



Intensifying the anti-mining campaign

A new generation of strategies for government accountability is needed, one that fully considers entrenched, institutional obstacles to change. Vertical integration of coordinated civil society policy monitoring and advocacy is one such strategy. Engaging each stage and level of public sector actions in an integrated way can locate the causes of accountability failures, show their interconnected nature, and leverage the local, national and transnational power shifts necessary to produce sustainable institutional change (Fox 2001). This case study summary is one of seven that reflect on civil society monitoring and advocacy initiatives in the Philippines – all of which aim to improve government accountability in different sectors – through the lens of vertical integration.



Intensifying the anti-mining campaign

The Philippines has a mining law that is contested by several sectors due to the inadequate environmental protection it offers lands and communities. The law allows forest clearance, free exploitation of water, easement rights, and the use of explosives with low fees and penalties. It does not provide effective protection of the rights of mining-affected communities, nor does it recognise the ownership of natural resources by communities of indigenous peoples.

This flawed law, together with high-profile coverage of several mining disasters in the Philippines, raised the consciousness of several communities affected by the ill effects of mining, and intensified the existing anti-mining campaign. Thus, in 2000, when one of the Philippines' biggest mining companies planned new operations in a town in Surigao del Norte, Mindanao, community members began organising themselves to prevent the potential degradation of their lands. The Anislagan Bantay Kalikasan Task Force (ABAKATAF), a community-based organisation (CBO), strengthened its ranks through fighting the insidious efforts of different mining companies to enter and mine their lands.

Linking the grassroots and national anti-mining campaigns

Faced with this impending threat, ABAKATAF mobilised and organised its members and engaged the *barangay*-, municipal- and provincial-level officials in dialogue. When the mining companies pushed for entry into the community, ABAKATAF organised

sit-down picketing and hunger strikes at the entrance to the mining sites to prevent this. They actively sought audiences with key government officials from the *barangay* and the municipality and, as a result, both councils passed ordinances upholding their rights to their lands and accorded them protection.

ABAKATAF then elevated its case to the provincial level, and beyond this, to the Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau and to the President of the Philippines. These efforts captivated the attention of the nation, resulting in an outpouring of support for their cause.

For a time, due to the initial efforts of ABAKATAF, mining companies were prevented from entering the mining site. But they re-strategised, using both informal and legal approaches to suppress ABAKATAF's protests. Although cases were filed against the group, its members did not give up. Leveraging its initial victory, ABAKATAF sought the help of national organisations, including the Alternative Law Group, the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC) and Friends of the Earth-Philippines.

These legal rights groups were active in the national campaign against mining, and LRC filed an injunction '*mandamus*' class suit against the mining firms, and against government officials in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. This became a test case for the new Supreme Court-promulgated 'Rules of Procedure for Environmental Cases', and the first of its kind in Mindanao.

ABAKATAF and LRC employed a people-led legal strategy, with the community

members filing cases themselves, with technical and legal help from LRC. On the local front, ABAKATAF's actions reaped victories. As well as being a test case for the new rules, it was also the first to be granted a temporary environmental protection order.

Meanwhile, LRC was instrumental in sustaining interest in the grassroots-level campaign and maximising support from related non-governmental organisations. It helped ABAKATAF effectively coordinate a media campaign, and it maximised its international network to focus on the plight of the community. Together with the Alternative Law Group, LRC submitted regular reports to Friends of the Earth and the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Links, a UK-based organisation supporting indigenous peoples in the Philippines, about the activities and campaigns of communities. These fed into the international community's information resources about the struggle against mining.

While there was an active movement at the grassroots level, higher-level efforts – headed by more technically savvy civil society organisations – continued to push for mining policies that would benefit grassroots communities. Coordinated grassroots efforts fed the national anti-mining campaign with the necessary on-the-ground information to use in advocacy at the Philippine Congress and in consultative meetings with the executive branch of government, involving the Office of the President and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. This work eventually resulted in a moratorium on the issue of mining rights, and the streamlining of rules on mining.

Lessons for vertically integrated advocacy

- ABAKATAF recognised its limitations as a CBO, and therefore invested efforts in seeking wider support from the Mindanao region and from national organisations involved in the anti-mining campaign.
- ABAKATAF maximised integration at various levels through coalescing with national organisations, thus ensuring legal, technical and sometimes financial support to attain the goals of its anti-mining campaign.

Reference

Fox, J. (2001) 'Vertically Integrated Policy Monitoring: A Tool for Civil Society Policy Advocacy', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30.3: 616-627

Background to this summary

This summary is based on a case study by Benedict G. Nisperos and Rhia Muhi. Further reflections on this material will be published later in 2016 as part of a report on the theory and practice of vertically integrated civil society activism, edited by Joy Acheron, and including a contribution by Jonathan Fox. Please visit the Making All Voices Count website (www.makingallvoicescount.org) for the latest information about the publication of this report, and to find the other six case study summaries in this series.

About Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. It focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

Making All Voices Count is supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Omidyar Network, and is implemented by a consortium consisting of Hivos, IDS and Ushahidi.

Research, Evidence and Learning component

The programme's research, evidence and learning component, managed by IDS, contributes to improving performance and practice, and builds an evidence base in the field of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and technology for T&A (Tech4T&A).

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Disclaimer: This document has been produced with the financial support of the Omidyar Network, SIDA, DFID and USAID. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of our funders.

IDS requests due acknowledgement and quotes from this publication to be referenced as: G-Watch (2016) *Intensifying the anti-mining campaign*, Brighton: IDS © The Institute of Development Studies 2016



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