklukan Norte*, one of the participant narrated that her husband used to maltreat her. Instead of fighting back, she avoided her husband every time he gets drunk. She is thankful that her husband changed and is no longer assaulting her. When asked for the possible reason why her husband changed, she linked it to her livelihood engagements like gold panning along *Tacoma River*, and doing laundry work for a family in the municipality's town center.⁶⁵ Another battered wife is forced to endure the pain because of economic dependency, *nag titiis ang babae dahil hindi kayang buhayin ng babae ang kanyang pamilya dahil wala din silang pinagkakakitaan*.⁶⁶ For this type of GBV, the discussion centered on RA 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act. In both cases of violation, however, husbands are not penalized, are readily forgiven by their wives, and at times, even pardoned by the community when the husband makes amends for his actions by changing the way he treats her wife.

The discussion shifted and focused on preventive measures to at least curtail the number of cases of violence against women and children. The participant highlighted this point: livelihood opportunities for women. As one participant from *Patiao* mentioned, *pag may income ang babae, mas maayos at matahimik sa bahay* (If the wife has steady income, the household is relatively peaceful).⁶⁷ Another participant from *Luklukan Norte* specified that women become courageous if they have their own source of income. At some point, the wife can even challenge her husband to work harder so he can outdo or exceed her daily income. Some participants revealed that some husbands in their community fear and respect their wives given that their income is bigger and more stable. Since the discussion revolved around money, the participants were asked if money is the main reason for the counts of gender-based violence amongst women in mining communities. All of them observed that if there is steady flow of money from various livelihood engagements, almost everyone will be at peace; and there are almost no antagonistic relations in the household.⁶⁸

The FGD on gender-based violence, and the shared stories of the participants point to these interrelated issues: power relations in the family, economic dependence, the need to strengthen women's support group in the community, cycle of violence that women painfully go through, and social stigma. Women in small-scale gold mining communities generally do not have stable sources of income. The daily grind of self-employed work, which is a combination of gold panning in river streams and in the shallow sections of the *Mambulao Bay*, selling of food and other basic goods/items, doing household chores for other families, and the absence of employment opportunities in the municipality for women contribute to the uncertainty of women's livelihood options. Despite the measly income of men, and the lack of sustainable livelihood projects for women, women in mining communities still choose to work hard and labor for the needs of their families. Such diligence and creativity, however, do not guarantee a safe place for women and their children from gender-based violence. Unfortunately, the male perpetrators of GBV also live close or within the household. This makes the household a possible place of tension and threat for both women and children.⁶⁹

⁶² FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁶³ The committed crime also violates RA 9262: Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act, and RA 8505: Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act.

⁶⁴ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁶⁵ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁶⁶ FGD Documenter's notes, October 4, 2014.

⁶⁷ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁶⁸ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁶⁹ The relation between mining and domestic violence has also been noted in Pasimio's study of domestic violence in mining communities in other parts of the country, e.g. Eastern Samar. Pasimio, *Mining and Violence against Rural and Indigenous Women in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Lilak, 2013)

With the cases and themes of GBV, it is still evident that the household is treated as a private space, where men are free to exercise and assert their dominance. An indicator of this is the thought, which unfolded in the discussion that it is up to the wife – as an individual, to assert her rights or not. The wife, in this respect, is even indirectly blamed for bringing herself to such situation. The fault of the husband, however, is not included in this equation, and the community tends to distance itself from the issues of the household. This disposition somehow implies that the community hinges itself on the possibility that men may change for the better, and that women are expected to be at least patient, and hang-on.

Hence, the presence of gender-based violence in small-scale gold mining communities in Jose Panganiban is a threat to the welfare and future of women and children in the municipality. There is also an urgency to uncover other accounts of GBV in the communities. But the articulation of the presence of violence against women and children can also be construed as expressions of courage – of the ability to talk about such cases instead of reducing instances of GBV to silence. At the same time, the few cases of GBV can be reckoned as alarms or indirect expressions of a dire need for enabling interventions. In this regard, the participants point to these primary matters: conduct more seminars and workshops on gender-based violence in the barangays in the municipality, provide more stable economic opportunities for women, and organize workshops that can strengthen women's organizations' role in assisting or helping survivors of gender-based violence. These are suggestions and possibilities that the participants in the FGD look forward to.⁷⁰

Women's Dreams and Aspirations

The participants in the FGD were invited to reflect and share their dreams for the self, the family and the community. A participant cried while sharing her dreams, and magnified her hope that one day such dream will become a reality. Her sharing set the tone for the discussion in this module in the FGD. From the dreams and aspirations of the participants, the following themes figured and stood out:⁷¹

- 1) College Education and Degree for their Children. All of the participants share in this dream. They hope for opportunities – like scholarships, which their children can avail so their children can enter college and finish a degree. As mothers, the participants put more premium over education than high-grade gold, which they can possibly mine from the rivers *Tacoma* and *Tigbi*, and *Mambulao Bay*. For them, education is key to more permanent positions in the municipality, even opening opportunities to work in other towns, and countries. This aspiration also signals their longing to see their children no longer working in mining operations.
- 2) Alternative Livelihood Projects. Small *sari-sari* (vending) store is one livelihood activity, which some of the participants dream of. They regard vending as less stressful compared to mining, and is an income generating activity, which can somehow support their daily needs and provisions. Unlike small-scale gold mining, they are exposed to risks and the daily grind makes them apprehensive if they will still be physically fit to endure and withstand the physical demands of mining in the future. Another participant from *Patiao* wished for interim livelihood projects especially during rainy seasons. She explained that heavy rain makes tunneling and panning difficult, and at times, dangerous for both men and women. In this case, she hopes that other livelihood options will be made available so miners, in large-scale and small-scale operations, need not work in the mines during difficult and dangerous conditions. The participants from *Luklukan Norte* and *Patiao* also wish that their livelihood activity can be done within the household so they can properly take care of their children. A participant gave this sample income-generating project within the household: sewing of curtains, bed sheets, clothes, or dressmaking.

⁶¹ FGD notes, October 4, 2014

- 3) *Minahang* Bayan (Community Owned-Facilitated Mining). A few participants mentioned this aspiration in the discussion. For these women miners, they look forward to the legalization of the *Minahang* Bayan project in the municipality, which they think can help ascertain the safety of men and women miners.⁷² In hindsight, this concern for safety is something, which frequently emerges in the participants' discussion on mining activities.
- 4) Training on Women's Rights. The participants hope for more training and seminars on GBV and women's rights especially after hearing stories and accounts of GBV in other barangays. The participants agree that the trainings will help inform women with options or provide a clear idea on the steps to follow to protect themselves and their children from abusive situations and actions.⁷³
- 5) Clean Water and Evacuation Areas. The participants in the FGD who occupy positions in the local government dream that their community will have clean drinking water for everybody. To date, families need to buy water for drinking and cooking, which cause additional expenses for the household. Aside from drinking water, they also aspire for evacuation areas in the community as preparation for possible disasters. This need may mean that to date, the people in some mining communities do not have a clear notion of places or spaces where they can seek refuge in times of disasters.⁷⁴ Another inference from this aspiration is the regulative presence of danger in the conduct of large-scale and small-scale gold mining operations, which seeks attention and possible solution.

Given these dreams and aspirations of women in mining communities, one can take notice of women's vision to live in an enabling and empowering community.⁷⁵ While their dreams reveal what they hope for, such aspirations also confirm the current situation and challenging conditions of their communities. In this respect, women's dreams are expressions of the kind of improvements and interventions, which may make living in mining communities not just bearable but actually livable. From the list of dreams and aspirations of the participants, their version of a better future generally intersects with these concerns: stable finances, health, and the future of their children.

Finally, their dreams also affirm the need for the local government to intervene and provide options in the form of trainings, seminars and workshops, and assistance that may open livelihood opportunities that may not be necessarily dependent on gold mining, or scholarships, which may give an assurance that their children will no longer be stationed and confined in mining operations.

Summary

The narratives and stories of women taking part in ASGM communities in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte reveal the spaces that they occupy in the community, the multiple burden that they carry in the household, the occupational risks and hazards that they face in their livelihood engagements, the unfortunate accounts of gender-based violence that some women are forced to endure, and their aspirations for themselves, the family, and community.

As many of these women spend five to eight hours of daily intensive work panning gold in river streams or in Mambulao Bay, they need to stretch their capacities for roles usually performed outside the household, in their communities. More specifically, they would need (1) to find time to bring their children to school and fetch them after class, (2) weigh the family's capacity to pay-off financial loans from lending institutions, (3) regularly bring children to health clinics/centers for check-up, (4) comply with the requirements of 4 P's (conditional cash transfer program of the government), and (5) even try one's luck with betting games in the community intimated with the possibility of winning grocery items or cash for the family.

Once in the household, the women engaged in ASGM also need to fulfill overlapping tasks and deal with issues that consist of (1) budgeting the finances, which is focused on the daily needs and provisions of the family, (2) perform household chores, which includes laundry work, cooking meals, bathing the children, and cleaning the house, (3) look for ways to earn money and deal with the condescending notion that their income is only considered as additional income to the husband's salary, and (4) ensure that they stay healthy, since no one in the household is ready to do the tasks that they perform.

⁷² FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁷³ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁷⁴ FGD notes, October 4, 2014.

⁷⁵ This stance coincides with Sen's notion of development as the removal of structures that do not provide real or enabling options for individuals. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999) 2.

In addition to the household and community functions of women who take part in small-scale gold mining in rivers streams or sea, they expect themselves to brave through occupational risks and threats that originate from (1) mercury (*asoge*) which they use in gold panning with unprotected/bare hands, and direct exposure to fumes which are discharged while raw gold is smelted, (2) toxics from the rivers streams and sea, which they also attribute to the use of mercury in small-scale and large-scale mining operations in the municipality, (3) methods/processes in mining, which may result in physical pain and discomfort, and are sometimes accompanied by skin rashes and headaches, and (4) the possible rules/ordinances that the local government may impose, which will dis-allow mining in Mambulao Bay, and directly affect the small-scale gold mining activity of some women in *Patiao*.

While women engaged in ASGM try to balance their functions in the community, and in the household, and face the risks and threats that accompany their livelihood, they likewise deal with the terror and stress caused by stories of GBV in their household and in some families in the community. To be specific, they are disturbed over accounts of incest, abused and battered wives. With these stories, the participants are equally concerned about the welfare of the children. It is clear to them that in their communities, children are always with their mothers. In retrospection, it is generally difficult to defend and protect children against GBV if the mother is unable to protect herself. This is a sad reality that children also need to brave through as some mothers struggle against various kinds and degrees of GBV in the household and the community.

Finally, the challenging situation, multi-layered roles, and criss-crossing functions of women who take part in small-scale gold mining and are conditioned by the social relations dictated by mining operations in Jose Panganiban still have the capacity and power to dream and aspire for a better life with their families and communities. In their list of priority, they hope for more stable livelihood projects, which can bring them out of the uncertainty of income, health risks, and the daily grind of ASGM. The concept of *Minahang Bayan* and the possible interventions of the local government in the municipality also nourish the participants' and that of other women's hope for

enabling roles and situations in a community. Their dreams and aspirations speak volumes of women's natural ability to take care of almost everyone's needs, and perhaps the social structures and arrangements in the municipality will plan, and accord empowering opportunities that can effectively carve spaces where women can thrive and flourish. If radically appropriated, their experiences can even be raised as a platform to make the local government accountable for allowing unfair economic rules to subsist in the working conditions for women in the municipality.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Josefa Francisco, "Engendering the WTO? What Else," in *Review of Women's Studies: Special Issue on Gender, Globalization, Culture and the Economy*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (Quezon City: UP Center for Women's Studies, 2005) 206.

Photo-Documentation



Description: Some of the participants in the Focus Group Discussion in Jose Panganiban's JoMaPa Museum from Barangay Patiao, Luklukan Norte, and Santa Elena (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)



Description: Kabudan-Akawan in the shoreline of Mambulao Bay, Barangay Patiao (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)



Description: Kabudan-Akawan in Patiao with one of the participants in the Focus Group Discussion wears two caps to shield her face from the rays of the sun while shoveling and sifting sand in Mambulao Bay (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)



Description: A participant from Patiao with her daughter who just finished sifting sand from Mambulao Bay (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)

Photo-Documentation



Description: An akyatan stationed in the shoreline of Mambulao Bay, which small-scale miners in Patiao use as steps when sea levels start to rise (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)



Description: Women doing small-scale gold mining along Tacoma River, Luklukan Norte (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)



Description: Bangka (small boat) used by small-scale gold miners while shoveling and sifting sand in Mambulao Bay (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)



Description: A section of Luklukan Norte, Purok 6, which is located near Tacoma River (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)

Photo-Documentation



Description: A marker, which signals the separation between the community and the entrance of an abandoned tunnel mining area in Luklukan Norte (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)



Description: Photos of the participants in the validation exercise of key research results on the situation and roles of women miners in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte held at the session hall of the municipality, December 2014. (photo taken by Arlene Galvez)

PART IV

THE SITUATION AND ROLES OF WOMEN IN ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING COMMUNITIES

IN GA-ANG, BALBALAN, KALINGA

An Overview

This section of the project endeavors to provide detailed description of the situation and roles of women in artisanal small-scale gold mining (hereafter, ASGM) communities in Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga. Given this intent, a focus group discussion (hereafter, FGD) was organized where women representatives from various barangays were disposed to express their stories and experiences and that of other women in their communities who are engaged in ASGM. The two-day FGD workshop took place in a private residence in Sitio Sese-an, Barangay *Talalang* in October 2014. Interestingly, the location of the FGD, is adjacent to the Golden Gate Station of Ga-ang Mines,⁷⁷ provided a view of passers-by from and to the Ga-ang Mines. Most notable were the male porters who transport somebody else's heavy item for a fee, and ambulant women vendors carrying readily arranged food packs to be sold in the mines area. Another striking sight in the FGD area is the massive *Bi-yao* River, which the community taps for electricity. The unique combination of the imposing presence of nature and the fast-moving porters and ambulant vendors strode and paced with the conduct of the FGD in *Sese-an*, Barangay *Talalang*.

Nine women representatives who are involved in ASGM and are conditioned by the social structures, and arrangements in Ga-ang Mines participated in the FGD. These participants hail from the following areas in the Municipality of *Balbalan*: Barangays *Talalang*, *Salegseg*, *Pantikian*, and *Tabuk* City. Some of these participants usually stay in Ga-ang Mines to primarily engage in ASGM, and/or be involved in other livelihood engagements to earn money, and occasionally go back to their families for a few days to attend to the needs/concerns of the household. A

few participants also stay in the mining area to manage vending stores, while taking part in ASGM during their free time and when opportunities for high-grade gold arise. With their experiences and length of stay in Ga-ang mines, the participants served as the key informants in the FGD, which centered on the status, roles, and struggles of women in Ga-ang mining community.

Moreover, the FGD did not officially start in the absence of the participant's consent. In this respect, the reasons for conduct of the activity were shared and explained; and the participants were invited to raise questions or curiosities to further clarify the goals of the FGD. After a short discussion, the participants expressed a sense of clarity on the overall aim of the research, and the facilitator reminded them that they should not hesitate to communicate their questions to the group and the facilitator. With the expectations checked, and questions fairly addressed, the participants agreed to the ethical conduct of the discussion.

And in December 2014, the result of the FGD was presented for validation. This exercise was joined by five women representatives, and the board of trustees of the *Banao Bodong* Association. Questions were expressed to clarify terms and concept, and lengthy discussions unfolded. The validation activity officially ended after the group gave their approval of the publication of the research.

Banao Tribe and Privileged Barangays

Access to Ga-ang Gold Mines is exclusive to members of the *Banao* Tribe, and the privileged barangays of the Municipality of *Balbalan*. This limitation to access is historically conditioned and has been enabled by the arrangements between the indigenous organization and municipality, and the rights accorded therein in the laws pertaining to ancestral domains.⁷⁸

In *Balbalan* municipality, the members of the *Banao* tribe basically live in three barangays: *Talalang*, *Pantikian*, and *Balbalasan*. On the one hand, the residents of these barangays invoke ethnicity as the basis of their access to the mines, since Ga-ang falls within their ancestral territory. The privileged barangays, on the other hand, invoke their location of birth in *Balbalan* as the basis of access to the mining area, since they are non-Ibanao. The term privileged highlights the special access accorded to these residents and clarifies the difference between the privileged barangays and the *Ibanao* ethnic group.

⁷⁷The golden gate station serves as the portal of the Ga-ang mines. This means that it is the only passage where miners, porters, and ambulant vendors enter and exit from the mining area. Given its strategic location, a satellite office is positioned where a marshal checks and screens the items that are carried inside the mining site.

⁷⁸This claim is also legally hinged on the Indigenous People's Right Act (IPRA), which was passed by Philippines Congress in 1997. The distinction between the *Ibanao* and privileged barangays maybe interpreted as a clear observation of the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of the *Banao* tribe in allowing non-Ibanao – like members of the privileged barangay, to have a share in the resources in Ga-ang mines.

This also partly explains why two women participants in the FGD are non-Ibanao yet they are engaged in ASGM in Ga-ang mines, since both participants were born in the municipality of Balbalan. Moreover, the distinction implies that individuals who are not Ibanao, and were not born in the Balbalan cannot have direct access to the gold mining activities in Ga-ang.

But what are the reasons for the unique delimitation of access to Ga-ang mines? How did the concept of privileged barangays emerge? On a historical note, an Ibanao miner in the community recounted that a group of people around 1983 went hunting and gold sampling in Ga-ang. The exploration was successful as it resulted in the discovery of gold in the area, and was pivotal as it marked the start of the gold mining enterprise in the community. The community later labeled the group of individuals who were foundational to the discovery of Ga-ang mines as the founders. Interestingly, there is a non-Ibanao in the group in the person of Daniel Tangdol, a resident of barangay *Salagseg*, and was born in Balbalan municipality. In gratitude to Tangdol, the tribal organization figured that it is best to open and share Ga-ang mines – as part of their ancestral domain, to non-Ibanao on the condition that the person was born in Balbalan municipality.⁷⁹ In hindsight, such a requirement is reflective of Tangdol who is a non-Ibanao and was born in Balbalan, and the Banao tribe's recognition of his contribution in the discovery of gold resource in their ancestral domain. In addition, the creation of the privileged barangays also point to the generosity of the tribe to the other members of the municipality. Although the narrative on the historical contribution of the founders requires historical validation, the story has been consistently shared by the FGD participants and by the other members of the community in Talalang.

The inclusion of privileged barangays, however, demands obedience and observance of rules. This implies that access to mines, and the activities of miners in the community are disciplined and regulated. In Balbalan, the primary organization that oversees and manages the conduct of the activities of the miners fall under the care and responsibility of Banao Bodong Association (hereafter, BBA), which began sometime in 1984. Through the BBA, a miner submits to the policies of the organization. A look at their policies, the conditions, and penalties give the impression that the rules aim to caution the impact of mining to the environment, discourage excessive/violent

activities and specific items like liquor and pornographic materials, which may cause untoward incidents in the area, and remind the miners of the processes that should be observed in the conduct of mining like permits and renewal of contracts.

It should be noted, however, that BBA did not originally emerge to regulate gold mining activities in Ga-ang. The organization was first formed to deal with conflicts with other ethnic or non-ethnic groups. This somewhat explains the use of the term *bodong* in the name of the organization, which stands for peace-pact. A senior member of the community discussed that the BBA is in place to assure that the traditions in a barangay, territorial boundaries, and laws that govern ethnic groups are respected, and conflicts with other groups are peacefully addressed.⁸⁰ Based on the account of the participants, the BBA started facilitating the needs and concerns arising Ga-ang mines after Barangay Talalang realized that the BBA is in a better disposition to manage mining activities in Ga-ang. This is a move, which after a series of consultation, the *Ibanao* community endorsed.⁸¹

The exclusive access to Ga-ang mines also grounds the limited access of wives or husbands who are married to either an Ibanao or a person born in the municipality. The local term *pakamang* is used to refer to persons who, despite marriage to an Ibanao or a native of the municipality, still do not gain any ground or basis to directly participate in gold mining in Ga-ang mines. Our participants in the FGD, however, clarified that individuals who belong to the category of *pakamang* can work as porters and/or as ambulant vendors. These jobs seemingly appear marginal, but such tasks are essential to the community of miners.

Since there are no means of transportation to reach the mining community, and a person usually requires two to three hours of 7.5-kilometer walk, porters play a crucial role in sustaining the entry of goods/items needed in the mining community. In this respect, porters have carved a niche in the network of economic relations or transactions in Ga-ang mines. For ambulant vendors, they also secured an important role in the mining community as they provide a sense of variety to food-choice in the area. In fact, during the course of the FGD some ambulant vendors were seen bringing bite size doughnuts, and ready to cook vegetables. Between porters and ambulant vendors, men execute the former, while women commonly do the latter.

⁷⁹ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

⁸⁰ An example of a law, which the Banao tribe rejected but is upheld by other ethnic group is *Bodong*, which holds that those who died in a place, whether it is within or outside the ethnic group's territory, receives the right to claim ownership of a place unless it is paid and bought back by the original land owners.

⁸¹ An instance of a rule in Banao *Bodong* Association (BBA) is the regulation on the number of miners allowed to have access in Ga-ang. The rule of the organizations holds that there should only be 40 miners per barangay. This is stipulated to lessen the impact of mining activities to the environment.

The BBA regulates porters and ambulant vendors by assigning specific rates for items. At times, the expected fees and prices of goods go up especially during rainy season, which make steep trails towards the mining area become more difficult to manage. In summary, *pakamang* stands for the third group who are given limited access to Ga-ang gold mining community solely for livelihood engagements that do not directly interface with gold mining-production. This is the BBA's way of providing livelihood opportunities for those who are married to an Ibanao or a member of the privileged barangays. In this regard, the *pakamang* is another unique expression of the generosity of the tribe and the Balbalan community.⁸²

Given the kinds of groups, the levels of access of engagements in Ga-ang mines, and the role of BBA in implementing rules/policies, one can estimate the community's understanding on the relation between resource management and social responsibility. While the residents of Balbalan are thankful for the natural resources in Ga-ang, they are also aware of the need to carefully assess and regulate the means and ways of extracting such resources. In this respect, resource management is a key concept, which members of the community in Ga-ang and Balbalan value as they highlight the need to prioritize processes that are less damaging and if possible, not detrimental to nature's capacity to regenerate. This is also reflective of a collective consciousness, which takes primacy over individual goals.⁸³ This type of consciousness can even be easily observed in Barangay *Talalang* where households are expected to manage their own wastes, and are encouraged to engage in backyard vegetable gardening. Such communal activities importantly help contribute to the level of environmental awareness amongst barangay constituents and miners in Ga-ang. Since Ga-ang mines is also located up north of *Talalang*, the tribe and the community recognizes the relation between the possible effects of their activities upstream, which may trickle down into the natural resources below. This is a concern, which key members of the barangay, specify especially in relation to the quality of their rice produce. A few participants in the FGD acknowledged the possible negative effects of mining activities to rice production in their communities.⁸⁴

In relation to social responsibility, the golden gate station, which is located just in front of BBA office symbolically consolidates the community's effort to follow a system that will assess the activities of miners, porters, business owners, and ambulant vendors. Moreover, the willingness of the miners to be subjected to such rules, for instance, opening their bags for inspection prior to the trek towards the mining site, concretely shows their respect to the organization. The marshal in the station also conducts his responsibility seriously by not letting any items go unnoticed specifically prohibited items. Given the strategic location of golden state station, it has been transformed into a space where members of the Ibanao tribe, the privileged barangays, and *pakamang* are reminded of the need to constructively contribute to the ideals of the BBA, and re-affirm the commitment to exert caution and prudence in extracting gold deposits from Ga-ang mines. This is perhaps one good ground why Ga-ang mines no longer allow the use of *asoge* (mercury) in gold extraction, and why it was less difficult to follow such rule, since it was implemented in 2012.

Women's Community Mind Map

This section aims to articulate and identify the spaces that women occupy in Ga-ang Mines and in their barangays, and the reasons why women often hover and gather in these locations. For this exercise, the participants were asked to draw an image of the mining area and their barangay, label the spaces where women commonly stay, and think of conditions that encourage or force them to dwell in such spaces. This activity also helps initiate and situate the sensibilities and mind-set of the participants as they are left to imagine how they have lived and fared in the community. For this module, here are two samples of mind-maps drawn and shared by the participants in the FGD.

Mind Map of Ga-ang Mines



Description: In this drawing, one can recognize the ball milling station in Ga-ang mines, which is located near the Biyao River. (Photo by Jermafe Kae Prias)

⁸² FGD notes, October 9, 2014

⁸³ Arbeen Acuna, "Indigenous Research: Settle to Unsettle, Learn to Unlearn," in *Forum*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 2014).

⁸⁴ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

Mind Map of Sitio Sesec-an



Description: This mind-map showcases the basic structures and spaces in Sesec-an, which includes the school, church, the gas station, rice fields and the vegetable garden. (Photo by Jermafe Kae Prias)

The participants' sharing of their drawings of the spaces of women in Ga-ang mines and their communities paved way for the articulation of these intersecting locations and themes:

- 1) Ga-ang Mines. In this mining community, almost all women from the Banao Tribe and privileged barangays engage in small-scale gold mining and take part in other economic transactions in Ga-ang Mines. In the FGD, the participants specified that women take part in almost all activities in the area except tunneling. When inquired on the possible reasons for such exclusion, they narrated that the Ibanao traditional beliefs forbid women to enter any tunnel, which the participants also approve and recommend. The participants agree that the tunnel has its risks, which women may not be able to handle, and men are in a better disposition to protect themselves from untoward incidents inside tunnels.

But if women do not work inside a tunnel, does this mean that they play marginal roles in the community? For the participants, Ga-ang mines is a space where women's presence and contributions significantly figure. They cited that aside from ASGM, women perform household jobs in camps, vend items in stores, sell clothes, and assist other women interested to learn the skills needed for gold panning. The

participants added that such activities help make Ga-ang mines a viable and sustainable community. While the FGD participants accept that they cannot directly take part in tunneling, they are proud to underscore their productive roles, and claim their spaces in the mining community.⁸⁵

- 2) Mining Camps. In Ga-ang mines, there are about 200 hundred camps where most male miners rest and reside after working in tunnel areas. Some of the participants in the FGD shared that at times they stay in camps to assist male miners in keeping their areas clean, help prepare their meals, and do the laundry. When asked why they perform such jobs, they replied that that is their way of helping miners manage their household. Another possible reason, however, can be reckoned when a participant recounted that some miners in their camp gave away rocks with free gold as a way of compensating her efforts in the camp. This story may mean that doing household chores in miners' camps are not free after all. However, the participant was quick to specify that the act of giving away rocks with free gold was first an expression of the miner's gratitude, and was second, an indirect way of compensating her efforts in the camp.⁸⁶ From this story, one is actually given a hint on the unique relation between doing charitable acts and being compensated by other charitable gestures in the mining community. This spirit of sharing – based on the narratives of the participants – will unfold and be retold in ensuing discussions in the FGD.

- 3) Health Centers. In the discussion, the participants consistently regarded health centers as spaces where women regularly figure. For this space, the following professions were identified: midwives, and community nurses. When asked if there are male nurses, the participants said that to date, there is none. In addition, mothers need to bring their children for regular check-up especially babies for immunization. In a trip going to Tabuk City, three mothers actually rode the jeepney and carried their babies for one and a half hours for a routine check-up in the community health center. A query was raised in the FGD as to why women dominate such space? Should men also bring their kids to health centers? A participant clarified that men only stay in health centers when they are sick or are victims of accidents

⁸⁵ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

⁸⁶ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

in tunnel mining. In hindsight, this comment from the participant suggests that men do not share in such health related child minding activity, and accords women with the responsibility to bring their kids-babies to health centers.

- 4) Saturday Cleaning Activities. The participants in the FGD also shared that women spend their Saturdays cleaning sections of roads, and attending to the vegetables that sprawl in public areas in the barangay. During community cleaning, a participant mentioned that men also take charge of ensuring that irrigation systems for farm lots work.⁸⁷ The regularity of this communal activity may help explain why Barangay Talalang, especially Sitio Sesec-an is spot-on its cleaning and greening programs, and why the irrigation system that brings water to farm lots in the community are efficiently operating. One wonders where this drive and desire to be stewards of nature come from, and in the FGD, a participant uttered a line that may help situate the context of such dedication: If we do not take care of nature today, we rob the future generation a healthy environment that they deserve.⁸⁸
- 5) Farm Lots and Gardening Plots. Almost all of the participants in the FGD engage in backyard vegetable gardening as part of their household activity. They shared that it is common for them to plant *calabasa* (squash), *pechay* (spinach), string beans, and black beans. The BBA office is even surrounded by vegetable plots, which the marshal harvests for his meals. The phrase from “plot to plate” seems sufficient to capture the participants understanding of the relation between what one plants and eats on the table. But aside from providing healthy meals for the family, the participants stressed that backyard gardening help ease financial expenses.

In the FGD, a few participants narrated that they also grow rice in their farm lots. This is something they do in specific months of the year to help assure that their families have ample supply of rice, which usually lasts up to three months.⁸⁹ This is a livelihood activity, which some women keenly fulfills and this shall be explained in detail in the third module of the FGD. But for this section, what is clear is that women cultivate the soil of the barangay, hence occupy

such spaces, which they are committed to perform to provide healthy meals for the family, assure that the family's rice supply can last for almost three months, and help lessen food related expenses.

- 6) Monthly Meetings. The discussion in the FGD also made special mention of another space where women gather – *KALIPI* or Kalipunan ng mga Liping Pilipina. As a women's organization, women and their representatives participate in monthly meetings to discuss livelihood opportunities for women, and women's rights issues in the barangay and city-town levels. The presence of this organization for women is possibly caused and conditioned by the growing number of women representation in important posts in the local government. The FGD participants actually take pride in mentioning these positions held by women: chief accountant and treasurer of the municipality, municipal health officer, BBA Board of Trustees Member, BBA Committee Chairperson, and previous Municipal Councilor.⁹⁰ With *KALIPI* and the number of posts that women hold in the government, the participants in the FGD recognized such spaces where women in *Balbalan* figure, which are also symbolically reckoned as representations of women empowerment in the barangay and municipality.

In summary, the spaces that women in Ga-ang Mines, and in the barangays where the FGD participants come from occupy these spaces: (1) Ga-ang mines, (2) Mining Camps, (3) Health Centers, (4) Saturday Cleaning Activities, (5) Farm Lots and Gardening Plots, and (6) Monthly Meetings. In these spaces, women conduct their livelihood engagements, participate in community activities, share their skills and capacities to others, fulfill perceived obligations in the household, cultivate the land to generate food for the family, and perform functions that concern the well-being of the barangay and the municipality. With these spaces, the women in Ga-ang mines demonstrate the value and dignity of their contributions to their families and communities. This sense of pride over what they do and have accomplished somehow simultaneously reveals the value that men and the community in return confer on the role of women in the community. Are women's spaces peripheral? Given the initial discussion in this module, it appears that women's spaces in Ga-ang mines and in their barangays are acknowledged as fulfilling, crucial and life-giving roles in the community.

⁸⁷ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

⁸⁸ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

⁸⁹ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

⁹⁰ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

Women and the Household

For this module, the participants in the FGD were invited to itemize their engagements in a typical day. The primary intent of this exercise is to let the participants re-examine their schedule and articulate the reasons behind their regular daily engagements. Interestingly, the discussion clarified two possible meanings of a household: one is the household in Ga-ang mines, which can refer to the vending store, or a mining camp, and second, the household in the barangay where most members of the family of the participants reside. Given the kinds of households that the participants think of, one can inquire on how women figure their roles in least two households. The discussion for this section hovered around these points:

- 1) Temporary Household in Ga-ang Mines. For this type of household, the participants underscored the importance of thinking in advance or the need to plan ahead. This disposition may be attributed to the kind of life that the participants in the FGD have while staying in Ga-ang, which can be conditioned by a combination of three concerns: (a) maximizing opportunities to earn money while in the mining area, (b) the limitations of one's resources vis-à-vis the expensive goods in the area, and (c) the needs of the family in their respective households in the barangay. In relation to the initial concern, the participants in the FGD shared that they are willing to leave domestic concerns in camps or in vending stores in Ga-ang Mines if there are productive tunnels – these are tunnels that produce high-grade gold.⁹¹ During such instances, household concerns in the mining areas are temporarily abandoned. This disposition also makes sense, since income generation is the primary reason why the participants and other women in the mining community choose to stay in such place. This also clarifies why the participants are ready to use the term *maglayas* when they choose to leave household chores when opportunities for high-grade gold arise. *Maglayas* or to flee or run away fittingly describes their behavior when they rush towards productive tunnel sites.⁹² With the overriding role of economic concerns and opportunities, the household in the mining area may be reckoned as temporary abodes or shelters. The spaces that they occupy in their household in Ga-ang mines are temporary in comparison to the spaces that they fill-in in the household in the barangay where their families live.

For some of the participants who live in camps with other miners, the camp as a household can be considered as an opportunity to save and earn additional income. As they render service in camps, women carve their space in such places as they accomplish household chores like cleaning, cooking meals for the miners, and doing the laundry. When a participant in the FGD was asked why she renders such services, she opined that as a mother, you would want to assist in organizing an abode. She specified that it makes her uncomfortable seeing the camp disordered or disorganized.⁹³ In retrospection, when the camp as a household is seen in this manner, it becomes a space where the participants extend their skills in managing household chores to others who live in the same mining camp. And this is something, which some of the participants try to balance as they also engage in other livelihood activities. But the overriding sentiment of the participants is captured in this line: *di maayos ang kampo kapag walang babae* (the camp is best managed when there is a woman).⁹⁴

As some women apply their household management skills in camps, they also establish social relations with male miners. This network of social relations may come in handy as it may pre-dispose enabling arrangements where: (i) some women acquire a sense of access and priority to rocks discharged from mining tunnels, especially from tunnel areas with miners whom they have worked for or worked with, (ii) open other possible income generating activities like massage for a fee, or have potential buyers of food items or clothes from miners who belong to the same camp.⁹⁵ These are some of the practical gains that are disposed to women as they fulfill specific roles in their temporary households in the mining area.

⁹¹ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

⁹² FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

⁹³ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

⁹⁴ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

⁹⁵ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

Mining Camps-Households in Ga-ang Mines



(Photo by Arlene Galvez)

- 2) Household with the Immediate Family. The participants in the FGD stay in the mining area for a few days, a week, or months depending on the opportunities for high-grade gold. When asked for the shortest stay in Ga-ang mines, a participant said that she once worked in the area for four days, given that she was fortunate enough to sift a substantive amount of gold. Such a fortune made her immediately go back to her household in the barangay to share her gains with her family. She added that before, she stayed in the area for two straight months. She was able to save a big amount of money within such a span of time but decided to simply ask someone to bring the money to her family in their barangay. The participant specified that she chose not to go home, since she wanted to save more before going back to her family in the barangay. Another participant uttered these lines to clarify the usual length of stay in Ga-ang: *two weeks, mag-iipon muna bago bumaba* (One saves money for two weeks, before going back to the family).⁹⁶

Given the primary concern for income generation, the FGD proceeded on the kind of household life that the participants have as they stay with their families. Do you have time to rest and relax once you stay with your family after toiling in Ga-ang mines? *Nakatambak ang trabaho* (Domestic work has accumulated), this is how one participant described her workload every time she is at home with her family.⁹⁷ The other participant, however, clarified that unlike in Ga-ang mines, one can first relax with the family and just attend to domestic chores thereafter. In Ga-ang mines, one has to maximize time in doing household concerns, since one does not know when the next opportunity is for high-grade gold. For the participants, such situation is a big contrast to the less stressful conditions that they deal with when they stay with their families. For them, household chores are far easier than the daily grind of manual labor in the mining area.⁹⁸ This is a point, which shall also be magnified in the third module of the FGD on women and their livelihood engagements.

Since the participants earn substantial amounts of money, are household chores shared between husbands and wives, and do children contribute in doing household work? The FGD provided these telling lines: (1) *mabuti pa ang lalaki nakakarela sa bahay, ang babae hindi* (men are better off, since they can rest in the household, women cannot), (2) *depende sa usapan* (it depends on the agreement between a husband and wife), (3) *mas-magaan ang trabaho ng babae pero hindi nauubosan* (women has lighter tasks but never ending), (4) *kapag busy ang babae, ang lalake ang gumagawa* (if women are busy, men do the chores).⁹⁹ With these statements, it appears that household work nevertheless lean towards the shoulders of women. Although a few of the participants stated that household responsibilities could be discussed, it seems that by default, women are still expected to perform such functions. The interesting point from the sharing of the participants, however, show that women are in a platform where they can also negotiate with their husbands and family members. That is why when the participants were asked to identify as to who makes the decisions in the household their response was also mixed. Some participants, however, specified that husbands should be acknowledged as the father figure in the

⁹⁶ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

⁹⁷ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

⁹⁸ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

⁹⁹ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

household. But another participant clarified that such a position does not mean that the father is the only one entitled to decide. What the participants in general stressed is that decision-making totally depends on the subject matter at hand. The most reasonable justification, even if it comes from the children, should be listened to and followed.

An interesting case was also discussed in the FGD when the topic focused on laundry work. A simple question was asked if men are capable of washing clothes in the household. A participant replied that some men wash their own clothes: *yung ibang lalake, sila ang maglalaba ng gamit nila*. However, the participants also stressed that men generally do not wash somebody else's clothes. In the words of a participant, *ayaw nilang labhan ang damit ng iba* (Men do not want to wash another person's clothes, the least is they only wash their own). To this point, the participants in the FGD specified that unlike men, women do the laundry for every member of the household.¹⁰⁰

- 3) *Kung i-budget ang oras, kulang talaga* (If time is budgeted, time is never enough). This is another interesting notion that emerged in this part of the FGD. The participants noted that as they stay in vending stores or in miner's camps, or in the household with their families in the lower barangays, they are regulated by this feeling that time is never enough. They always race against time. For instance, the longer they stay in the mining area, their supplies decrease, and their expenses pile up. A participant specified that women usually stay in Ga-ang mines until her supplies last. As much as possible, women conserve their resources until they can get enough gold from small-scale mining and earn money from other transactions. Conversely, the longer they stay in the household with their families, the list of expenses and financial obligations add up. In this respect, the participants also have to budget and maximize their time with their families. This implies that as mothers, the participants try their best to save, earn money while they are in their households in Ga-ang mines, attend to the needs of their children while they are in their households in the barangay; and as wives, support their husbands by contributing money to the family, and fulfill-share in doing domestic chores.

Thus, planning ahead seems to be the over-arching disposition of women as they figure in household tasks and responsibilities. As one participant opined, when one stays in Ga-ang mines, *parang oras sa city, walang fix time* (The experience is comparable to time spent in the city, time is never fixed).¹⁰¹ She also itemized her tasks as she recalled an instance when she started picking and collecting stones at 6pm and finished the task until 12 mid-night. She only slept for two hours and started working again at 3am. *Walang tulugan* (There is no time for sleep), this was how she described her schedule especially if there is high-grade gold in the tunnel areas.¹⁰²

- 4) *Nanay* (Mother). As mothers, a participant mentioned these telling lines: *bilang nanay, di nauubusan ng trabaho* (As a mother, there is no end to work), and *kahit anong hirap, tinataguyod* (Even if things become difficult, a mother pushes through).¹⁰³ With these statements, the participants in the FGD agreed that at the core of women's role in the household is a mother who is almost always ready to go beyond her limit just to fulfill her responsibilities to the family and the community. This is perhaps the context that situates and clarifies the meaning of this statement as expressed by a participant: *sa pagbaba galing Ga-ang, nare-relax na ang katawan, pero nararamdaman na rin ang pagod at sakit sa katawan* (As one descends from Ga-ang, one gradually feels relaxed but one also begins to feel pain in the body).¹⁰⁴ This statement somehow captures the experience of mothers who strive hard to generate income while staying in Ga-ang mines so they can have something to offer for their families in their households in the community below. As a participant succinctly expressed: *Bilang isang magulang lalo na pag may pinag-aaral kami na mga anak, gagawin naming ang lahat kahit gaano pa kahirap ang mga trabaho* (As a parent, we exert our very best especially that our kids are already studying even if our work can be very difficult at times).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹⁰¹ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹⁰² FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹⁰³ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

In summary, the participants in the FGD who are engaged in ASGM in Ga-ang mines think of the household in these locations: one is in Ga-ang mines, which refers to the shelter or camp while they are at the mining area, and second is in a barangay in the municipality where their families live. Given these two locations, the participants discussed that women consider the household in Ga-ang mines as an abode that enables them to engage in economic transactions. This means that as they reside in such a household, they also take part in the following activities: (a) picking of stones near tunnel sites, which women process for possible gold deposits, (b) vending items like food, clothes, frozen food, etc., (c) doing household related chores like cooking meals, cleaning camps, or doing the laundry for miners for a fee or for free, or (d) offering services like massage for a fee. These activities somehow configures the household in Ga-ang mines as a place of work, where women can strategically earn money, and establish social relations with tunnel miners in the community. The second meaning of a household where the families of the participant reside may be said to fulfill these functions: (a) as a place of rest where women miners can relax from the worries and the manual labor expected in the mining area, (b) as a space where women can take care of the needs of their children, the family as a whole, (c) as a location where women do household chores like cleaning, planting crops or vegetables, laundry work, preparing meals, and (d) as an area where women bring home the hard earned money in Ga-ang mines.

Since the household pertains to two meanings and subsists in two locations, one can suppose an interface between these meanings and locations of a household. By admitting the interface, one can suppose that: (a) the commitment of women to work hard in the mining area is reinforced and conditioned by the needs of the family, and that (b) the sense of obligation to meet the demands of the members of the family sustains the very effort of women miners to steadfastly strategize their stay in Ga-ang mines so they can earn and save money for the family. This dialogical relation between the household in Ga-ang and the household of women in the barangay shows the broad mindset and capacities of women. This means that women miners in Ga-ang demonstrate a consciousness that can cover the details of household work in the barangay, at the same time, take advantage of the specific economic opportunities that their household in Ga-ang mines provide. This is the double edged disposition that women maintain as they try to thrive in conditions that unfold from the household in Ga-ang, and in the responsibilities that await their presence in households with their families.

Women and Livelihood

The number of livelihood opportunities in Ga-ang mines and in the barangay for women abound. In the FGD, the participants were asked to describe in detail their economic engagements, the opportunities that such transactions provide, and the risks that they can identify while they take part in such livelihood activities. For this section, the participants discussed five possible sources of income in Ga-ang mines and in the barangay, and the concomitant risks that they deal with:

- 1) Small-scale gold mining in Ga-ang. The participants in the FGD all take part in ASGM. As a participant mentioned, *sayang ang mga naba, may gold pa rin doon* (Its a waste if stones are just discarded, one can still find gold in such stones). The steps involved in ASGM are as follows: (a) stone picking (naba stones), (b) manual (*tuktuk*) or machine crushing of stones, and if manually done, one uses a metal hammer or *maso*, (c) hauling, (d) ball milling, (e) sluicing, (f) panning (*man-juyas*) using *juyas*, (g) smelting (*man uto*) using a blue torch, and (h) selling.¹⁰⁶ The participants specified that they normally spend their day hours picking and crushing stones. When done with household concerns, they proceed near the tunnel areas to collect ore stones, which they bring back to their household. Just before lunch, they go back to their household to prepare meals and eat. After which, they return to tunnel areas to pick and gather more stones, which they pile near their abode. An estimate of 200 hundred stones can fill one sack. Once they have gathered enough, they manually crash the stones using the hammer. A week's worth of work usually results to four to six sacks of crushed stones. This is the daily grind that most women in Ga-ang mines do.

Once stones have been properly crushed, the next phase of the process begins – ball milling. Through a machine, crushed stones are further pulverized to increase the probability of separating gold from the ore. In Ga-ang mines, almost all mining groups have their own ball milling stations. Some also make their ball milling stations available for rent, which usually falls within this range, 150 to 300 pesos per load or sack. Some participants in the FGD also avail of such arrangement. A participant in the FGD even specified that she usually ball mills in the evening, which may take around three hours to complete the process for the first load. The steps are then repeated for another two hours after filling-in the ball mill with fresh/unused water.¹⁰⁷ She said that she takes advantage of the evening

¹⁰⁶ FGD notes, October 9, 2014

¹⁰⁷ FGD Documenter's, October 9, 2014

schedule when ball-milling stations are usually available for use, and when there are lesser people around.

Women Collecting Stones in Ga-ang Mines



After ball milling, the next step is sluicing, which requires another working hour. A participant in the FGD noted that the extent and time allotted for ball milling, and sluicing significantly depends upon these factors: (a) the number loads, (b) the size of the rod mill, and (c) the quality of the water flow that run the ball mill. The number of loads is also an important concern as a participant detailed that usually one load is equivalent to one gram of gold, and if a tunnel is productive, it can produce five grams of gold per load. With sluicing done, gold panning can now commence. In the FGD, only one participant claimed that she does her own panning. It is a skill, which she learned and mastered only recently. Since men usually do the panning in Ga-ang mines, it is interesting to note that there are only a handful of women who share in such a capacity. The participant narrated that it took time for her to master the craft. But today, she beams with pride that she has learned the process, and now reaps the reward for having such skill. The skill means she does not need to contract the panning service of men, and she can even have extra income for those who want to contract her panning skills.¹⁰⁸

Panning in Ga-ang Mines



(Photos by Arlene Galvez)

¹⁰⁸ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

Panning in Ga-ang mines also took a significant turn when the BBA dis-allowed the use of mercury in the area in 2012. For two years, the community has adjusted to mercury free gold panning methods. The adjustment was not that difficult, since everyone almost had the same experience – they sifted more gold after panning, which meant more income for the family, and the mining community understood the need to prioritize the integrity of the environment. And after separating gold from the sand residue by using gumamela extract, the next step starts – smelting. In Ga-ang mines, the women miners use blue torch to smelt raw gold. The smelting stations in the community are usually located in communal areas. Finally, the last step in ASGM is selling, and there are gold buyers in the community, which women miners approach in exchange for their gold. To date, the price range per gram of gold is between Php 1,150.00-1,350.00.¹⁰⁹

The participants in the FGD were also asked if men engage in ASGM, and a participant clarified that to date men exclusively work in tunnel areas; only women take part in small-scale gold mining. They even recounted instances when some women jokingly challenge men to wear skirts and take part in small-scale gold mining especially if a tunnel is no longer progressive: *ang lalaki, pag wala nang naba, binibiro na magsuot ng palda*. But the point of such a line, according to a participant is that although women's income may be less compared to men – *paunti-unti*, women are diligent and resourceful. To this point, the other participants in the FGD agreed.¹¹⁰

Are there certain risks that women face in small-scale gold mining in Ga-ang? A participant in the FGD highlighted these risks: (a) while picking stones near tunnel areas, she said that: *baka matamaan ka ng bato kapag tinatapon na nila ang mga naba* (One might accidentally get hit by stones especially when the tunnel miners de-load stones). Another participant shared, *pwestuhan kami at inalalapag ang sako sa pwesto malapit sa tunel* (We place an empty sack on the ground as our space near the tunnel site while waiting for the excess stones to be unloaded).¹¹¹ Although none of the participants in the FGD experienced getting hit by a stone, their location near the tunnel area still contributes

a sense of worry that stones might accidentally hit them. Getting an injury is something, which they would not want to experience lest it will seriously affect their livelihood activities in the mining area.

The next set of risks that women face in ASGM is health related. In the FGD, the participants mentioned these health conditions: (a) asthma and allergy, which are triggered by dusts while doing manual stone crushing, (b) back ache and at times, fractures in the course of stone hauling, (c) the ball mill station can be slippery and shafting is too heavy, which intimates accident when one is not careful enough, (d) sleep deprivation during ball milling especially that it is done at night, and (e) headache while panning especially while using nitric acid to remove silver from gold which also cause skin rashes and/or burns, pulmonary edema, at times difficulty in breathing and pain on the throat.¹¹² With these risks, the participants in the FGD cautioned each other that they should try their best to take care of their bodies and health. They would not want to imagine a scenario where they will be forced to hang-up their engagements in the mining area because of possible illness. This is also one reason why they hope that a natural method can be done to replace the use of nitric acid in separating silver from other ores.

- 2) Vending and Sari-Sari Store. A few participants in the FGD have small vending stores. The items they sell are usually purchased at Tabuk City, which is a four to five hour bus drive from Sitio Sesec-an, where the golden gate station is located. From this station, another 7.5-kilometer walk is needed to bring the goods into the mining area. A normal walk, for a resident in Ga-ang mines usually requires one and a half hours of walk. The rugged terrain and the steep slopes make the walk to the mining area difficult. First time climbers may even need ten hours of walk just to reach the area only to highlight the challenging terrain towards Ga-ang mines.

Given the distance and the difficulty expected in bringing goods to Ga-ang mines, the prices of purchased items drastically go up. For example, a 3-in-1 coffee, which can be bought at Tabuk City for 6 pesos, will be sold in the mining

¹⁰⁹FGD notes, October 9, 2014

¹¹⁰FGD notes, October 9, 2014

¹¹¹FGD notes, October 9, 2014

¹¹²FGD Documenter's, October 9-10, 2014

area for 18 or 20 pesos, or a bottle of spring oil, which is pegged at 32 pesos in Tabuk, will be sold for 100 pesos. These sample rates make living in the mining area financially consuming. This also contextualizes the participants' previous sharing on the need to maximize time in the area, since the length of the stay will mean consuming more expensive goods in Ga-ang. In addition to the distance, owners of vending stores would also need to settle financial obligations with the BBA. This includes business permits from MLGU (Municipal Local Government Unit), and the BBA. To add to the costs, the rates for porters when carrying specific items should be in sync with the pre-calibrated rates per kilo. This implies that heavier items require bigger fees. Lastly, rainy and cold conditions may at times mean that owners of vending stores will give additional pay for porters especially if the items to be transported are perishable (e.g. *bulanglang* – mixed vegetables). This arrangement, however, is only done between the business owner and the porters.¹¹³

Given the fees that vending stores need to tackle, selling goods at Ga-ang mines has its unique features. For instance, a participant narrated that she allowed a miner to get items from her store but she waited a year for the miner to settle his debts. The participant said that at times, she allows such arrangements, since miners will eventually have productive tunnels. And when such instances happen, she will be paid in full and may even be given with stones with free gold as an expression of a miner's gratitude. Although engaging in such long-term payment scheme has its downside, the participant reiterated that one should not worry, since miners also keep track of their debts. The participant used the term loyalty in describing the relation between miners who purchase goods from her store and her vending business. The other participants also stressed the need to have a strong PR (Public Relations) with miners in the community. As a participant noted, one cannot be that strict, otherwise, your business will eventually close, since you will no longer have interested and loyal costumers.¹¹⁴

Are there risks in the livelihood engagements of women in Ga-ang mines? Two risks were identified during the course of the discussion with the women participants in the FGD: (1) competition with ambulant vendors, and (2) bankruptcy. The participants noted that ambulant vendors only need

to get permission from the golden gate station. Since they do not operate in stalls, they also need not get business permits from the municipality and the BBA. The owners of vending stores in Ga-ang regard such absence of conditions an advantage for ambulant vendors in terms of costs. Unlike vending stores, they would need to invest part of their money for permits and renewal of contracts. Ambulant vendors, according to some participants in the FGD, also have an advantage with their selling strategy: house-to-house delivery. The participants noted that it is an effective approach in selling goods and in establishing loyal costumers/consumers. After a day's hard work, ambulant vendors can also just descend, go back to their households in the community and comeback the following day with their ready to sell goods. Given such features, vending stores in Ga-ang mines regard ambulant vendors as possible competitors.¹¹⁵ Whether it is a healthy or disabling competition, such a concern pre-disposes the possibility of the second risk that vending stores in the mining area hope to avoid, bankruptcy.



Description: Ambulant vendors who are about to pass through the golden gate station and trek towards the Ga-ang mines with their baskets filled with food for sale. (Photo by Gelli Aiza Baluyan)

¹¹³ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹¹⁴ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹¹⁵ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

A few participants in the FGD mentioned accounts or instances of business closure amongst vending stores in Ga-ang mines. *Naubusan ng puhunan* (They lost their business capital), this is how they explained the cause of such closures in the mining community.¹¹⁶ The participants who have small vending stores in Ga-ang remarked that they usually have a dilemma if they should still allow miners to get items from their stores on credit or not. While they are aware of the near possibility of having productive tunnels in the area, which will allow miners to pay their debts, it is something that remains to be seen; and such an arrangement somehow leaves the future of their business hanging. While owners value loyal buyers, they would also need to find other means to infuse additional capital for their vending business. This is perhaps one reason why almost all vending storeowners do not hesitate to engage in ASGM. As a participant shared, after watching over her store between seven to ten am, she proceeds to nearby tunnel areas to collect stones, which are kept and piled-up near her store. Another participant noted, *para di maubusan ng puhunan dapat may ibang income* (Just so business capital will not get depleted, one should have other sources of income).¹¹⁷ For women with vending stores, this other source of income usually pertains to small-scale gold mining in Ga-ang.

- 3) Rice Farming and Vegetable Gardening. Some of the participants in the FGD are also into rice farming. Since there is usually one planting cycle in Balbalan, some women ensure their participation in rice farming in the family's parcel of land. When asked if rice produce is sold in the market, the participants replied that their yield is only intended for family consumption. This stance somehow opens the idea that livelihood engagements – the way the participants construe such concept, do not necessarily lead to income generation. The point of the matter being considered is that as long as an activity contributes or helps provide to the household's granary of resources, it is a livelihood activity – as an add-on to the food supply of a family.

In relation to rice farming cycles, the participants in the FGD specified that the preparation of rice plot happen around October. With the farm fields ready, planting (*manloop*) begins in January and ends in March. When the month of May

comes, farmers begin cleaning the passageway in-between rice plots, locally termed as *tamvak*. In June and July, the harvest period begins, wherein the yield is subsequently dried and kept in the household or community granary. The kinds of rice in Banao were also specified: *Unoy: intan, finuwaya, darat, moggu, and Oyak-ulikan, gal-it, sinablangan*. In-between such activities in the farm lot, women farmers also go to Ga-ang mines to engage in ASGM. When asked on the possible risks related to farming activities in the area, the participants took notice of storms/typhoons during harvest season, and the growing concern on the siltation of farm lots, which is traced back to the tailing waste from the mine site at Ga-ang.¹¹⁸ This concern on siltation was also reinforced in one of the short conversations with a local barangay official in Sitio Sesec-an. He mentioned that the effects of siltation on rice plots and the quality of rice harvests are already evident and he is hoping that a corrective action can be done about it.¹¹⁹



Description: A section of the river in the mining area in Ga-ang, which cascades to river streams and rice paddies to low lying barangays where rice plots are located and is considered as reason for the siltation in rice plots and the diminishing quality of rice produce. (Photo taken by Arlene Galvez)

¹¹⁶FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹¹⁷FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹¹⁸FGD Documenter's notes, October 9-10, 2014.

¹¹⁹FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

With regards vegetable gardening, all of the participants in the FGD agree that it is a basic household and even leisurely activity. There is even an expression that a household that does not have plots for vegetable is lazy and languid, since vegetables are easy to plant and take care of. This also served as the risk that families might face when they do not engage in vegetable gardening. The participants would not want to imagine being labeled as lazy and unproductive. They also stressed that it is a bit embarrassing to ask for vegetables from your neighbor especially if you have no garden plots in the household. *Dapat magtanim ka* (One should plant), this is how a participant stressed the need to cultivate soil and plant vegetables.¹²⁰ A short stroll in Barangay Talalang easily distinguishes sections where vegetables are planted. Aside from the local barangay ordinance, which requires households to plant food at their backyard, the soil in the area is fertile enough and is, therefore, easy to cultivate. The BBA office in Sitio Sesec-an somehow fulfills its role as model for following the local ordinance through its creative way planting vegetables around its small vicinity. The vegetables commonly planted in the area according to the participants are as follows: string beans, *pechay* (local spinach), cabbage, tomato, herbs, and squash. Although most families plant for household consumption, some sell their vegetables, which are displayed in vending stores just before the golden gate station.

- 4) Pottery. Some women in Talalang engage in pottery and painting, which they have inherited from their ancestors, and carry on as part of their livelihood activities today. A participant in the FGD described the steps involved in pottery: (a) clay drying, which is then pulverized using a pestle and a hard flat surface, (b) to separate the pulverized clay, one uses a strainer, (c) mix portions of water, grind and shape into a cylinder, (d) a hole at the center is made using a *vuntut* (round shape stone), (e) with bare hands, one taps the side of the clay to mark a curve for the mouth of the pot using a small piece of cloth or *lapijas*, (f) air dry the freshly made pot, (g) smoothen the pot's edges and cook it using dried bamboo or dried bark of pine trees, and (h) to get a shiny finish to the pot, one pours *livu* (sap from an Almaciga Tree). Recently, the women in Talalang were taught to paint the pots with local designs after a train-

ing sponsored by DOST, and some women even pair their pots to pieces of driftwood to produce another version of artwork. The participants shared that many of these pots and art-works are made-to-order, and are commonly displayed in various stores that showcase and sell local products in Tabuk City. A big hand-made pot is usually sold for 80 pesos. There are, however, a few risks that women face when they make pots. According to a participant, these risks include: skin burn while cooking the pot, and inhaling fumes, which causes slight chest pain.¹²¹

- 5) Barter or *Makisinukat*. This is an interesting practice and concept of livelihood engagement that emerged in the FGD. Some participants shared that they unintentionally gain money through unique transactions or arrangements that are not essentially measured by monetary exchange. For instance, out of one's intent to help ease the burden or address the needs of another community member, one may receive a reward in return. This is how one participant summarized her view on the principle of barter in the mining community. A more specific example is when a participant renders *hilut* (massage) with no specific fee in mind. Because of this flexible arrangement on fees, some miners perceive such act as an expression of kindness and willingness to help. Building from such a perception, the miner at times return the favor by handing the masseuse rocks that have traces of gold, or free use of ball milling stations, or free assistance in hauling sacks of stones. The participants regard such gestures of miners as rewards for the acts of kindness or services that they have rendered, since they do not expect to be recompensed. Another interesting expression of the barter system is when a woman miner do the laundry of male miners, or in exchange for food, some miners give *pinta* or gold nuggets. For women engaged in ASGM, they appreciate such transactions, since such acts provide them good reasons to continue helping others when they have the resources to give or capacities to extend. This system, according to one participant, is part of community sensitivity where one is attentive and mindful of the needs of other members.¹²²

¹²⁰ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹²¹ FGD Documenter's notes, October 9, 2014.

¹²² FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

Beyond the individual-based gains, the participants in the FGD also reinforced the concept and practice of *finnulig* or *bayanihan* (community spirit) in the mining area. They see this as a capstone to the values of the community, which is most evident when members meet an accident, wherein other members in the area spontaneously give rocks with gold as an expression of their support to the victim. This is an achievement, which the participants in the FGD are happy to acknowledge.¹²³

In summary, the participants in the FGD believe that there is every reason for women to generate income and learn new skills given the various livelihood options in the community. As a participant remarked, it all depends on the initiative of the individual. For instance, as women do the daily grind of ASGM in Ga-ang mines, one can also put-up stalls or vending stores, engage in rice farming in specific months of the year, and backyard vegetable gardening, sell food, or engage in pottery making, and even help others through the barter system in the community. With these viable options, the participants in the FGD expressed that working in Ga-ang mines – despite the challenges and difficulties, can also be rewarding and fulfilling. Do women feel that they have less economic capabilities to help in the financial demands of their household? The participants in the FGD are eager to recount the numerous instances when they were able to provide enough resources to address the needs of their families, and even address some of the essential needs of their relatives.

Women and Gender-Based Violence

For this module, the participants were invited to re-call instances when they encountered acts of gender-based violence (hereafter, GBV) in either Ga-ang mines or in their barangays. Through the mind-maps from the first module, the participants were instructed to identify areas or sections in their map where GBV took place or is currently happening. Interestingly, only one participant identified GBV on her mind-map, which took place in Tabuk City, not in Ga-ang mines or in their barangays in Balbalan municipality. For this case, a participant recounted a mother's experience of physical abuse in Tabuk in 2013. The participant shared that she was actually approached by the victim, and she advised her to report the case to the barangay. When

asked on the status of this case, the participant said that today, the couple is in good terms: *okay na sila ngayon*.¹²⁴

Since the case did not happen in Balbalan, the participants stressed that the instance of GBV took place in Tabuk City – it did not happen in Balbalan. With this emphasis, the participants were then asked to possibly explain why there are no cases of GBV or if cases are actually unreported. To this query, the participants shared these viewpoints: (a) there are continuous update from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) of the local government on the laws that protect women and children. Leadership trainings were also organized for women to empower them and help fulfill their leadership potentials; (b) *disiplinado ang mga tao* (individuals have discipline) – this point pertains to the values of the members of the community specifically on the effort to avoid/restrain excessive behaviors, (c) fear of God – for this stance, one participant shared that men are religious, which somehow explains why men do not abuse their wives and children in the area, (d) everyone is aware of the barangay ordinance against GBV – to this claim, a participant said this line: *malakas ang pag-implement* (there is strong implementation of the barangay ordinance against GBV), (d) the policies of the BBA cover acts or cases of GBV, which even impose penalties for violators, (e) the customs and traditions of the Banao Tribe punish acts of GBV, which explains why men in the community have always been careful with their dealings with women.

For instance, a short observation on how men behave towards women in public spaces like stores in Sesec-an reveal that men display proper dispositions towards the opposite sex, (f) *malakas din ang kahihyan sa angkan* (one does not want to humiliate one's family, or bring dishonor to the tribe) – this social stigma may condition a big part of the worry or concern of possible perpetrators of GBV, since families are tightly knit, and the community knows each other's family history at length, and (g) women are economically empowered – for this point, the participants in the FGD shared that with their economic contributions, men might even be embarrassed over women's capacity to financially address the needs of the family. In this respect, the participants believe that their livelihood engagements are viable equalizers with men.¹²⁵

¹²³FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹²⁴FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹²⁵FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

With the foregoing points, it is evident that for the participants in the FGD, the women in Ga-ang mines and the barangays know and assert their rights and expect respect in return especially from the male members of the community. For them, there is no reason why women should experience GBV. An anecdotal or sketchy case was even shared that a woman in Ga-ang mines complained about the way a man stared at her, which she regarded as a form of sexual harassment. To this complaint, the man was immediately called and was asked to explain his side and retorted that it was not his intention to look at the woman in a demeaning manner. The complaint was instantly settled and was judged as a case of mistaken impression but the man was advised to be more careful with the way he looks at women.¹²⁶ With this sample situation, one can easily sense the level of empowerment of women in the community, and how complaints are directly settled. This is perhaps the reason why it is rare to see men gazing at women in public spaces, which is commonly the case in urban centers where there are high incidents of GBV.

Women's Dreams and Aspirations

The last module of the FGD centers on the hopes and desires of women for themselves, the family, and the community. Through this activity, the participants in the FGD are disposed to articulate the kind of vision that they have of a better life with their families and the entire commune. At times, this exercise also gives an opportunity for the participants to share things that they were unable to narrate in the previous modules, and even validates their stance on the absence of GBV in the community. This is because when one is given the chance to articulate one's dream, the person is disposed to re-assess what she has been doing, how she has fared with her responsibilities, and the steps that she need to take to achieve her aspirations. In the FGD, the dreams and aspirations of the participants are telling of the kind of future that they imagine for the self, family, and community. These are the themes that emerged in the sharing and discussion:

1) Self. For this section, a few participants gave a space for their dreams for the self. This maybe reckoned as a classic case where mothers often are ready to neglect their personal dreams as they usually are focused on the wellbeing

of their families. But in the FGD, three participants were bold enough to assert that they also have their individual dreams. For example, a participant yearned for the possibility of travelling to new places where she can relax and unwind specially from the manual labor expected in ASGM. She added that it is a reward that she deserves for her hard work, and efforts while working in Ga-ang mines. Another wished that she can work again in another country so she can earn and save more money, which she plans to invest in her vending business in the mining area. For this longing, she imagines the possibility of building a bigger store with more supplies in the mining area. This desire to expand her business can be indicative of her mastery of specific entrepreneurial skills needed to have a successful business in Ga-ang mines. Another participant narrated her desire to be a good a model for other women in the community, and be a good mother to her child, and a wife to her husband.¹²⁷ This dream maybe taken to mean as a mother's hope that she can improve the way she carries herself especially with regards her responsibilities. In hindsight, these aspirations are telling of the participants' understanding of the extent of their contributions to the family and community, which they also owe to themselves – as agents of diligence and determination.

2) Family. For this domain, the participants held the common desire to continue working in Ga-ang mines to help support the education of their children. They all envision a future wherein their children have successfully finished their studies and are working as professionals in various institutions. Does this mean that they would not want to see their children mine gold in Ga-ang? For these mothers, they find it more fulfilling if their kids no longer need to work in the mining area. Although one can earn from ASGM and tunnel mining, permanent jobs in private or government institutions are given more appraisal. As the participants in the FDG reiterate, life in Ga-ang mines can be difficult – there are risks, and one has to adjust to the highly reflexive schedule in the community. Interestingly, one participant hoped that her husband could control his drinking habit. This is a line, which speaks of the less ideal situation and relations in the household. Although there was no mention of GBV, one may say that a concomitant side to the wish is that the habit will not lead to actual gender-based violence in her family.¹²⁸ This is a point that also needs a follow-through inquiry.

¹²⁶ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹²⁷ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

¹²⁸ FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

- 3) Community. The participants in the FGD all agree that there is a sense of unity in their community. This is a reality, which they all hope to still see and experience in the future. As part of their commitment to this notion of communal or participatory living, they envision their involvement in activities that are beyond the interests of the household. For instance, a participant expressed her desire to play a part in the Saturday collective cleaning and greening activities, to be more involved and active in the meetings of women organization like KALIPI, and even provide musical instruments to the a youth church organization. With these involvements, one can sense the participants' appreciation of the community life in Ga-ang and in their barangays, and realization that they too need to aggressively pitch-in to sustain the community spirit.¹²⁹

Given the three-fold dreams and aspirations of the participants in the FGD, one can surmise the simplicity and depth of their vision for themselves, their families, and community. Such dreams can be reckoned as authentic expressions and reflections of the capacities that the participants and that of other women possess in assisting the members of their families and the community to fulfill each other's dreams. The participants are also convinced that their efforts and contributions will cascade and bear fruit in the achievements of their children, family, and the community. There is a strong sense of clarity to how their future beholds.

Summary

The focus group discussion of women engaged in ASGM in Ga-ang mines functioned as a focal point for the sharing of narratives that helped describe women's spaces, experiences in the household and in livelihood engagements, perspectives on conditions that help prevent instances of GBV in the community, and dreams and aspirations. These personal stories-accounts were generously communicated, which is reflective of the participants' commitment to help represent women's voices in Ga-ang mines and in Balbalan municipality.

For the spaces that women occupy in the mining area, and in their barangay, the FGD generated these locations where women usually gather: (1) Ga-ang mines, (2) Mining Camps, (3) Health Centers, (4) Saturday Cleaning Activities, (5) Farm Lots and Gardening Plots, and (6) Women's Monthly Meetings. In these spaces, women demonstrate and share their capacities, and the values that they uphold. Are these spaces marginal? This module revealed how the participants assert their contribution to the flourishing of the mining community and their barangays. This is the reason why the participants believe that the spaces that accommodate women are transformed into enabling and even ordered areas. This goes to show that women recognize the impact and worth of their presence in such spaces in the community. Does the community acknowledge their contributions? The pro-women rules and regulations of the BBA and in the municipality speak volumes of the respect that these institutions accord to women in Ga-ang and in their respective barangays.

With regards to household commitments and activities, the discussion of the participants paved way for the articulation of these points: (1) Temporary Households in Ga-ang Mines, (2) Households in the Barangay with their Families, (3) Time Management, and (4) Motherhood. With these notions, the participants underscored the flexibility of time within households. This is an anticipative disposition, which regulates the women's mind-set as they intersect in various activities in the mining area, or in the households in the barangay. In Ga-ang mines, for instance, one should be ready to leave work in the household to engage in ASGM especially when there are productive tunnels. In the household in the barangay, mothers are also expected to maximize their time with their families. In both engagements, what the FGD reveals is the participants' strong-willed and all-embracing capacities, which takes root upon their identity as mothers. This identity is the reason why women will always find time for everything – even if they think that time is never enough, for the sake of their children and families.

¹²⁹FGD notes, October 9, 2014.

The sharing on women's livelihood engagements specified these income-generating undertakings: (1) Small-Scale Gold Mining in Ga-ang, (2) Vending and *Sari-Sari* Stores, (3) Rice Farming and Vegetable Gardening, (4) Pottery, and (5) Barter. With these economic endeavors, the participants showcase their creativity in search of resources that can help address the needs of their families and communities. This is one reason why the participants emphasize the values of initiative, hard work, and discipline. These are the same virtues and habits needed so women can take advantage of the numerous opportunities for income generation in Ga-ang mines and in the community as a whole. Is there a reason for women not to earn? Given the natural resources in the area, and the generosity of individuals in sharing their skills, the participants think that there is none. Given the overlapping interests, tasks and responsibilities of women, are they perpetuating the multiple burden that women are socially conditioned to carry?¹³⁰ This is a query that needs further reflection.

For GBV cases, the participants are convinced that perpetrators of such forms of violence are highly guarded and heavily punished in the mining community and in the barangays. This community sentiment and outlook against GBV help condition the participant's mind-set that they are and can be protected from such abusive and demeaning situations. In addition, the discussion in this module highlights the presence of the traditions of the Banao Tribe, which has piped in constructive influence to the way women are approached and treated in the mining area and the community. This is one way of showcasing how the Banao sensibilities regulate the transactions and arrangements with women in the community, which somehow explains why the FGD was unable to identify instances of GBV in the neighborhood and in their families.

Finally, the module on women's dreams and aspirations revolved around the way women imagine a better version of themselves, their families, and the community. For the participants, seeing their children go to school and graduating with a degree is more than enough reason to continue toiling in the uncomfortable, and at times risky conditions of ASGM. The discussion underscored that such steadfastness can only come from the heart and mind of a mother. While a few participants hoped for personal rewards for the manual work and daily grind that they have exerted for years in the mining area, they still are convinced that they have significant roles to play in sustaining the unity of the community. This goes to show that in their dreams and aspirations, the participants reveal that they have a good grasp of the need to value the interconnection between the self, the family, and the community. Will the participants shy away from a bright and happy future? The participants agree that their aspirations, through the help of artisanal small-scale gold mining in Ga-ang, will soon take the form of concrete realities.

¹³⁰ Marilyn B. Barua-Yap, "Engendering Development: An Overview of the Philippine Experience," in *Review of Women's Studies* Vol. 13 No. 2 (Quezon City: UP Center for Women's Studies, 2003) 14.

Photo-Documentation



Description: Some of the participants in the focus group discussion in a residence in Sesec-an, which is also steps away from the golden gate station of Banao Bodong Association.



Description: A participant in the focus group discussion sharing and clarifying her notes to a fellow participant.



Description: Gold Panning in Ga-ang mines using the mercury free method.



Description: This marker is found beside a road going to Sesec-an, which stipulates the call to eradicate mercury in gold panning in Ga-ang mines.



Description: This tarpaulin highlights the strict rule of the Banao Bodong Association in view of the transport, and use of liquor in Ga-ang mines. This is a rule, which women miners are pleased to note.



Description: A recycling shed in Sesec-an, which is in obedience to the barangay ordinance on waste management. As a rule, every household is expected to manage its own waste.

(Photos taken by Gelli Aiza Baluyan)

Photo-Documentation



Description: These photos are sections of the satellite office of Banao Bodong Association which is strategically stationed at the golden gate. This office is manned by a marshal who screens and checks items and individuals who are from or going to the Ga-ang mines. (Photos taken by: Gelli Aiza Baluya)



Description: Photos during the presentation and validation of key research results on the situation and roles of women miners in Ga-ang mines, Kalinga in Tabuk City done in December 2014. (Photos taken by Gelli Aiza Baluya)

PART V

THE SITUATION AND ROLES OF WOMEN IN ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING COMMUNITIES

IN JOSE PANGANIBAN, CAMARINES NORTE, AND BALBALAN, KALINGA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

An Overview

This section provides a comparative account and analysis of the experiences, and narratives of participants in the Focus Group Discussions on the situations and roles of women engaged in ASGM in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and in Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga. After describing at length the spaces that women occupy in the community, the roles that women miners fulfill in the household, the kinds of livelihood engagements that women do, the types of gender-based violence that they have experienced or know about, and the dreams-aspirations of women miners, the big task at hand is to determine the similarities, and dissimilarities between these narratives from the

two communities. By looking at the points of convergence and divergence, the discussion is disposed to infer on possible sufficient or causal conditions for the similarities, and dissimilarities between women's situations and roles in the mining communities. These conditions, may then function as our scientific estimation on the reasons why such patterns of experiences are in place. To facilitate the identification of such points, here is a taxonomic presentation of the key points that emerged in the FGD in the two communities, which shall be particularized according to the five domains-themes of the research queries:

A Taxonomy of the Situations and Roles of Women Engaged in ASGM in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga		
	Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga
Women's Spaces	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) School and Day Care Centers, 2) Lending Groups-Institutions, 3) Areas of Betting Games, 4) Health Centers and School's Clean-Up Drive, 5) Stores (<i>Tindahan</i>), and 6) Sections of <i>Tacoma</i> and <i>Tigbi</i> Rivers, and <i>Mambulao Bay</i>. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ga-ang mines, 2) Mining Camps, 3) Health Centers, 4) Saturday Cleaning Activities, 5) Farm Lots and Gardening Plots, and 6) Women's Monthly Meetings.

	Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte	Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga
Women and the Household	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Women Should Not Get Sick, 2) Women's Income is Additional Income, 3) Budgeting, and 4) Women are Like Unpaid House Helpers, 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Temporary Households in Ga-ang Mines, 2) Households in the Barangay with their Families, 3) Time Management, and 4) Motherhood.
Women's Livelihood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Small-Scale Gold Mining in <i>Patiao</i>, Luklukan Norte, and Tibgi River, 2) Small Vending Activities like Selling Food, and Snacks, 3) Risks Include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Mercury (<i>asoge</i>), (b) Toxics from the rivers streams and sea, (c) Physical pain and discomfort, skin rashes and headaches, (d) Losing one's livelihood with the possible banning of ASGM in Mambulo Bay, (e) Risks to children 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Small-Scale Gold Mining in Ga-ang, 2) Vending and Sari-Sari Stores, 3) Rice Farming and Vegetable Gardening, 4) Pottery, and 5) Barter, 6) Risks Include: (a) For ASGM - asthma and allergy, back ache, sleep deprivation, headache, skin rashes, burns, pulmonary edema, at times difficulty in breathing and pain on the throat caused by nitric acid, (b) For Vending - Bankruptcy, (c) For Gardening and Farming - Typhoon and Siltation, (d) For Pottery - Slight Burns and Rashes
Women and Gender-Based Violence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Economic, Psychological Abuse of the Mother, and Child Abuse, 2) Incest, 3) Battered Wife 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continuous Training from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and LGU 2) Individuals have Discipline, 3) Men Fear of God, 4) Strong Implementation of Barangay Ordinance against GBV, 5) Banao Bodong Association (BBA) Policies, 6) Banao Customs and Traditions
Women's Dreams and Aspirations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) College Education and Degree for their Children, 2) Alternative Livelihood Projects, 3) Minahang Bayan, 4) Training on Women's Rights, 5) Clean Water and Evacuation Areas 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Self - Vacation, Work Abroad, Travel, 2) Family - Children graduating from College, and Passing Board Exams, 3) Community - Maintain Unity, and Actively Participate in Regular Activities

Comparative Analysis

- 1) Women's Spaces. The narratives of the participants in the FGD in the two communities show that there is a significant number of women taking part in artisanal small-scale gold mining activities. In Jose Panganiban, women who do not have jobs or regular sources of income primarily depend on ASGM, which they do in the *Mambulao Bay*, and in *Tigbi* and *Tacoma* Rivers. This is part of their daily grind mainly done for sustenance of basic household needs like rice and food for meals. In Ga-ang, most women who are engaged in ASGM do it for similar reasons – to help provide for the needs of their families. In Ga-ang, however, many women consider ASGM as a reliable source of income, and an almost full-time job especially when they live in the mining area. This is the reason why women in Ga-ang treat ASGM more of an occupation, since it is capable of generating a reliable range of income that can address family needs, not just food but the education pursuits of their children. This difference in the way women view their spaces in the two mining communities is reflective of the dissimilarity in the way women figure in the mining activities in Jose Panganiban, and in Ga-ang. Hence, the similarity in space, which is the mining area, also becomes the space of divergence.

Another similarity is the health center as a space where women regularly congregate. In the two mining communities, women carry and fulfill the task of bringing their children to health centers for regular check-up or immunization. Men do not basically share in fulfilling such parental health related responsibility. In both mining communities, women admit that as mothers, they have the primal accountability of ensuring that their children's health are taken cared of. In Jose Panganiban, the discussion on health centers is also closely associated with school centers. In this municipality, women miners need to find time to bring their children to school and fetch them after class. This is a duty that they expect themselves to accomplish. In Ga-ang, however, there was no mention of mothers needing to ferry or bring their children to school. As a participant in the FGD mentioned, children can just proceed to their schools, since it is safe for them to do so. Mothers are not worried if children walk on their own to school centers.

Women miners in the two areas also fill-in roles in community activities. In Ga-ang, women take part in Saturday communal cleaning schedules, while in Jose Panganiban, women help clean the schools where their children study. This commonality, however, are done for different reasons. On the one hand, women in Jose Panganiban participate in cleaning activities in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the conditional cash transfer program of the government, commonly termed as 4 P's (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program). In Ga-ang, women miners involve themselves in community cleaning activity, since they want to contribute to the wellbeing of the place, and find it important to help preserve the integrity of the environment. This contrast in reason may mean that women miners in Ga-ang mine are still influenced or conditioned by the Banao tribe's understanding of their responsibility to nature. Another possible basis is that their sense of community participation in Ga-ang maybe fuelled by their participation in women's organization, like KALIPI. This may further suggest that women in Ga-ang are organized and may enjoy a certain leverage in determining the processes that regulate the activities in the community. This sense of value accorded to nature, and the unity of women are features that are yet to be strengthened in Jose Panganiban.

Another stark difference between women's spaces in the two areas is that women miners in Jose Panganiban locate themselves in betting areas and loaning institutions. These are spaces that did not emerge in the FGD with the women miners in Ga-ang. The presence of such spaces in Jose Panganiban somehow validates the point earlier raised that women who do ASGM in Ga-ang are more economically empowered, and have the resources needed to address the growing demands of the household. In Jose Panganiban, women, however, become vulnerable to betting games and loans offered by institutions to help temporarily defray costs in the household. This sense of susceptibility is actually abused as loaning institutions peg the loan rates between ten to twenty percent, which even adds to the economic burden that women regularly face in their household.

- 2) Women and the Household. The discussion on the roles and situation of women in the household in Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang, Balbalan reveal that the household is pre-dominantly a woman's territory. This is the reason why women who do ASGM in Jose Panganiban feel overburdened by the interfacing, and at times crisscrossing tasks in the household to the point of comparing themselves to unpaid house helpers. While they do their best to properly manage the households, they feel that their efforts are unappreciated. This is a lack that somehow makes the burden of fulfilling the tasks in the household even more difficult to handle.

In Ga-ang, Balbalan, the women miners also experience the burden of attending to the needs of the household. In the mining area, however, managing the household or camps means opening economic opportunities and establishing social relations with other miners. This is a burden, which they would want to face or deal with because in so doing, they find such involvements possibly economically rewarding. With regards to the way the household with their families are managed, the women miners in Ga-ang think of it as a space that is less busy compared to their stay in the mining area. Their narrative that they can choose to delay attending to the chores in the household somehow supports this difference. This stance is telling of the way women miners in Ga-ang think of themselves in the household space, and the capacity to assign work to other family members, including men even if it only mean washing their own clothes.

Is the household a shared space between men and women? In both communities, the share of men in the household is confined to providing money for the needs of the family. This means that tasks like parenting, budgeting and household management generally fall on the shoulders of women. Since the women miners in Ga-ang try to find a balance between the household in the mining camp, and the household with their families, they should be perceived to having more burden and difficulty in budgeting their time and resources vis-à-vis the needs of their children. But it appears that such estimation is not the case. The women miners in Ga-ang have a sense of leverage in the way their

finances are managed, and in the way they figure in the roles of the household. This leverage seems to come from the steady and at times huge income from the mining area. Is there a big difference in the way mining is managed and conducted in Ga-ang, Balbalan and Jose Panganiban. While women in Jose Panganiban do their best to earn money from ASGM, it appears that there are social structures that do not enable women miners in this municipality to carry on with their household responsibilities with a sense of assurance and confidence.

- 3) Women's Livelihood. Do women miners in Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang, Balbalan have livelihood options? Based on the provided taxonomy of their situations and roles, the economic options for women in Jose Panganiban are less compared to the income generating opportunities for women Ga-ang. While both communities have ASGM as an economic option, the hard work that women exert in Ga-ang are well compensated by the mining activity itself. An important factor that makes such an advantage possible is the fact that Ga-ang mines belong to the community. It falls within the Banao ancestral domain. Unlike in Jose Panganiban where land is privately owned, the women miners in Ga-ang have a close access to the gold resource itself. Although they cannot directly engage in tunnel mining, the quality of rocks that these women miners collect cannot be categorically considered as excesses or trash from tunnel areas. This stand as reason why women miners in the FGD sometimes claim that their income can be at par with some of the men miners in the community especially if one knows how to properly pan gold using the mercury free method.

Because the hard toil that women miners in Ga-ang exert is well reciprocated, they can initiate or sustain other livelihood engagements like putting up a vending store, and even allow male miners to purchase items on credit. This is a feature that does not take shape in the economic transactions between men and women in Jose Panganiban where women usually apply for loan on the husband's behalf. With this role reversal, it can be said that the women miners in Ga-ang do not simply play marginal roles.

Their hard work is evident and predictive, which conditions relations like men requesting installment payment schemes to vending businesses managed and maintained by women. Is it possible for women miners in Jose Panganiban – who also engage in ambulant food vending – allow a customer to obtain their items on credit? It seems that their economic situations do not permit this. If women miners in Jose Panganiban do sideline jobs like food selling, there is no room for credit, since the capital is just enough to support the next cycle of expenses. This is a disposition, which is reflective of the financial and economic struggle of women who rely on ASGM in the municipality of Jose Panganiban.

Aside from ASGM and vending stores, the women in Ga-ang also find it important to sustain backyard vegetable gardens. The community expects households to have such gardens as part of a family's leisure or income generating activity. In Balbalan, there is also a social stigma, which families try to avoid – to be branded as lazy and unproductive. Although sharing of resources like vegetables is a welcome gesture, the overriding assumption is that one cannot ask for vegetables from a neighbor if one has not planted vegetables in one's plot. With this yardstick, women miners also figure ways to plant vegetables near their households to address the social-communal expectation, provide healthy meals for the family, save money, and even have extra source of income if the yield is sold. In Jose Panganiban, some women miners also have their vegetable plots. They plant *camote* tops, okra, tomato, and squash. A comparable difference, however, can be seen in the way these plots are made and managed. This may have to do with the fact that the *Ibanao* have rice fields and that their knowledge when it comes to planting has been traditionally part of their lives and customs. Should women plant vegetables in their backyards? The degrees of urgency differ between the two mining communities.

The threats that women miners confront in the two communities as they conduct their livelihood commitments are both alarming. The list of risks that women miners in Ga-ang are well accounted for and gives you the impression that they face more risks than women miners in Jose

Panganiban. To an extent, this is true, since women miners in Ga-ang are involved in many livelihood activities. The rate of involvement becomes proportional to their exposure to risks. But another interesting way of interpreting such list is that the Ga-ang women miners are more aware of the kind of risks that they face when they choose to be involved in an economic activity. This can be reflective of their experiences as they try to find the perfect livelihood partner to the ASGM in Ga-ang.

In Jose Panganiban, their awareness of the risk of ASGM to their children is actually commendable, since it is something that they have reflected upon given their assessment of the toxicity of the *Tacoma* and *Tigbi* Rivers, and *Mambulo Bay*. The question, however, that mothers in this municipality need to face is if they can protect their children from such exposures. This is perhaps one reason why some women who do the daily grind of ASGM desire for jobs that will no longer require them to dip themselves in river streams, or sea water, because in so doing, they can protect their kids from the toxics that such places carry. This may mean that the mother can be reprieved from the worry if her body is transferring the toxics that she has been exposed to through the meals that she cooked, if children play in river streams while she is doing ASGM, and if she will remain healthy given the degree of her exposures to various toxics found in river streams, and in the sea.

- 4) Women and Gender-Based Violence. For this section, another cause for concern amongst women miners in Jose Panganiban is the presence of GBV against women, and child abuse. In this municipality, a few accounts of physical, verbal, economic and psychological abuse were shared, which were clearly identified in the mind map of the community. Also, some stories of child abuse and incest were imparted and discussed. Although the number of cases was not alarming, this may mean that there are more unreported cases or there are truly only few cases in the municipality.

What were the possible reasons that contributed to the realities of GBV, and child abuse in the communities? In the FGD, one possible reason is the presence

of drug use in the community. The relation between mining and drugs may need to be properly established, but the presence of drugs may not be a far out possibility given that mining also intimates with huge income especially when tunnels generate high-grade gold. Another probable cause is a sense of weak cohesion within women's association in the community. This is an area that may need attention, and cultivation. In a community where women are well organized can be of help as it concretely and symbolically reminds everyone that women can take refuge in such organization, and that this group can file charges against the perpetrators of GBV. Another possible explanation is the absence of economic security in households, and the livelihood spaces that are open for women lack any assurance of tenure. Given this scenario, women are forced to hang-on as they suffer from the presence of gender-based violence especially with the awareness that there are relatively few options for women in the community.

The case is different in Ga-ang mines as the FGD only made anecdotal mention of a case of sexual harassment in the mining area. Although the case was immediately attended to and clarified, the FGD claimed that there are no cases of GBV in the municipality. From a realistic and sensible point of view, it seems improbable that there is such an absence. The burden of proof now belongs to the community in demonstrating that indeed there are no cases of gender-based violence. In the FGD, the plausible reasons that protect women from GBV revolved around these three key points: (a) traditions-customs, and rules from BBA, (b) continuous trainings from the local government, and (c) discipline – social and religious. According to the participants, the combination of these three conditions creates an atmosphere where women are acknowledged and respected for their roles and contributions. The Banao traditions, for instance, help safeguard the integrity and value of women. Since Ga-ang mines is part of the Banao ancestral domain, it is logical that the Banao traditions will significantly regulate the activities in the mining community. The trainings initiated by the local government also help magnify the necessity of allowing women figure in the processes of the community. This perhaps explain why women miners actively participate in policy-making processes in

general assemblies of the BBA, which for instance, explicitly bans pornographic materials, and liquor, which are usually linked to men's habits, and interests. Discipline is the resulting blend of the presence of traditions and trainings received. This is an attribute that the FGD participants hold as also regulative of meaningful and respect-filled relations amongst women, men and children.

- 5) Women's Dreams and Aspirations. The women miners in Jose Panganiban and Ga-ang share in the dream of seeing their children finish a college degree and land in more stable jobs. This means that in both communities they would not want to see their children take part in mining. Even in Ga-ang where income generation is more reliable than in Jose Panganiban, the women miners understand that there are limitations to such natural resource. This is why some Ga-ang women miners hope that they can still engage in mining until their children obtain their degrees. In Jose Panganiban, the women also do not want to envision their children following in their footsteps – doing the daily grind of work. They look forward to better days with their children, which usually means working outside the mining vicinity.

Aside from education, the women miners in Jose Panganiban underscore the immediacy of having alternative livelihood opportunities. As they realize the level of toxicity in the places where they work, and the possible imposition of the local government on the banning of ASGM in rivers and seas, they hope that the government will deal with them honestly and seriously so they can be prepared to meet the demands of life especially during livelihood transition period. Is the future bright enough for women miners in Jose Panganiban? It appears that they need further clarification on the options that the local government has prepared for them. This worry, however, is not felt in the way women miners in Ga-ang envision their future. For them, as long as the existing rules and set-ups are not altered, they see the near possibility of accomplishing their tasks of providing for their families and enrolling their children to colleges or universities. The status quo between women miners in Jose Panganiban and Ga-ang is a case of contrasts.

But what unites the two contexts of women's dreams and aspirations is the ability to identify what women need, be it in the primary or more basic levels like clean water, safe place for evacuation, trainings on women's rights and issues as in the case of Jose Panganiban, or more advanced aspiration like maintaining the unity in the community in Ga-ang, the vision from the two groups and two locations are good reminders of the things that women value: (a) a safe place for everyone, and (b) healthy social relations within the household, and the community. With these conditions, women miners actually reveal the heart of a mother – that what is really important is a place where there are few threats, lesser constraints, and where bonds between neighbors are fostered and nourished. It is in such conditions that mothers, not just as women miners, try to envision their dreams and aspirations for the self, family, and the community. This is the imaginative space where the participants from Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang interface.

Summary

The study shows that there are similarities and dissimilarities between the situation and roles of women involved in ASGM in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, and Ga-ang, Balbalan, Kalinga. These resemblances, and points of divergence can function as locations where one can reveal the way women miners figure themselves in their respective communities.

An important point to consider that conditions the difference between communities is that the women miners in Ga-ang are privileged to work within the ancestral domain of the Banao tribe as it sets the tone with the way structures in the community are arranged, and the ideals that govern community relations. Such feature, in an important way becomes regulative of the spaces, roles, economic options, the non-presence of gender-based violence, and dreams-aspirations of women miners in Ga-ang. In this respect, the Banao tribe traditions are actually in place, acknowledged and respected in the community, which empower women miners in the Ga-ang community, and are assured of a safe environment that tries its best not to discriminate women's capacities.

Such is the kind of situation and setting that women miners in Jose Panganiban hope for. In a place where land is privately owned by a few, where gold resources are siphoned by the interests of the land-owners, and financiers, and at times players, women figure outside such social structures which leaves them out of the negotiating table. This is the social reality that somehow explains why women in this community find the present arrangement of economic options in their communities disadvantageous to the interests of their children and family. Despite not falling short of building on their strengths, the kind of work that they invest-in are not humanizing and assisting enough. It traps them to a day job that does not give any guarantee of economic relief, and does not provide openings for development. Their work in *Mambulao Bay*, and in *Tacoma* and *Tigbi* Rivers do not even tap their creativity and potentialities. This is why women doing ASGM aspire for enabling arrangements where they can be freed or released from the present situation. Despite these difficulties, their dreams and aspirations, however, point to the need to re-configure the way mining relations and structures are organized, since it is the same configuration that leaves their children vulnerable to the risks that they do not deserve.

At the end of this summary, the women miners involved in ASGM in Ga-ang may now find more reasons to value and appreciate the enabling habits, values, rules and traditions that currently protect and further their interests as women and mothers to their families in the mining community, and the municipality. These are resources that also favor the interests and development of women in their households and barangays. For women miners wrapped-up in ASGM in Jose Panganiban, they may need to wait a little bit longer armed with the hope that constructive changes in the way mining sites are managed will finally include their interests, will listen to women's voices, will develop women's capacities, and will open opportunities to women that are not necessarily tied-up to artisanal small-scale gold mining.

PART VI

CONCLUSION

- 1) This study on the situation and roles of women in artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte showed the kind of space that women occupy in the informal economy, the consequent feminization of labor, the multiple burden that women carry, and the tragic presence of gender-based violation of women's rights. Their narratives concretely reveal the marginal, and often unbecoming locations that women are forced to fill-in and bear for the sake of the welfare of their family.

Subsistence somehow encapsulates the interfacing issues and problems of women in Jose Panganiban. Their stories of struggles, and hopes imply that they are pushed against the wall, forced to deal with manual-intensive work of panning gold in river streams, and in the Mambulao Bay to earn money that can at least guarantee rice as food on the table. Subsistence, maintenance, and survival all synonymously describe the core of women's reality in the municipality, and condition their reasons for unwearyingly upholding ASGM. The use of mercury also gives the impression that it provides the easiest way of panning gold from less marketable ores. Mercury, in this regard, is reckoned as an ally that makes their task less difficult, and less labor intensive. When inquired if they are willing to abandon the use of mercury in gold panning, it seems that there is ambivalence if it will create significant changes in income generation, or if it will guarantee economic relief. This uncertainty somehow points to another side of their disposition – avoiding changes that may only magnify current economic ambiguities. Perhaps, the concept of mercury free methods in gold panning should be coupled with real options, and this may imply structural changes with the way mining in the municipality has been habitually engaged and perceived.

- 2) The report on the situation and roles of women miners in Ga-ang mines importantly revealed the overarching presence of an enabling collective spirit – the community's assertion of their right to self-determination. By virtue of the Banao Tribe's ancestral domain, and the constitutionally conditioned rights accorded to the community in defining and deciding their activities, the Ga-ang mines has been transformed into an empowering host to the efforts

of women who take part in artisanal small-scale gold mining as an entry point to other economic opportunities. In this community, a participatory and united association, Banao Bodong Association, also functions as an effective and gender sensitive ally that underscores and upholds values, and that can guarantee and safeguard the interests of women.¹³¹

While women carve their spaces in a relatively male dominated mining community in Ga-ang, women steadily find their niches and are disposed to spread their expertise in helping improve the quality of life in the mining area. In Ga-ang, women experiment in various transactions – like vending stores to increase opportunities for additional income, and figure in arrangements or situations that may give them the opportunity to reinforce collective values like sharing and unity. It is in this respect that women who are engaged in ASGM in Ga-ang mines are no longer confined to small-scale mining. Now, they see it their task to remind the rest of the Banao tribe and the privileged barangays on the meaning of these key points: (a) working and living for the wellbeing of the community, (b) upholding the integrity of the environment, and (c) the importance of acknowledging the voice of women in a community.

- 3) Between women miners in Ga-ang and Jose Panganiban, the former begins with the economic need to engage in ASGM to provide for the needs of the family. This entry point, however, has been built upon and used as stepping-stone in unlocking new livelihood opportunities that they would want to experiment on. This means that from ASGM, women in Ga-ang mines have steadily carved economic opportunities that make their stay in the mining area more productive. But in the case of Jose Panganiban, women miners who are involved in ASGM are unfortunately trapped in the situation. This goes to say that their hard work does not reward them or open-up new economically enabling spaces. It appears that the mining habits and structures in the community and municipality bind and trap them to the daily grind of small-scale gold mining. Should women in Jose Panganiban aspire for better days ahead? Perhaps, some nuggets of inspiration and lessons can be learned from the way

¹³¹ Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) underscores the holistic approach to the issues of women in indigenous communities, as specified in Kambels' (2012) *A Guide to Indigenous Women's Rights under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 36.

the Banao Tribe, and the privileged barangays in Balbalan govern mining activities, and from the collective rules and communal spirit that substantively uphold and empower the interests of women artisanal small-scale gold miners.

- 4) Should ASGM be equated to a space of women discrimination? The case study of the mining communities in Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang, Balbalan reveal diverging locations and experiences of women miners. In the case of Jose Panganiban, ASGM do stand as a space of gender discrimination, since women have assumed such activity out of poverty. Clearly, the rights of women miners to enabling options and safe working conditions are violated. Such a position has also conditioned various forms of gender-based violence as men occupy higher position, and are given with higher stakes in the socio-economic structures of the municipality. In the case of Ga-ang mines, ASGM do not necessarily account as a space where women are violated and prejudiced. The socio-economic pillars of the indigenous community function as the enabling host to the needs and concerns of women. This is a location where ASGM only serves as an entry point to other livelihood and meaningful opportunities. Where the community is mindful of their duty to each other, and the integrity of the environment for future generations, women help ensure that their children can still enjoy the resources that they are currently enjoying and blessed with. This mind-set clearly sets the tone in the way mining in Ga-ang is managed, and in the way women figure in such community.

PART VII

VALIDATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research on the situation and roles of women engaged in artisanal small scale gold mining was presented to the two communities for validation. In Tabuk City, a validation exercise was participated by women representatives from Ga-ang Mines, and the board of trustees of Banao Bodong Association. In Jose Panganiban, the validation was joined by the participants of the focus group discussion, and it was conducted in the session hall of the municipality. These validation activities were done in December 2014. Questions, suggestions and clarifications were expressed by the representatives from the two mining communities and the productive discussion highlighted these points:

1) Livelihood opportunities for women miners in Jose Panganiban and Ga-ang Mines were central to the way women view their spaces, and roles in their respective communities. In Jose Panganiban, the participants reiterated the point that women generally do not have viable economic options that dispose more productive engagements. While it is important to take note of the steady entry of women in crucial government posts in the municipality, women miners in general are confined to small scale gold mining as their livelihood means. This leaves women miners in the municipality with their constant hope that other livelihood opportunities can be opened for them. In Ga-ang Mines, Balbalan, women miners noted that the economic viability of mining is a feature that they are happy to underscore. For them, small-scale gold mining in Ga-ang provides adequate economic compensation. The financial stability that small scale gold mining provides gives them the inspiration to dream more for the future of their families, and the community. This is a feature, which the members of the board of trustees of the BBA, which were largely constituted by men, also stressed. For them, women miners in the mining community play indispensable roles, which should be properly acknowledged.

2) The discussion on gender-based violence against women took different turns in the validation activity in the two communities. In Ga-ang Mines, the stance that women are respected and are not oppressed was re-affirmed. A single case of GBV was, however, mentioned but it was clarified that it was not committed by a member of the BBA. No other instance of GBV was recorded since the first case. A participant in the validation emphasized the central role of the values of the Banao tribal community. This is the core reason why women in the mining community are respected, and women efforts are supported. The presence of a strong and organized women association was indicative of women's initiative and intent to further provide opportunities for women development. In Jose Panganiban, the participants noted the presence of gender and development activities like seminars and projects which were conducted in the community. For this feature, there was a shared stance that there is a need to strengthen such efforts to protect and empower women as there are cases of gender based violence in the municipality. Although the representatives stressed that the number of cases are not that many, a new case of GBV in *Patiao* was shared in the validation exercise, and still reckoned as confidential. In hindsight, the emergent case of GBV and the notion of having few cases of GBV in the municipality may point to the need to support and organize activities to increase GBV awareness, women's rights and issues, and to strengthen the cohesion of women's organization in the community.

In relation to women empowerment, the members of the board of trustees of BBA expressed a desire to further understand the different faces of GBV. This idea may be indicative of a need to conduct Gender and Development (GAD) Awareness for Men. As many of the GAD seminars are oriented towards women's issues and interests, seminars on men and GAD maybe productive exercises so men can further qualify and comprehend the roots of patriarchy, and gender discrimination in society. Seminars for women and men, although such activities were not straightforwardly mentioned in the validation exercise may also precondition the possible improvement of relations between women and men in the municipality of Jose Panganiban.

- 3) The possible formation and legal recognition of a *Minahan ng Bayan* in Ga-ang mines was recognized as key in sustaining the efforts of the mining community to provide productive opportunities for women, the protection of the environment, and the non-use of mercury and other toxic substances in mining processes. The same aspiration is shared by women miners in Jose Panganiban. Women miners in this municipality also look forward to the implementation of such concept, and the economic benefits that such arrangement could bring to their families. If the structure of a *Minahan ng Bayan* can be implemented in Jose Panganiban, the participants in the validation exercise also see the possibility of women leading the way in the eventual banning of mercury and other toxics in mining processes in their communities.
- 4) The two communities approved the publication of the results of this research in the local, national, and international levels. The participants from Jose Panganiban, and Ga-ang Mines, Balbalan recognize the possible insights and lessons that can be learned from the experiences of women in their respective communities. While women small scale miners in Jose Panganiban are experiencing more challenges than the women miners in Ga-ang, the participants recognize the importance of importing their narratives as possible bases in crafting policies and ordinances that the municipality may formulate, which are hopefully capable of addressing the issues that women miners face in the community. Since women miners in Ga-ang are better supported and protected by their communities, their experiences may stand as wells of inspiration for women miners and communities in other parts of the country or the world who desire to work together for the advancement of women interests and protection of women's rights and privileges.

REFERENCES

- Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao Inc. (AFRIM). 2012. *A Background Study on the Small-Scale Mining Operations in Benguet and South Cotabato and their Impact on the Economy, the Environment, and the Community*. Bantay Kita.
- Baluyan, G. A. 2014. Focus Group Discussion Documenter's Notes, Sesec-an, Talalang, Kalinga, October 9-10, 2014.
- Barua-Yap, M. B. 2003. "Engendering Development: An Overview of the Philippine Experience." *Review of Women's Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1.
- Berg, B. L. 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 4th edition*. Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.
- Cabral, E. I. 2006. *Statement of the Secretary of Department of Social Welfare and Development, Republic of the Philippines, at the 36th Session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*. November 26. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/36sess>
- Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods Approaches, 3rd edition*. California: Sage Publications.
- Eftimie, A., Heller, K., Strongman, J. Hinton, J., Lahiri-Dutt, K., & Mutemeri, N. 2012. *Gender Dimensions of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: A Rapid Assessment Toolkit*. World Bank Group's Oil, Gas, and Mining Unit.
- Francisco, J. 2005. "Engendering the WTO? What Else." *Review of Women's Studies: Special Issue on Gender, Globalization, Culture and the Economy*. Vol. 15, No. 2.
- Illo, J. F. I. 2005. "Prospects for People Living in Poverty to Participate in Growth-Oriented Enterprises." *Review of Women's Studies: Special Issue on Gender, Globalization, Culture, and the Economy*, Vol. 15, No. 2.
- Kambel, E. 2012. *A Guide to Indigenous Women's Rights under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 2nd edition*. UK: Forest Peoples Programme.
- National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCR-FW). 1995. *Filipino Women Issues and Trends*. Mandaluyong City: Asian Development Bank.
- Pasimio, J. A. 2013. *Mining and Violence against Rural and Indigenous Women in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Lilak - Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights.
- Pavo, R. R. 2014. Focus Group Discussion Notes, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, October 3-4, 2014.
- _____. 2014. Focus Group Discussion Notes, Sesec-an, Talalang, Kalinga, October 9-10, 2014.
- Republic of the Philippines. 1997. *Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA)*.
- _____. 1991. Republic Act No. 7076: People's Small-Scale Mining Act.
- Roldan, R. 2014. Focus Group Discussion Documenter's Notes, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, October 3, 2014.
- Sarmiento, M. G. R. 2014. Focus Group Discussion Documenter's Notes, Jose Panganiban, Camarines Norte, October 4, 2014.
- Scott, W. H. 1994. *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society*. Quezon City: ADMU Press.
- Sen, A. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.



www.bantoxics.org