

Peter Walpole on Indigenous Peoples and Mining in Philippines[1]



Sango: Are mines required to have any sort of agreement with the community?

Peter: Well, not for those mines under the previous mining law before 1995. Most of these mines are closed. With the new Mining Act, consultation and agreement is necessary. What is very difficult to deal with is that neither mining nor the social engagement is a simple process.

In the Philippines, communities or villages, can, depending on where we go, be very mixed. There may be indigenous peoples and migrants together in some of these areas. They live together or sometimes people who have migrated into the area and occupy the larger villages.

The indigenous people may live beyond the *barrios* (today politically this is the *barangay*, the smallest political unit) in *sitios* (hamlets) and therefore they have little or no political representation, they don't have power. When we walk around and find them, and talk with them, we actually find that they may have emigrated from the present centre that is now occupied by others. So, when we say ancestral domain in the Philippines, what do we actually mean? We look at where the community is now and what political strength there is to claim it despite what will be excised by more recent population settlements. It's very unrealistic to expect, within a period of 10 years of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), to actually resolve even the inter-cultural disputes, let alone the disputes with society and the fast-tracking of mine exploration.

We are not integrally responding to the needs and the desires of indigenous peoples through IPRA and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). You can't possibly, unless you really turn the laws and institutions of government around to service these people. Working with indigenous peoples requires more than just delineating the boundaries of their present lands and then developing a management plan, which we don't even have for the rest of society. We need a coherent response to basic needs and cultural integrity (for example supporting mother tongue basic education), and you need government to respond to – what is it? 15% of the population? or 13 million people? You've got 13 million people who are still at the bottom end of things. And you expect one Act, one Commission, to respond to 13 million people without any proper links to any other government, any other budget! Now we are seeking to solve these problems by compounding the situation with the international mining investment strategy?

Sango: When there is an active mining interest, what is the significance of

resolving the land interests? Is it so that they can define who gets what share?

Peter: In a sense, this is what motivates it. But it has become more a matter of who has a right to say if the land I live on can be explored or developed as a mine.

After the Marcos era, we had a certain reorientation of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which received a lot of international money for reforestation and community involvement. It was also an effort to devolve and allow the forest lands which are degraded to become part of community forest management. The DENR in the 1990s was also allocating land to some of the indigenous communities.

When people said there should be more done for indigenous communities, the NCIP came in and took over those discussions for IPs. In the meantime very few communities developed the documentation and understanding of government to hold securely the land rights indicated in the Constitution. It has become too complex, and when the process was simplified and realigned it bypassed many of the concerns of IPs. Such forest lands are now the areas for mineral exploration assisted by the same government department through its Mines and Geoscience Bureau (MGB). Both the policies are still weak, the experience limited, and communities have little basis to decide whether to accept or reject mining.

On the other hand, within the government the process did so little at the beginning for capacity building etc., and was so little integrated with government, it has not achieved what it set out to do. Politicisation on the ground, as well as political interest nationally in a quick fix of the economy through mining that will provide rural 'development', leaves much to be desired in terms of nation-building.

Sango: One thing I've heard said in relation to the Native Title Act in Australia is that it gives communities the right to negotiate. Is it similar in the Philippines?

Peter: What is the social communication that is already inherent within our cultural communities in relation to the rest of society? What experience and what exposure do they have to act and be heard in society? What pressures are upon them? Do the courts, the executive, and the legislature actually and coherently respond to these people? Or to what extent is it up to them to stand up for their rights?

So I would say that it's a very different context, which is not surprising. In the Philippines, there is an interrelation of cultures and a mixing with each other but there is limited recognition of access and rights over resources, forest land or water and without these being clarified, there is a powerful and immediate pressure to allocate mineral rights and resources to foreign companies without

delineating local rights. People feel vulnerable, and promises have little rights value in the Philippines.

Sango: How does this affect indigenous political rights in Philippines?

Peter: Only in the Cordillera Administrative Region and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao do the dominant cultural groups have political rights and representation. They have fought for them and continue to fight. Outside of these areas indigenous peoples hold few major positions in Philippine society. They're an exception, but they're there. For those who are in politics they are there as equals, nobody looks down upon them for that, or takes exception. But the fact is that there are very few. So how does an indigenous culture engage?

The Philippine government does not view Indigenous Peoples' movements as a national threat; they are a bother to resource exploitation and maybe an economic threat but not a political threat. IPs are seen as peripheral to the insurgency problem as a few get caught up in it; indigenous peoples have no intention to overturn government. They need greater recognition of where they live and how they can engage more sustainably with broader society, and so are seen as a complication and a nuisance at times.

So when the social arguments get heated, one hears that IP communities are to blame for their poor condition because they will not buy into the grand scheme of national economic development. So implicitly they are being viewed as deserving to be where they are. Others may dismiss them as, "ignorant, lazy and unresponsive of a dutiful national strategy of inclusive national development for society." As one unnamable official once said to me without recognising the consequences of his words: "indigenous peoples are fine as long as they behave like us."



Recognition is hard to establish socially and politically, and the pressures are so great, society can't wait and give space to indigenous peoples. Land speculation and mineral exploration are subject to the same if not greater levels of corruption prevalent in society, nobody hold IPs interests as sacrosanct.

Sango: I want to ask you more about these existing mines established under the old Mining Act. Has the requirement of these companies changed in terms of benefits they have to provide?

Peter: Historically no. Policies do not change anything with respect to a mine that's already operating. Under the new mining act there are different types of agreements depending upon the size of the operation. The policy now is to split the profits 50-50 with government – before I think it was a 70-30 split – and this now affects new mines. However, I don't know if the Philippine government is

getting anything out of the present operative mines in Kasibu or Rapu-Rapu. Does it get anything out of Siocon? All of these major mines are having problems, either they have been stopped or are presently on slow mode due to environmental or social issues. Perhaps benefits are better defined with Sagittarius mines. (Since January 2008 this mine is now running into trouble and drawing in the military and so will have other attending costs that will reduce returns to government).

If the government is getting US\$70 plus million in taxes out of an \$800 million investment so far and with a projected \$11 billion investment, where is the plan that shows these benefits reaching the people above its present spending? Please show where the money goes and makes a difference.

Sango: And the community?

Peter: Community gets 1%. I mean if a community actually got 1% of the revenue, it would be fabulous! But the trouble is, we have these stories whereby the barangay captain goes out and drives a motorbike, and when he crashes or runs out of gasoline he buys another motorbike. People in many cases do not know how to manage the money. Again, it's a question of the development of local capacity to use effectively the money, which may be limited. Yet if the policies are restrictive, people feel they are being controlled. Government can't play god and decide how to do it for them. Therefore, there is a sense that the time is not right socially but the development must go ahead.

If we're talking about human development, ultimately what are we talking about? Are we talking about the economy? To what extent are we talking national economy, and global economy, free trade, and to what extent are we talking needs, capacity and integrity of the people? Bottom line in society is we are not yet achieving this balance.

Sango: You talked about basic needs, health, education and so on. Are these picked up in terms of benefits?

Peter: These are not doing any better if you look at the human development index, the poverty index. Those provinces dominated by indigenous peoples are still the poorest provinces in the country. The government's sense of development is that in these outlying areas where it does not reach with provision of basic services, mining will legitimately provide these services and create roads and markets that will provide an improvement in the lives of these people. The assumptions are too great and the safeguards too weak.

Sango: Have there been any examples of companies that are actually providing some of these services?

Peter: There are companies that have tried to do a good job and have improved their standards, but very few Filipino corporations were able to do this as with Philex. Given the technology and investment needed today in developing a major mine, it can only be done with major international investments and these

investments will not be made if it is purely a local company. There are larger companies today trying to hold the course both socially and environmentally. Involving international corporations does grant security to the investors abroad, but does not secure us against massive loss at home. Government is afraid to lose the investments and is not equipped to monitor and there is no policing of the ranks within the industry. So when we hear Freeport-MacMoRan is purchasing operations in the Philippines it is not impressive given the history of destruction in Indonesia.

Various answers can be given but either the corporate world did not deliver or government cannot, such as in the Marcopper Placer Dome disaster. Ultimately, it does not matter locally whether it is government or international finances that are at fault as we are left with a degraded environment. We have 20 or more legacy mines as we call them and some have been finally closed without being a danger. Many remain a danger and the only way to close them well is to re-open them and get enough money to close them properly. A bit risky. These are mines in the past but they are part of our future.

Good corporate social responsibility (CSR) does exist. Many of the mega mining companies portray this image and only get involved if there is really a world class mine to operate, and therefore one expects that a more professional job will be done. In this way the basic services will be covered but only for those barangays or municipalities affected not for the whole area. So even then 'development' remains patchy.

There are only two financial and Technical Assistance Agreements (FTAA), these are largest scale operations, the others, 10 to 20, are Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSA). Today we are faced with a wildfire of exploration that in the Philippines very easily leads on to levels of extraction, and before anything is known more broadly, the mine is operative. The controls on these companies are inadequate, as we know, and these can be sold overnight.

Sango: In what way do these efforts go wrong?

Peter: Social and economic development is something you cannot do for people! You have to do it with people! And do it, with regard for their timeframes. But there isn't enough patience with the new wave of exploration. Companies will do anything, give you anything. But they need your consent **now!** They need their access **now**. They need to put it on the stock exchange, that they are exploring or opening a new mine. So that's what's on their mind. Not a nice CSR extension of the company out there, taking all the time they need. They need to be able to say in the stock exchange "we've finally made an agreement with the community, we're going to do exploration". Then they send the nice guys out to do the responsibility bit as long as there is budget.

In the Philippines, we never really know what companies are playing with in the stock exchange. Is it just exploration they want, to bump the share prices up?

And eventually will they come back to exploit the resource? We don't know.

Depending upon the arsenic content and what they need to mix to get it down, and on what the gold prices are, these amongst other factors will determine whether it's worth opening the mine or sustaining operations for the next year. We don't know whether they are buying the rights for a certain mining lease so they can stop others from exploring to keep the prices high, we just don't know what the game is. So we are subject to the economics of the game outside, on which the government is clueless. At the same time people are bought in the area as everything depends on market figures and that does not secure the development of the people.

Geograce Resources Philippines, for example, obtained mining rights in September 2007 to over 31,000 hectares of nickel mine sites in Zambales, Palawan, and Bukidnon. This is the company that is seeking permission from the local upland communities we work with in the Upper Pulangi watershed, for its exploratory activities. This generated an excitement in its stock performance, with its share price surging from PhP 0.63 in end 2006 to PhP 3.10 maximum in the last quarter of 2007, a 52-week high, (and settled to a comfortable PhP 1.22 this second week of February 2008). This excitement is translating into profits for the stockholders and players and the company's healthy bourse showing, thereby making Geograce so attractive to investors.

However, the reality in the Upper Pulangi is so far removed from the stock exchange world. Communities and local officials are not appreciative of the manner by which the information drive was done, the "consultation," the inadequate information provided, and the bulldozing style of company representatives who expect that by the end of the consultation, the local officials will issue a resolution endorsing and approving their exploration activities in the area. Just last month, we were informed that one community already gave permission in exchange for PhP 5,000 monthly allowance for each of the 20 tribal leaders, 40 college scholarships, and 50 high school scholarships. Basically this invites corruption and does not lead to sustainable education.

And the trouble is, we've had 20 years of this in the Philippines – since the Marcos era – and we're exhausted as a people, as a society. There is little trust and Asian cultures are very strong on the trust relations in society. Discussions continue about development and knowledge. We're all about science, we're all about the legal and everything else that comes out of the global dynamic. However, so much of it is virtual or speculation - a gamble in terms of human development.

This is the basic problem in the Philippines. Take Lafayette Mines – this is the only mine that's operated under the new Mining Act and it just has created disaster after disaster. And now it disowns the disasters because we cannot prove that there is cyanide washing off their land. We can't prove it, so fisherfolk

and communities have to cope with fish kills all the way. They have answers like “maybe its an up-welling of an ocean current” but suddenly we get all of these within 15 kilometres or so of one area. Maybe it can be blamed on global warming, but we know at a certain point this is not true. People have no recourse and they are left with the fact that government cannot act, as it does not have efficient scientific capacity and all people can say: “there is no honesty.”

The rationale, the science, and these policies and laws that come from a global context, these are all trying to help us. But we had a fish kill last week, so what do we now do? We don't have a livelihood. But the policy may take another 20 years to sort out.

Sango: How long does it take before people can catch fish again after an event like that?

Peter: The currents change. It gets washed out. Maybe in a few days or weeks. But, hey, I don't have food to eat today, and I was hungry yesterday! So we have to question, how many times does this happen? It is a disruption; and do people not have a right to have a meal during the day? Already the catches are too low for fishing villages to do more than subsist. Mining is not doing anything for them. Already the trawlers are sweeping it up with huge nets, the fishing abuses are massive, particularly in the Visayas. The fishing community knows they're a kilometre off shore, or 5 kilometres (officially 12 km) cleaning up already meager stocks that they used to be able to sell in the market. Now what little they have to fish gets killed. They don't have the rice either; they don't have the corn.

So finally, what does all this add up to? In the last few years we have lost the middle ground in society to seriously discuss nationally the role of mining and where it can responsibly occur. If a mine is going to operate for 25 years or more, or if we are going to do broad scale exploration there has to be a serious commitments to a social process where we can see the real costs and benefits. In today's procession of mining ventures it is a question as to when somebody is heard saying: “Stop, the emperor has no clothes!” and people wake up to long term responsibility.

There is little credibility in this system in terms of what we say and what we do in terms of helping people. Government is supposed to help people; it's supposed to serve people. It's not supposed to serve the almighty economy. At some point it has to stop feeding itself and supporting the massive migration abroad to build an economy that serves genuine human development.

[1] Extract from an interview between Sango Mahanty and Peter Walpole, 11 December 2007.

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Peter Walpole on Mining negotiations in Philippines[1]



Sango: Can we talk a bit about how mining companies approach communities and how that negotiation process works?

Peter: In theory, the process with communities might work. However, under the new drive for economic development in the country where mining is seen as the major engine, it is difficult. The contexts from the national to the local level are very

diverse. And the basic reality is that the company needs to move in yesterday, so the timeframes are totally unrealistic. There isn't the flexibility to work with people in this new phase of exploration. There are multiple cases where an initial ocular inspection is done without informing people, and then when an information drive is carried out, the request for permission may be followed up within the same meeting without the community having time to process. And if somebody in that process ever signs off on anything, sometimes because of personal benefit, the community has great difficulty correcting the process before the decision is railroaded right through. So there's no stopping it.

Sango: Who do the companies deal with in communities? Are there particular leaders who are targeted?

Peter: Yes there are. Remember mining areas are often far away and can often be in indigenous peoples' domains. There are elected *barangay* officials, there are also business people of influence and there may be *datus* or tribal leaders. People may be of different political persuasions and act out of opposition to the other. So to some degree, a very loose, traditional – if we're talking about indigenous peoples – system can be overrun by the political system. This undermining and manipulation is unacceptable but difficult to challenge.

Sango: What level of consent does a company need from a community before they can go in?

Peter: Free, prior and informed consent or FPIC must be obtained in ancestral domain areas. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples specifies how exactly this is to be done. But it's the integrity by which we carry it out that is not followed. I can say this openly given recent proceedings with communities in Bukidnon for example. And for areas with no ancestral domains, the *barangay* council is asked to pass a resolution to support or not to support the proposed activity.

Sango: This is required by law?

Peter: Yes, FPIC is required under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 and even the Mining Act of 1995. But it's how we go about it that's presenting the problems. On the other hand, I also recognise that mining companies, if they are genuine, are faced with huge politicisation. This is mainly coming from NGOs that oppose such government-backed interests for their lack of sincerity, and whose motives they do not trust. This results in a politicisation of people without really

learning the processes of establishing good participation and genuine agreement or disagreement. But basically mining interests break down the accountabilities within that local community without clearly working out a way forward.

Sango: Can there be division between people who are in favour of mining and others?

Peter: Look at human nature. What we are trying to establish here is a process with a degree of integrity by which a society can be informed. But mining as a whole, as it is currently of such a massive scale of exploration and global determination, denies that. This is so because we're asking people in communities who have never associated to the same extent to come together in relation to a mining dynamic, the impact of which they have no real understanding.

Government is there as an informal guarantor anyway. We have government officials – the Mines and Geosciences Bureau or MGB – who should be there at a technical level telling what the problems are and explaining the impacts to people. But they are now moving in so pro-mining at times and manipulative of the situation that they fall over themselves and are not following government procedure. At best we could say they are misguided. Unfortunately, we increasingly hear the word “corruption” at local and national levels of government. And so people lose trust.

So it's very hard to make decisions about people without their participation, when they haven't participated to any extent in the system. And we are going to solve all of this in a couple of weeks consultation? It's not possible! So, if development means that we have to move at the rate of industry, in order to develop and make decisions in society, then we're going to have a lot of fall-out. Fall-out in terms of people, loss of ecosystems, loss of environmental integrity, social fabric. And at the end of it, who is any better off? Who lives any better?

Sango: Do people gain employment and other benefits from mining?

Peter: Again, we have to break all of this up. We can ask any question about mining and there are black and white answers on paper, but there are so many ways to read a text that many communities do not end up with the level and number of locally employed that is expected. We do not find black and white reality. It's always a range. Of course there are degrees of employment. But what does that employment lead to? What security do they have as a result of it? And again, there are all of the promises of when the mine folds up, this is what the company will now do, they'll put money aside etc. But that just hasn't happened so far! The past may be different from the future but the new spate of exploration gives little confidence as the companies are often new entities that can easily fold up and pass on rights to others, but leave the community without accountability or continuity.

Even in the present activities by Lafayette under the new mining law,

transparency is not being done properly. The recent fish kill reports by communities and organizations not sympathetic to the mines – these accusations cannot be dismissed. So under the present climate of operations in the Philippines, how are people going to have the security that what is done is going to put things in place for the next 25 years? There's nobody around, even the Mines and Geosciences Bureau – who should really be working with local people – that can assure them that of a system that's actually going to make that happen.

Because we see how companies divest off each other. And we don't understand these things and can't do anything. There's no integrity in looking at the long term. Society isn't always conscious of the impact of a global industry on its political and social institutions as well as its environmental systems. We've lost a great deal of integrity both in the mining industry and in civil and local society. We may not be aware of it on a day-to-day basis, but mining in a sense is destroying Philippine social integrity. We are fighting each other, and the greed to get a share of the pie seems to be without control given all of the recent corruption scandals.

Sango: if you were in a position where you could ask the people who represent mining companies when they go for these initial dealings – if you had the ability to ask them to do 3 things, what would they be?

Peter: Well, there's a basic policy we're asking them to go through and they should go through with that policy. In recent cases I know, they are asked to follow that policy as they seek permission to undertake exploration activities. FPIC is reported as not working in several areas. Second, the culture may be very open and welcoming, but please don't abuse it and don't give salary-like benefits to *barangay* officials and *datus*. Though they may need it in their jobs, they lose credibility amongst their own and it starts the cover-up on future problems that may arise. Third, companies must be open and declare a problem when there is a problem. It will take both DENR and Lafayette a long time to recover for the initial wash-out of cyanide in Rapu-Rapu.

Sango: The recommendation is: the policies are there, just follow them?

Peter: If companies would follow present policies with an adequate degree of sincerity that would be a tremendous start. There are some loopholes in the law and they need to be reviewed with due process from government.

But what I'm saying is that the policy alone will not work. We actually have to understand people and work with their integrity. What is government most of all after? Is government willing to sacrifice the integrity of a community and split it up just because it cannot understand mining and cannot culturally any longer exist in the face of mining? Overseas workers are doing a lot for the government and for the name of the country abroad. At the least, the government needs to look after the people at home and not just dismiss them as unimportant or as obstacles to national development. For some communities way up the mountains, this is the

first time they see government other than the military. If their first experience is the kind of fast dealings we have seen recently, what sort of citizen development are we looking at? Is this what we are to understand of society and the greed, while communities face their most basic survival needs?

Some communities don't have the means to hold themselves together as a people, and we're going to lose that social integrity in the face of mining. That's what's happening in some areas. But because we can't put a price on it, we've moved in with the mining before we can understand what we've lost, because the pressure becomes too much for these people to bear. Now how do we help a community deal with mining if we so divide them from their integrity and relationship with the land? They have half the land they need to live, or if they don't have any, they just work in the mine. How do those people go home and continue to live as a community? It's something that can happen in 5 years total!

The company may give them a school building here, or give them a nursing post there, but is that what makes a community? No! It's the relations and how those relations can continue to exist and to build capacity. It's not easily solvable, but if a company says it wants a decision now and it's the only way to do it, and the company gives the community money, we give them one side of the equation. The reason why mining does not work in many areas is because we don't have patience, because we won't work with people. We won't acknowledge their integrity; we won't go through a process that gives them enough time to express themselves, to see where they want to be and where they want to go. It is always for the nation's immediate development.

But what has government done for people in recent years? It's heavily dependent and living off the hard work of Filipinos who have gone abroad and are sending their savings home. Now, in addition to the overseas workers, we're going to mine the poverty of the poor and disenfranchise them. This doesn't have to be the case. I don't believe and I don't think it's happening in every area, but many are increasingly untrusting of the other as a result of it.

Sango: So where do you see things going in the next few years, because you were talking about reinitiating a national dialogue...

Peter: Well, the question was whether we could reinitiate levels of dialogue. I think it's very difficult to do that until we regain a level of integrity and get some things answered. Free, prior and informed consent seems increasingly not to work for communities. National government does not have integrity through its line agencies.

Sango: Is there anything else you want to add on what is needed to take this dialogue forward?

Peter: Well, my answer on the dialogue is the old adage that is in use in Australia, "there is nothing in the middle of the road except a dead armadillo".

And that's pretty much where we are at the moment unless there is seriousness on different sides to build together. However, the potential "prize" is too great to leave the minerals in the ground and those supporting mining are seeking to muster the power to go full blast leaving little room for broader negotiation.

Sango: It's that seriousness isn't it, because there are so many statements of policy -

Peter: Look at the fellow who got shot – near Guiting-guiting. He was a *barangay* official. A security guard of the company shot him. The question is why did they have guns at that time? If the only way foreign companies are going to – in broad daylight – defend claims in the Philippines is by the point of a gun then we've missed the point of what is human development. Then the company says it is not their responsibility, as they had subcontracted the security services. I then begin to think if there is a disaster, what aspect of the disaster is subcontracted and how do they get out of that?

This might be government's kind of development, but this is not the kind of development a community can accept anywhere in the Philippines. It divides a community against itself. Now fair enough, we need security, but if one government official cannot walk up and protest, then we've seriously got to ask ourselves where are we going? And if we're so hot-tempered and driven to push these things through before opposition is heard, then these things are going to go wrong. The answer is not to have more guns and not to have more protest, but to have more clarity and accountability before powerful decisions are implemented, as part of the integrity as a society.

Sango: Do you think civil society is playing a useful role in enabling communities to have more of a voice in negotiations?

Peter: Civil society is like an amoeba. It pushes a foot out in this direction, it pushes another foot out there. Who and what is civil society? There are institutions within civil society that are consistent and accountable and trying to move this engagement with mining forward in a way that responds to genuine and desperately needed economic growth. But civil society cannot be government. People have to go and do a day's work at some point and government too. It is asking too much of civil society, of NGOs, of church, to keep us on the straight and narrow. In honesty, a lot of the bishops were pulled into the mining disasters of the past and the new interests in the Philippines since the Marcos era. But they are the first to say "this is not what our job is, this is not what we want to be doing". They're often caught saying unbalanced things, but they actually want to get on with what they are supposed to do! They are however caught as they are concerned about the social welfare of people and to see critical improvement in government practices.

But there's little integrity coming out of government and there's nobody answering the questions in a way that holds. Civil society is not an excuse for

allowing government to do whatever it wants until it's corrected.

Sango: You seem to be basically saying that government needs to do its job and actually take into account what people's needs are. And companies: their job is to follow the policies and to have real consultation and allows space and time.

Peter: Yes, and companies and government must accept that in some areas, we are not going to do mining. This is clear in much of the Central Cordillera of Luzon, but that is clear for historical and political reasons that the cultures can forcefully make a stand. So at what point will government accept that it does not do mining in some areas? In some cases there are people, or biodiversity, or geological factors that mean there should be no mining. Government does not seem to be accepting that, and wants to open up the entire country without clearly showing the limits. The limits seem to be where people are strong enough to stand up and stop, so the style of engagement by government provokes resistance and there is increasing lack of trust.

Sango: So is that the importance of the national process, as well as specific site level activities?

Peter: Yes. The problem is there is no trust, so they throw whatever truth or untruth they have at each other... And now we have other investors from the region who come from a very different context and do not have scruples about extracting minerals at lowest financial cost. There isn't this sense of responsibility, corporate or otherwise, that they connect with in the Philippines.

They want the resource, they go through the basic requirements, and they go and get it. But we have population densities that just cannot cope with the dislocations. Look at all the disasters we have had in the country already through floods and landslides, with maybe 1,000 or so people dying in each major event. Mining disasters are generally of a very different nature, causing massive loss of livelihood and sustainable landscapes, though thankfully not such loss of life. But all of the relocation of people and livelihoods puts increased pressures on the landscape with increased labour and needs from outside.

If we acknowledge these factors, then we can have a process whereby we move forward. We can say "we will have these mines". But to destabilise and threaten everyone with this open policy, so everyone in the uplands feels vulnerable – there's no security in the process and there's no transparency and accountability. Where do we now go?

Until integrity returns to government, people don't have secure livelihoods. They don't have a secure resource base. They lack access. So we've got 13 million indigenous peoples or 25 million people living in the uplands... whatever figures you want to quote. And this is insecurity by definition, with the land rights controlled by one government department that has both the responsibility of resource extraction and environmental protection. We want society to progress

but keep this number of people at risk for the sake of national development?
Whose development is this?

It's not helpful. We have to give these people basic rights beyond ancestral domains and literally not take the ground from under them. We give them rights to ancestral domains on paper, but who do we want to give them to in reality to mine? What areas of an actual ancestral domain, certified or not, will be incorporated or affected by future mining operations once clearance is given? Do the communities have any way of generating a livelihood out of the land left? Are these people able to get on with their life and culture above the poverty line? Today we can only say basically no. So again it's a question of integrity. So many are out for profit, not people, at the moment.

[1] Extract from an interview between Sango Mahanty and Peter Walpole, 11 December 2007.

Peter Walpole is a founding member of the Asia Forest Network, a coalition of planners, policy makers, government foresters, scientists, researchers, and NGOs working to supporting the role of communities in protection and sustainable use of Asia's forests. He is also Executive Director of Environmental Science for Social Change, a Philippines based institution that aims to promote environmental sustainability and social justice through the integration of scientific methodologies and social processes.

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