

EXPERIENCES and LESSONS of the CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE on the MINING CAMPAIGN

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CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance

- Established on June 1984, the CPA is an independent federation/alliance of grassroots-based, progressive peoples organizations among indigenous communities, sectoral alliances of women, peasants, workers, elders, youth and students, cultural workers and artists, and human rights advocates in the Cordillera, Philippines
- Founders were mainly indigenous leaders and activists who spearheaded the widespread and successful opposition to the WB-funded Chico Dams project and the commercial logging Cellophil Resources Corporation
- Present membership of 195 member organizations

Campaign for the Defense of Land, Life and Resources (DLLR)

- Coinciding with the UN-declared First International IP Decade, CPA launched its decade-long DLLR Campaign since 1994
- Covered the intense campaign against the open-pit mining project of Benguet Corporation
- Participatory research program on land related-issues and successfully held the second Cordillera Multi-sectoral Land Conference in 1995
- Also included the adverse impact of ODA in our education and public information campaign (i.e. CECAP, HADP to CHARMP)

Conducting a Regionwide Mining Campaign

- CPA has been battle-scarred in the protest movement against large-scale corporate mining
- After the anti-open mining struggle, another development confronted CPA --passage of the Mining Act of 1995 which totally liberalized the Philippine mining industry; transnational and local big mining companies swarmed the MGB with mining applications
- Studied and published a critique on the law
- Convened community leaders of CPA to study the current mining issue and unify
- Regional Mining Conference, veteran anti-mining trainers helped sharpen the analytical skills of community leaders, provided the national and global context of the new Mining Act
- Regional and national campaign to junk the Mining Act of 1995

Conducting a Regionwide Mining Campaign

From the Regional Mining Conference

- Produced resource kits, primer, education guides that educators and community organizers used as handy references
- Community leaders wrote petitions and letters for a massive signature campaign against the Mining Act and massive mining applications
- Community mass meetings
- Networking and organizing with the mainstream media, inviting them to press conferences, fora, symposia, community protests; press statements, releases, interviews for wider projection of the community protests and issues

LOCAL STRUGGLES AGAINST EXISTING MINING OPERATIONS

- Community barricade and mobilizations (i.e. drilling operation of Lepanto Mining Company in upper Mankayan, Benguet). Some leaders were charged of usual “illegally obstructing company operations” which were dismissed and lessons were drawn
- Lobby and support of LGUs, Congressional inquiry
- Community organizing and strengthening of peoples organizations as solid backbone for sustained and organized struggles and mobilizations with wider public support

LOCAL STRUGGLES AGAINST EXISTING MINING OPERATIONS

- Lepanto mineworkers strike in 2003 and 2005 including their wives and children, with strong support from the communities, regional, national and international. In both strikes, most of their demands were achieved with the ultimate sacrifice of union’s leaders (terminated)
- Community protests against Philex mining company
- Alliance formations, broader advocacy and lobby
- Congressional and provincial inquiry

Internationalizing & Broadening the Mining Campaign

- Generation of various forms of support to the campaign and local struggles from local, national and international levels
- International Conf on Mining and Women in 1997, National Mining Workshop in 1998, Cordillera Regional Conf on Mining 2005, National IP Mining Conf 2006
- International Networking including networking of women on mining issue
- Local, provincial and interprovincial mining conf and assemblies
- Alliance work with various organizations, NGOs, personalities, church, academe, scientists, environmentalists, advocates, etc

SOME GAINS

- Since 1995, not a single FTAA was approved in the Cordillera. However, some mining TNCs with local subsidiaries were granted Exploration Permits and FTAA applications are being transformed into smaller applications
- Provincial board and municipal resolutions (i.e. Mountain Province) and 25-year moratorium of large-mining (i.e. Mindoro Oriental, Capiz)

SOME GAINS

- Some communities were able to sustain opposition in defending their ancestral territories.
- Organizing of communities, building alliances and networks (i.e. STARM, Defend Patrimony), networking and broadening the campaign, internationalizing the campaign
- Building the alliance and mutual understanding between mineworkers including their families and indigenous/peasant communities (i.e. Lepanto, Benguet Corp) against their common problem
- More experiences and Lessons

SOME LESSONS

- Need to strengthen the organization and unity of affected communities so they do not fall prey to the deception and divide-and-rule tactics and be able to face the repression of mining companies
- Lobby, dialogues and alliance work with local government officials to support the call and position of their constituents instead of endorsing/supporting the mining companies

SOME LESSONS

- Alliance work and broadening the campaign to get the broadest support of sectors, institutions, advocates and the wider public
- Internationalizing the mining campaign to generate various forms of support to the community protests and struggle against large mining
- Concrete Alternative: indigenous small scale mining
- Campaign machinery, center of coordination and leadership that continually assess, plan, and sustain the campaign with organizers/leaders on the ground
- Building and strengthening the alliance, unity and mutual understanding of mineworkers (inc their families) against their common problem (management/mining company) and confront the divide-and-rule scheme of mining companies
- Building of a mining protest movement integral to the wider peoples movement

SOME LESSONS

- Building and strengthening the unity and cooperation between highland communities and lowland communities since their ecosystems are not separate. Environmental and social impacts of mining affects both
- Training of local human rights activists and paralegal teams, and work on lawyers for legal services. Mining/development aggression comes with militarization resulting to HRVs.
- Know your allies and know your enemies. Dare to struggle and dare to win.

SOME LESSONS