THE PREY OF PHILIPPINE RED-TAGGING:

A Look into the Frontline Environmental Defenders of the Cordilleras and Mindanao

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Prepared by: Hazel Acero, Bernardine de Belen, and Joanna Marie Titular

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This study is part of the project Resistance and Resilience: Collaborative Responses to Online Attacks on Environmental Defenders which supports research on the scope and impact of of technology-facilitated violence against environmental defenders in Brazil, Kenya, Mexico, and the Philippines, with a focus on Indigenous, traditional, and local communities.

Based on research findings and the identification of common trends from studies at national level, the initiative aims to contribute to a safer context for environmental activism through collaborative responses to online attacks, disinformation and the shrinking of civic space online.

In-depth research in Brazil, Kenya, Mexico and the Philippines was conducted through participatory and community-led processes that have been grounded in research ethics and principles defined together with the communities involved. The summaries provided in this publication offer critical insights for civil society, local and national governments, and institutions committed to human rights and environmental justice.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The project is led by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) in partnership with the following organisations: Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI), which supports the project overall; Voces del Territorio, which conducts research in Mexico; the Manila Observatory through the KLIMA Centre (MO-KLIMA), which implements the project in the Philippines; Intervozes – Coletivo Brasil de Comunicação Social, responsible for the project in Brazil; and the Ogiek Peoples' Development Program (OPDP), which implements the project in Kenya. The project is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

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I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Philippines is not unfamiliar to human rights violations. In the span of two and a half years, from July 2022 to December 2024, the administration of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. – son of dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. – has become responsible for 119 extrajudicial killings, 14 enforced disappearances (some removed from count as they were surfaced), 462 illegal arrests, 560 forced or fake surrenders, 46,921 bombings, 43,582 forced evacuations, and 3,706,431 forms of threat, harassment, and intimidation.[1]

Environmental defenders from the Philippines are not exempt from this. In truth, the Philippines is one of the most violent countries for them, ranking first in Asia as Global Witness recorded 17 killings and enforced disappearances of environmental defenders in the country in 2023, and 298 in total since 2012.[2] Often, a throughline of these attacks on environmental defenders is "red-tagging" which refers to the labeling or accusing of individuals or organizations

1 Palabay, Cristina, and Josael Dongail, eds. 2024 Karapatan Year-End Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines. March 26, 2025. https://www.karapatan.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2024-Karapatan-Year-End-Report-1.pdf

2 Global Witness, Missing Voices: The Violent Erasure of Land and Environmental Defenders, 2024, https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/missing-voices/

as communists, terrorists, and subversives.[3] Particularly, they are frequently accused of being members of the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines) and its armed wing, the CPP-NPA (New People's Army). Often, red-tagging is done or perpetrated by the state.[4] When these defenders are successfully labeled as subversives or 'enemies of the state', it becomes justification for violations such as trumped-up charges, forced surrenders, and enforced disappearances.

There are different tools used to facilitate red-tagging. There are repressive laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 which broadens the definition of terrorism. It defines terrorism as "acts that cause a serious risk to public safety". This phrasing lacks specificity, allowing authorities to arbitrarily label legitimate dissent and activism as terrorism.[5] There are also government entities such as the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) that are created to supposedly "attain inclusive and sustainable peace"[6] but are used to crack down on human rights activists as well as environmental defenders.[7] Lastly, technology also comes into play when it comes to red-tagging and human rights violations.

For example, in 2022, the outgoing National Security Adviser at the time, Hermogenes Esperon Jr. ordered the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) to block 28 websites that

3 Pimentel Simbulan, "Red-Baiting: A Tool of Repression," Observer, no. 2 (2011): 12-15, https://ipon-philippines.org/wp-content/uploads/ObserverJournal/Observer_Vol.3_Nr.2_RedBaiting.pdf

4 Ibid.

5 'I Turned My Fear into Courage': Red-Tagging and State Violence against Young Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines." October 14, 2024. https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/i-turned-my-fear-courage-red-tagging-and-state-violence-against-yo ung-human-rights-defenders-philippines

6 NTF-ELCAC, "About: NTF-ELCAC," n.d., https://www.ntfelcac.org/about

7 Amnesty International, "Philippines: Authorities Increasingly Using Facebook to Stifle Young Activists' Right to Freedom of Expression and Protest," October 17, 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/10/philippines-authorities-using-facebook-to-red-tag-young activists/

were allegedly connected to the CPP.[8] However, the list[9] issued shows that some of the websites that were blocked are, instead, alternative and independent media outlets such as Bulatlat and Pinoy Weekly, and basic sector organizations like Pamalakaya (National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organization in the Philippines), an alliance of activist fisherfolk groups, AMIHAN, an organization of peasant women calling for genuine agrarian reform, and Save Our Schools (SOS) Network, a network of child rights advocates fighting for the right to education, including the existence of Lumad schools which are indigenous schools in the Philippines. As many progressive groups stated, the act of blocking is a direct violation of these groups' freedom of expression and press freedom.

However, while technology is evidently a tool utilized for red-tagging in the Philippines, studies on the subject of technology-facilitated violence are still lacking. *Technology-facilitated violence*, lifted from the term "technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TF GBV)", refers to "act[s] of violence [...] committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified partly or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, against a person on the basis of their gender".[10] Technology-facilitated violence as referred to here simply broadens the spectrum of possible victims.

In particular, this paper refers to technology-based violence committed against environmental defenders. In addition, scholarly articles on the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) or environmental defenders in the Philippines are scarce. While their experiences

8 Jodesz Gavilan, "Legitimate, Progressive, or Foreign-Based: The Websites Esperon Sought to Block in PH," Rappler, June 22, 2022, https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/list-websites-esperon-blocked-progressive-groups-news-organizati ons-philippines/

9 Lian Buan (@lianbuan), "Using the designation of the CPP-NPA and NDF as terrorists as basis, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon asked NTC to block," X (formerly Twitter), June 22, 2022, https://twitter.com/lianbuan/status/1539394066999541760/photo/2

10 United Nations Population Fund, Brochure: What Is Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence? January 1, 2708, https://www.unfpa.org/resources/brochure-what-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence#:~:text=Tec hnology%2Dfacilitated%20gender%2Dbased%20violence%2C%20or%20TFGBV%2C%20is,the%20basi s%20of%20their%20gender

are often seen as a noble journalistic pursuit, their stories are rarely discussed academically.

With this, the study aims to look into the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, specifically in protecting and preserving land and natural resources, attacks on their communities as environmental defenders, the role of red-tagging in these attacks, technology as a facilitator of this violence, and the forms gender-based violence takes place in these situations. It is imperative to document, study, and hear the experiences of the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines as frontline environmental defenders of the country.

Two large groups of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines were chosen as case study areas–the Igorot from Cordillera and the Lumad from Mindanao. Indigenous communities here are hotspots of attacks making them pertinent examples to explore.

The Cordillera region, a region composed of mountain ranges, is a common target for development projects such as new dams and new mining areas. These projects inevitably affect the ancestral domain of their Indigenous Peoples called the Igorot. "Igorot" means people from the mountains and is used to pertain to the Indigenous Peoples from the region.

One infamous development project under Marcos Sr.'s dictatorship which the Igorot opposed was the Chico River Basin Development Project (CRBDP). Four hydroelectric dams would have been built, two in Mountain Province and two in Kalinga, hitting Chico River which was called the "river of life" by the indigenous communities nearby.[11] However, because of the unity in struggle of the different Igorot tribes, the construction was upended. While this is a large

11 Karlston Lapniten, " 'The River Will Bleed Red': Indigenous Filipinos Face down Dam Projects," Mongabay Environmental News, March 8, 2021, https://news.mongabay.com/2021/02/the-river-will-bleed-red-indigenous-filipinos-face-down-dam-projects/

victory, these communities continue to be their stories show their resistance against and resilience despite development aggression, as well as accounts of attacks done against them because of the power of their struggle.

To respond to this need, the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance (CPA), a broad alliance of progressive peoples organizations that fight for IP rights, was chosen as a partner organization for this research. Indigenous CPA leaders who were red-tagged, harassed, surveilled, and forcibly disappeared were interviewed to narrate their personal experiences as defenders as well as the experiences of the indigenous communities they worked with.

Meanwhile, Mindanao is one of the three large island groups in the Philippines. It is located in the south of the country. Mindanao is the home of the *Lumad*, a collective term used for the non-Moro and non-Christian Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao. "Lumad" is a Bisaya word that translates to "native" or "indigenous".[12] While they are still divided into smaller ethnolinguistic groups with distinct cultures and identities, they are one in their struggle for their ancestral lands. Like other Indigenous Peoples, their lands are a target for development projects, especially mining. Because of this interest, many communities have become militarized.[13] They have been threatened, displaced,[14] and killed.[15] [16]

12 Faina Ulindang, "Lumad in Mindanao," National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed February 14, 2025, https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-heritagesch/historical-rese arch/lumad-in-mindanao

13 How Mining Threatens Indigenous Defenders in the Philippines," Global Witness, 2024, https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/how-militarisation-mining-threatens-i ndigenous-defenders-philippines/

14 Rina Chandran, "Driven from Home, Philippine Indigenous People Long for Their Land," Reuters, April 19, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1HQ033

15 Mark Saludes, "Justice Remains Elusive Seven Years After Killing of Manobo Leaders," AlterMidya, September 7, 2022, https://www.altermidya.net/justice-remains-elusive-seven-years-after-killing-of-manobo-leaders/#:~:text=In %202015%2C%20members%20of%20a,town%20in%20Surigao%20Sur%20province

16 Saludes, "Justice Remains Elusive."

Another common struggle that is common for Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines is education. Education is withheld from their communities despite it being a right.[17] The Lumads created alternative tribal schools with the help of religious groups and Indigenous Peoples' rights advocates. These were built to help students from the Lumad communities acquire education.[18] While these schools were helpful, they have since been threatened to be bombed,[19] red-tagged,[20] and shut down.[21]

With this, Lumad school students, teachers, and allies were chosen to be interviewed so that they can recount their experiences of environmental defense, resistance through education, and the attacks they experienced in the communities as constituents of the schools and as members of the community.

The evidence is clear that the Indigenous Peoples of the Cordillera and the Lumad, frontline environmental defenders in the Philippines, are threatened, harassed, displaced, and killed. Thus, their experiences of technology-facilitated violence in relation to attacks and red-tagging, of using technology as a tool, and of gender-based violence were pursued and given priority as case studies.

This is in hopes that by understanding their history of attacks with technology as one of its aspects, ways can be found to help combat these attacks, and even build precautionary measures for defense.

17 Save Our Schools Network (SOS), "Locking down Lumad Education: Schools under Attack amid Pandemic," Likhaan: The Journal of Contemporary Philippine Literature 14, no. 2 (February 21, 2022), https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/lik/article/view/8621

18 Jose Monfred Sy, " 'It Takes a Movement to Build Schools': A Historical and Pedagogical Sketch of the Lumad Schools Vis-à-Vis the Lumad Social Movement," Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints 70, no. 3 (December 7, 2022): 423–64, https://doi.org/10.13185/ps2022.70305

19 Bombing of Lumad Schools against Int'l Humanitarian Law - CHR," Republic of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights, August 11, 2017, https://chr.gov.ph/bombing-of-lumad-schools-against-intl-humanitarian-law-chr/

20 Priam Nepomuceno, "AFP Chief Insists Lumad Schools Used as NPA Breeding Ground," Philippine News Agency, December 3, 2018, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1055549

21 Save Our Schools Network SOS, "Locking down Lumad Education"

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

International conditions of Indigenous Peoples in the protection of their land Over 476 million Indigenous Peoples are living in 90 countries across the world, accounting for 6.2 percent of the global population. Of those, there are more than 5,000 distinct groups. [22] They are spread across more than 90 countries in every region and speak more than 4,000 languages.[23]

Indigenous or aboriginal peoples are so-called indigenous because they were living on their lands before settlers came from elsewhere; they are the descendants–according to one definition–of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.[24] This resulted in dispossession, oppression, and the creation of dependency. The international remedy to colonization is the right to self-determination, which is set out for Indigenous

22 United Nations, "Indigenous Peoples," n.d., https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/indigenous-peoples

23 Amnesty International, "Indigenous Peoples' Rights Are Human Rights," September 30, 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/#climatechange

24 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet No. 9 (Rev. 1), The Rights of Indigenous Peoples, October 1, 2007, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet9rev.1en.pdf

Peoples in Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).[25]

Indigenous Peoples have a close relationship with the land since they have been inhabiting it for generations. Their intimate relationship with the natural environment means that climate change poses a unique danger to their way of life. Climate change threatens the habitats and ecosystems. Indigenous Peoples depend on the natural environment for food, water, medicine, livelihood, and identity.[26] Hence, they are actively defending their land from the entry of large companies from conducting exploitative, destructive, and extractive activities. Because of this, they are known to be at the forefront of combating climate change.

Their sophisticated knowledge of the natural world means that where Indigenous Peoples have control of the land, forests and biodiversity flourish. Their sustainable land use fights climate change and builds resilience to natural disasters. Indigenous Peoples and their local communities manage 300,000 million metric tons of carbon in their trees and soil, a massive contribution to the global initiative to curb climate change.[27]

Many groups of Indigenous Peoples around the globe have been defending land, nature, and natural resources when colonizers were attempting to conquer the globe. Because of this dedication and commitment to protecting the environment, they were marginalized, displaced, and pillaged. Environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) have been harassed for centuries before the world decided to call them 'environmental defenders'.

25 International Institute for Sustainable Development, Indigenous Peoples: Defending an Environment for All, April 2022, https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2022-04/still-one-earth-Indigenous-Peoples.pdf

26 Indigenous peoples rights are human rights. Amnesty International.

27 Amnesty International, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Are Human Rights, 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/#climatechange

This marginalization and oppression has not ended. In truth, in the 2023 Global Witness report documenting violations against land and environmental defenders, of the 196 defenders murdered, 43% were Indigenous Peoples.[28]

During the United Nations 23rd Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), these attacks were emphasized. A report on the criminalization of Indigenous Peoples was presented.[29] Here, they discussed two forms of criminalization against IPs. The first pertains to the "failure to recognize and secure internationally agreed human rights in law and violations of those rights."[30] This also includes failure to create national legislation that is effective in recognizing Indigenous rights. This form of criminalization ignores important cultural practices that Indigenous Peoples have.[31]

The second kind takes shape in the criminalization of indigenous human rights defenders through the "misuse of criminal law by the State and Non-State actors".[32] These are usually implemented when Indigenous Peoples oppose projects from both the government and private sector that compromise their lands.[33]

Often, the intention of this criminalization is to impede Indigenous Peoples seeking protection or to inflict punishment for even attempting at all. In the Philippines, this proves to be prevalent.

28 Global Witness, Missing Voices: The Violent Erasure of Land and Environmental Defenders, September 10, 2024, https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/missing-voices/?gad_source=1&gcli d=CjwKCAiA8Lu9BhA8EiwAag16b-eUrIDASOP8tvKpika7Nrz-wlwFKbVkuutwCRI6FcXfj41zPsB5OBoCV 0YQAvD_BwE

29 United Nations, Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights, 2024, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/030/79/pdf/n2403079.pdf?token=etPztstmureF50a4u T&fe=true.

30 United Nations, Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples, 6/16.

31 United Nations, Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples.

32 United Nations, Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples, 7/16.

33 United Nations, Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples.

DOMESTIC CONDITIONS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE PROTECTION OF THEIR LAND

The Philippines is a culturally diverse country with an estimated 14–17 million Indigenous Peoples belonging to 110 ethnolinguistic groups. They are mainly concentrated in Northern Luzon (Cordillera Administrative Region, 33%) and Mindanao (61%), with some groups in the Visayas area.[34] The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples estimates that there are approximately 11.3 million Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, for example – a figure amounting to around 11–12% of the population – some civil society estimates suggest they may comprise between 10–20% of the population.[35]

IPs in the Philippines have been at the forefront of defending their lands from destructive, exploitative, and oppressive activities. They strongly opposed hydroelectric dams, deforestation, and mining which all have implications for climate change and human rights.[36] During the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur Ian Fry,[37] He heard from one civil society organization that 75 extrajudicial executions against environmental human rights have been recorded in the past 3 years.

IPs were displaced from their ancestral lands due to the entry of large dams and mines. There were also reported incidents of aerial bombardment undertaken by the military, some were using

34 UNDP. Fast Facts: Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines. July 24, 2013. https://www.undp.org/philippines/publications/fast-facts-indigenous-peoples-philippines#:~:text=The %20Philippines%20is%20a%20culturally,to%20110%20ethno%2Dlinguistic%20groups.

35 Minority Rights Group. Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines. April 12, 2024. https://minorityrights.org/communities/indigenous-peoples-5/

36

37 United Nations Human Rights Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, Ian Fry. A/HRC/56/46/ADD.1: Visit to Honduras. July 30, 2024. https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5646add1-visit-honduras-report-special-ra pporteur-promotion-and

phosphorous in IP and Moro communities in Kalinga, Cagayan Valley, Lanao del Sur, and Negros Occidental that caused irreversible damage to the environment, their livelihood, and homes[38].

THE IGOROT IN THE CORDILLERAS

The Igorot of the Cordillera are actively opposing the entry of development aggressions within their ancestral lands such as mega-dams.[39] This is a long-standing issue in the region which has resulted in several violations of the Indigenous People and their human rights.

The most recent incident, for instance, is the designation of the four (4) Cordillera activists as terrorists under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020.[40] These four (4) activists are environmental defenders and have been actively opposing mega-dams' entry into their ancestral lands. Due to their advocacies, they have been previously slapped with several trumped-up charges, which were already dismissed by the courts for being baseless. They were also relentlessly harassed and surveilled. One of the designees was, in fact, abducted but later released by suspected state agents last August 2022. Prior to his actual abduction, there were already occurrences of a series of harassments, red-tagging, and surveillance, towards this person.[41]

The designation as terrorist by the Anti-terrorism Council (ATC) not only causes damage to their persons but also to their families,

38 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Ian Fry

39 Clarissa V. Militante, "Remembering Macli-Ing Dulag," Focus on the Global South, April 24, 2014, https://focusweb.org/remembering-macli-ing-dulag/.

40 Anti-Terrorism Council, Designating individuals affiliated with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) previously designated as terrorist organizations, associations, or groups of persons as terrorists, Res. 41, 2023, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2023/06jun/20230607-ATC-Resolution-41-FRM.PDF.

41 Sherwin De Vera, "Cordillera Activist Recalls Ordeal Days after Abduction," Northern Dispatch, August 29, 2022. https://nordis.net/2022/08/29/article/news/cordillera-activist-recalls-ordeal-days-after-abduction/.

friends, and their respective organizations and communities. Their bank accounts have been frozen[42], resulting in further economic deprivation of themselves, their families, and their organisations' beneficiaries.

In 2016, only four (4) companies were engaged in large-scale mining operations in Cordillera. These are: Philex Mining Corporation (copper), Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company (gold), Itogon Suyoc Resources, Inc. (gold) and Benguet Corporation (gold).[43] According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), about nine million hectares or 30 percent of the total land area of the country were identified as having high mineral potential. In Cordillera alone, 11 Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSAs) were approved covering a total land area of 15,542.9 hectares. This was about 0.8 percent of the total land area of the region and 0.2 to the total mineable land in the country. Eight of these mining agreements cover Benguet province covering a total land area of 13,817.9 hectares. The remaining three covered the province of Abra with an area of 1,725.0 hectares.[44]

With the vast expanse of these mining concessions, these overlap with the ancestral domains of the Igorot. As a result, the Igorot were confronted with problems in asserting their rights and claims over their lands. The Kankanaey and Ibaloi, in particular, have been waging a century-old struggle to recover their land.[45]

Kankanaey and Ibaloys practiced gold mining and trade, farming, livestock raising, hunting, and foraging. The encroachment of these

42 Sherwin De Vera, "AMLC Freezes Assets, Bank Accounts of Cordillera Activists," Rappler, July 17, 2023,, https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/anti-money-laundering-council-freezes-assets-bank-accounts-activis ts-%20cordillera/.

43 Minerals Industry in the Cordillera Administrative Region - CY 2016 (2017). https://car.mgb.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/yr.end_.report.2016.pdf

44 Philippine Statistics Authority, "Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) Mineral Profile: 2004-2016," August 14, 2019,. https://rssocar.psa.gov.ph/content/cordillera-administrative-region-car-mineral-profile-2004-2016

45 D. K. Sunuwar, "Indigenous Peoples Continue 100-Year Fight against Large-Scale Gold Mining in the Philippines," Cultural Survival, July 11, 2023. https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-peoples-continue-100-year-fight-against-large-scale-gol d-mining-philippines

large mining concessions affected the livelihood of IPs since many of the access trails and small-mining claims have eroded or become vulnerable to erosion due to their abandoned tunnels.[46]

Recently, one of the existing mining concessions in Cordillera is applying to mine gold from the mountains of Itogon. However, this has been rejected by the community in 2022, citing concerns including water contamination and loss of access to traditional mining activities.[47]

THE LUMAD OF MINDANAO

In 2015, the Lumad experienced the Lianga Massacre. The Lumad Manobos were gathered in a basketball court by a paramilitary group, allegedly accompanied by soldiers. The paramilitary shot Dionel Campos and Aurelio Sinzo, tribal leaders, in front of everyone in the court.[48] Campos and Sinzo were known for their work protecting the community's ancestral lands against encroachments from mining companies. Meanwhile, Emerito Samarca, the director of Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV)[49]–an education initiative for the Lumad providing them with secondary education– was found dead in his classroom

46 Mines and Geosciences Bureau-CAR, "Assessment of Small Scale Mining Areas in the Region Conducted," n.d.. https://car.mgb.gov.ph/assessment-of-small-scale-mining-areas-in-the-region-conducted/

47 Marvie Latam, Aaron Mukpo, Luciana Araujo, Sonam Lama Hyolmo, Eleanor Carver, Rebecca Truscott, Kate A. Fabro, Catherine Cowan, and Leilani Torres, "Indigenous Philippine Village Rejects Gold Mine, Cites Flawed Consultation," Mongabay Environmental News, May 2, 2024. https://news.mongabay.com/2024/05/indigenous-philippine-village-rejects-gold-mine-cites-flawed-consulta tion/

48 Mark Saludes, "Justice Remains Elusive Seven Years After Killing of Manobo Leaders," AlterMidya, September 7, 2022, https://www.altermidya.net/justice-remains-elusive-seven-years-after-killing-of-manobo-leaders/#:~:t ext=In%20 2015%2C%20members%20of%20a,town%20in%20Surigao%20Sur%20province.

49 Frontline Defenders, "Killing of Emerito Samarca", https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/killing-emerito-samarca.

with stab wounds and a slit throat.[50] Samarca was an advocate against large-scale development projects that fuel violence and displacement in the southern Philippines. The Philippine military denied their involvement and claimed that an ongoing tribal war caused the killings instead.[51] This caused a forced evacuation of 3,000 Lumad from their homes in fear for their lives. No one has been made accountable more than seven years after.

In 2021, the same village experienced another Lianga massacre. Two Lumad farmers and one 12-year-old student were shot by soldiers while harvesting abaca. After news broke out, the Philippine Army claimed that those who were shot were members of the NPA "foraging for food" in the community.[52]

The Lumad are not unfamiliar with militarization in their communities. Many of them have fled due to this. One example is the Lumad in the Talaingod village in 2018. This community has been suffering the push for logging and mining companies that want to extract resources such as gold, copper, and nickel.[53] They were harassed in their own communities so they had to decide whether they could stay and defend their land or they should evacuate to save their lives. They ended up choosing the latter and staying 50 miles away from Davao City. This incident led to the filing of trumped-up charges against Lumad school teachers and several personalities who assist displaced Lumad students and teachers in Talaingod, Davao Del Norte.[54]

50 Vincent Go, "Displaced Lumads of Mindanao," Al Jazeera, October 9, 2015, https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2015/10/9/displaced-lumads-of-mindanao.

51 Ibid.

52 Saludes, "Justice Remains Elusive."

53 Rina Chandran, "Driven from Home, Philippine Indigenous People Long for Their Land," Reuters, April 19, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1HQ033/.

54 Asia Pacific Network of Environmental Defenders (APNED), "Who Are the Talaingod 13? And Why Is There a Need to Defend Them," November 28, 2024. https://apned.net/who-are-the-talaingod-13-and-why-is-there-a-need-to-defend-them/

Unfortunately, even the Lumad schools are attacked by the state and its forces. In 2017, Rodrigo Duterte who was president at the time, threatened to bomb Lumad schools. He claimed that they are being taught subversion and communism.[55] However, according to a former Lumad school teacher's online thread, their curriculum is actually composed of Math, Science and Health, Social Studies, Reading and Language, History, and Agriculture. They take into account the culture of the Lumad in their education and the students are taught to value and cultivate their indigenous practices.[56] Volunteer teachers Chad Booc and Jurain Ngujo, together with two community volunteers and one health worker, were also killed in 2022 by the military and were tagged as armed rebels.[57]

In 2024, the majority of the Lumad schools that provided indigenous youth education were forced to shut down. The Lumad in different groups also continue to be displaced from their homes for mining operations.

RED-TAGGING AS A TOOL TO ATTACK ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines, some efforts are made to address these growing security challenges against climate human rights defenders. For instance, the Makabayan Bloc, a coalition of progressive party list legislators, has filed in the House of Representatives during the Eighteenth Congress House Bill 8170, "An Act Strengthening and Instituting Mechanisms for the Defense of the Environment

55 Interaksyon, "Duterte Threatens to 'Bomb' Lumad 'Rebel' Schools," July 24, 2017, https://interaksyon.philstar.com/breaking-news/2017/07/24/86604/duterte-threatens-to-bomb-lumad-schoo ls-allegedly-teaching-students-to-rebel-vs-govt/.

56 @maykamaykaba, "The curriculum of Lumad schools are: Math, Science and Health, Social Studies, Reading and Language, History, and Agriculture," X (formerly Twitter), https://twitter.com/maykamaykaba/status/1063994272238657536?lang=e.

57 Froilan Gallardo, "Lumad Teacher Chad Booc, 4 Others Slain in Davao de Oro – Military," Rappler, February 25, 2022, https://www.rappler.com/nation/lumad-teacher-booc-others-slain-davao-de-oro-military/.

and the Filipino People's Right to a balanced and Healthful Ecology.[58] "The trailblazing Bill seeks to ensure that individuals, groups, and organizations engaged in promoting climate justice, environmental protection and its actual defense can fully exercise their constitutionally-guaranteed rights and freedom. This Bill is in response to the alarmingly increasing number of deaths of environmental defenders from 2001 to 2019. Unfortunately, the Bill has lapsed and thus is in need of re-filing in the new Congress. At present, the attacks continue to occur.

A common way to attack the defenders is through criminalization. In the Philippines this is made possible by red-tagging. This term was a product of the 2015 Zarate vs Aquino court case as proposed by Supreme Court Associate Justice Marvic Leonen.[59] They adopt the definition of "red-baiting" found in a journal article called *"Red-baiting: A Tool of Repression, Then and Now"* by Dr. Nymia Pimentel Simbulan. Dr. Simbulan defines it as "the act of labeling, branding, naming and accusing individuals and or organizations of being left-leaning, subversives, communists or terrorists (used as) a strategy... by State agents, particularly law enforcement agencies and the military, against those perceived to be 'threats' or 'enemies of the State."[60] This tactic is often used against nongovernment organizations (NGOs), peoples' progressive party list groups labeled as "front organizations" of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), National Democratic Front (NDF) and/or New People's Army (NPA).[61]

Exacerbated by repressive laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, this strategy is used to justify countless attacks against

58 Philippine Congress, House of Representatives, Strengthening and Instituting Mechanisms for the Defense of the Environment and the Filipino People's Right to a Balanced and Healthful Ecology, H.R. 8170, 18th Cong., 2nd sess., https://hrep-website.s3.ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/legisdocs/basic_18/HB08170.pdf.

59 VERA Files, "VERA FILES FACT SHEET: Why 'Red-Tagging' Is Dangerous," March 9, 2023, https://verafiles.org/articles/vera-files-fact-sheet-why-red-tagging-dangerous.

60 Nymia Pimentel Simbulan, "Red-Baiting: A Tool of Repression, Then and Now," OBSERVER: A Journal on Threatened Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines 3, no. 2 (December 2011): 12, https://ipon-philippines.org/wp-content/uploads/ObserverJournal/Observer_Vol.3_Nr.2_RedBaiting.pdf

61 Pimentel Simbulan. "Red-Baiting: A Tool of Repression." OBSERVER, 12-15.

activists, advocates, people's representatives, and basic sectors such as Indigenous Peoples, the urban poor, farmers, and fisherfolk. Many have been harassed, imprisoned, forcibly disappeared, tortured, and killed because they have been red-tagged. In the Philippines, red-tagging is not merely a destruction of reputation but a tangible death threat.

According to Karapatan's year-end report in 2023, 1,609,496 individuals have been threatened and harassed under the administration. The main mode of the threats is done through red-tagging, or "terrorism-tagging".[62]

Red-tagging is also recognized as a threat by the Supreme Court as a decision written by Associate Justice Rodil Zalameda referred to red-tagging as an act that threatens a person's constitutional right to life, liberty, and security.[63] Thus, red-tagging may justify the issuance of Writ of Kalikasan which is according to A.M. No. 07-9-12-SC or the Rule on the Writ of Amparo, the petition for a writ of Amparo is a remedy available to any person whose right to life, liberty, or security is violated or threatened by an unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or of a private individual or entity.

CASES OF RED-TAGGING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

There are a number of cases of environmental defenders being harmed from red-tagging. At the top of the list is the case of Jhed Tamano and Jonila Castro. They were activists volunteering for AKAP Ka Manila Bay in Bataan, a group opposing reclamation activities in Manila Bay. They were abducted by state forces in September of 2023; however, the state forces claimed that while in their custody, the two

62 Karapatan, The Monstrosity of Ferdinand Marcos Jr.: 2023 Year-end Report on the Human Rights SItuation in the Philippines.

63 Jairo Bolledo, "Finally, Supreme Court Defines Red-Tagging as a Threat," Rappler, May 9, 2024,, https://www.rappler.com/philippines/supreme-court-defines-red-tagging-as-threat/.

were not abducted; but instead surrendered as communist rebels.[64] However, during a live press conference held by the NTF-ELCAC where Tamano and Castro were shown, Tamano confirmed that they were forced to surrender after being abducted as their lives were threatened.[65] Despite this, the Court of Appeals refused to grant them a writ of amparo which would have protected them from the 70th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army.[66]

Two other victims of enforced disappearance who remain missing are Indigenous Peoples' rights defenders, Dexter Capuyan and Gene Roz Jamil "Bazoo" De Jesus,. They were taken in April of 2023. Before their abduction, Capuyan was tagged as a leader of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, and has a bounty of PHP 2.85 million. De Jesus also has pending cases in Northern Luzon.[67]

Lee Sudario and Norman Ortiz, farmers and activists were also abducted in September of 2023. Witnesses say that the two were forced into a white van by ten uniformed and armed men. Ortiz's sister mentioned that uniformed men introducing themselves as from the army have been visiting their home, looking for her brother before he disappeared.[68] Meanwhile, Sudario was tagged as an alleged NPA member by the Philippine National Police (PNP) Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).[69]

64 Nick Aspinwall, "'We Will Cut out Your Tongue': Filipino Activists Recount Kidnap Ordeal," Al Jazeera, October 20, 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/19/we-will-cut-out-your-tongue-filipino-activists-recount-military kidnap.

65 Altermidya, "Panoorin: Pahayag Nina Jonila Castro at Jhed Tamano Na Sila Ay Dinukot at Napilitang 'Sumerender' Sa Mismong Press Conference Na Inorganisa Ng National...," Facebook, September 18, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/altermidya/videos/866786704803085/.

66 Lian Buan, "CA Denies Protection to Red-Tagged Activists. Dissenter Says 'Court Ignored Threats,'" Rappler, August 14, 2024, https://www.rappler.com/philippines/court-of-appeals-denies-writ-amparo-jonila-castro-jhed-tamano/.

67 Bulatlat Contributors, "After 5 Months, Cordillera Activists Dexter, Bazoo Still Missing," Bulatlat, October 4, 2023, https://www.bulatlat.com/2023/10/04/after-5-months-cordillera-activists-dexter-bazoo-still-missing/

68 Bulatlat Contributors, "Sisters of Abducted Farmers Demand Their Brothers' Release," Bulatlat, November 6, 2023, https://www.bulatlat.com/2023/11/06/sisters-of-abducted-farmers-demand-their-brothers-release/.

69 Karapatan, "Families of Lee Sudario and Norman Ortiz Call to Surface Their Kin," Now You Know PH (Rappler), October 11, 2023, https://nowyouknowph.rappler.com/893/families-of-lee-sudario-and-norman-ortiz-call-to-surface-their -kin/.

Those who are red-tagged not only forcibly disappear, but they are also extrajudicially killed. Antonio Diwayan was a peasant and anti-mining leader in Abra. His area was opposed to various renewable energy and mining projects.[70] His neighbors knew him as very generous and kind, also a good farmer.[71] The 5th Infantry Division claimed that Diwayan was killed in October of 2023 during an encounter between the NPA and the 77th Infantry Battalion, implying that he is an armed rebel.[72]

A similar thing happened to Danny Malinao, a farmer in Surigao del Sur. He was harvesting vegetables with four other farmers when the 9th Company of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion randomly fired. While four farmers survived, Malinao was the lone casualty in January of 2023. In initial reports, the army again claimed that Malinao was killed in an encounter with the NPA.[73]

GENDER AS AN ELEMENT IN THESE ATTACKS

An article entitled "Gendered violence martyring Filipina environmental defenders" looks into the factors of attacks on women environmental defenders (WED), particularly their martyrdom in environmental conflicts. According to EJAtlas, a global atlas on environmental justice, they studied 20 cases involving 31 WEDs who were killed.[74]

70 Michael Beltran, "Philippines Hydro Boom Rips Indigenous Communities," Mongabay Environmental News, September 19, 2024, https://news.mongabay.com/2024/09/philippines-hydro-boom-rips-indigenous-communities/.

71 Sherwin De Vera, "Family, Town Mates Deny Man Killed in Abra Encounter a Rebel," Rappler, October 17, 2023, https://www.rappler.com/philippines/luzon/family-town-mates-deny-man-killed-encounter-lacub-abra rebel/.

72 Ibid.

73 Karapatan, "Karapatan to CHR: Investigate Reports on AFP's IHL Violations in Surigao, Cagayan," February 7, 2023, https://www.karapatan.org/media_release/karapatan-to-chr-investigate-reports-on-afps-ihl-violations -in-surigao-cagayan/.

74 Dalena Tran, "Gendered Violence Martyring Filipina Environmental Defenders," The Extractive Industries and Society 13 (March 2023) https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2023.101211.

It showed that most of them were rural low-wage or informal workers, and ten were indigenous, with all indigenous women. All the indigenous women were in poverty and rurality, and all peasant women were also from rural areas.[75] Violence was also higher when it comes to mining cases (10 cases killing 16 WEDs) and biomass (logging/plantations/fishing) cases (4 cases killing 8 WEDs).[76] Most were shot dead with a gun by hitmen riding a motorcycle.

In its discussion of the role of gender in these attacks, it is stated that attacking WEDs prevents them from mobilizing and restricts women's agency.[77] In a patriarchal society, a woman being scared to resist is the default, so when they are threatened after challenging the status quo, there is a high chance that they will hide themselves and their family for protection.

It is then imperative to discuss gender-based violence and attacks in this study to add to the literature, as well as explicitly document the experiences of WEDs on the ground.

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED RED-TAGGING AND VIOLENCE

These attacks also extend to the digital space via several ways such as: hacking, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS), tapping of devices, online smear campaigns, and general spread of disinformation. And when it comes to disinformation, Facebook rises as the top as the culprit since many Filipinos have flocked to the Meta social media platform. It is the leading social media platform in the Philippines with 95% of social media users logging into Facebook each month.[78]

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Amnesty International, Philippines: "I Turned My Fear into Courage": Red-Tagging and State Violence against Young Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines (London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2024).

For example, Lorraine Badoy, the former spokesperson of NTF-ELCAC and 2nd nominee of Epanaw Sambayanan Partylist for the last 2025 elections, is known for red-tagging on Facebook.[79] She has red-tagged Maria Ressa, CEO of Rappler and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; Leni Robredo, former Philippine Vice-President, claiming she was endorsed for president during the 2022 elections by Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Joma Sison; and Ana Patricia "Patreng" Non, creator of Maginhawa Community Pantry which was made to help feed Filipinos struggling during the pandemic among many others.[80] Because of her actions, Atom Araullo, an established broadcast journalist in the country, filed a case against her as he and his mother were red-tagged. Badoy claimed that they were linked to communist groups. Araullo won the case, as the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 306 ruled that Badoy's statements are defamatory.[81]

NTF-ELCAC also posts often on Facebook. In April of 2024, they published a statement with the title "NTF-ELCAC urges proactive steps to counter youth radicalization" which says "scrutiny has fallen on organizations like League of Filipino Students (LFS), National Union of Students in the Philippines (NUSP), College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP), Kabataan, and others for their focus on targeting the youth for radicalization in relation to their association with the designated-terrorist group, Kabataang Makabayan."[82] Contrary to the claims of NTF-ELCAC, these youth organizations are progressive legal organizations.

A prominent case is Sarah Elago's. She is a former Representative of Kabataan Partylist, the youth sectoral party in the Philippine

79 Internews, Meta's Amplification of Persecution: Red-Tagging in the Philippines (2022).

80 Ibid.

81 Kristine Daguno-Bersamina, "Atom Araullo Wins P2m Damages in Red-Tagging Case vs Badoy, Celiz," Philippine Star, December 14, 2024, https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/12/14/2407367/atom-araullo-wins-p2m-damages-red-tagging-ca se-vs-badoy-celiz.

82 Amnesty International, Philippines: "I Turned My Fear into Courage."

Congress. In 2020, when she was still a lawmaker, she was attacked online multiple times. She became the subject of disinformation.[83] Her face was seen in many different posters online, especially on Facebook. One of them showed her with "new recruits of the CPP and NPA", when in fact, that photo was from an event where they hiked for a cause.[84] In an interview with Rappler, she expressed that she has been experiencing anxiety when her photo was taken to be misused and manipulated. She stated, "It's really not easy to see your own face being manipulated, photoshopped, and spread online."[85]

The Philippine News Agency (PNA), owned by the government, even went as far as to publish an article with the title, *"Yes, we're red-tagging Elago: ex-NPA officer"*.[86] They claim that a former rebel called Jeffrey Celiz is saying that Sarah Elago should stop denying her ties with the CPP-NPA-NDF.[87] However, in an investigative article published by VERA Files, Celiz appears to have a questionable reputation. While he claimed to be working in the National Operations Command (NOC) of the NPA in 2002 until 2015, Jorge Madlos, commander and spokesperson of the NOC of the NPA in 2020, said that NOC was not operational before 2016.[88]

These are only a few cases of red-tagging in the digital space, particularly seen on Facebook. However, this happens often, not only through posts but even done by trolls commenting on progressive leaders' posts, tagging them as members of the CPP.

83 Michelle Abad, "Sarah Elago: Lawmaker Under Attack," Rappler, December 21, 2020, https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/sarah-elago-lawmaker-under-attack-faces-philippines 2020-series/.

84 Rappler, "FALSE: Photo of Sarah Elago With New Recruits to CPP-NPA," June 30, 2020, https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/fact-check/265244-photo-sarah-elago-with-new-recruits-cpp-npa/.

85 Abad, "Sarah Elago: Lawmaker."

86 Lade Jean Kabagani, "Yes, We're Red-Tagging Elago: Ex-NPA Officer," Philippine News Agency, October 2, 2021, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1155407.

87 Kabagani,. "Yes, We're Red-tagging."

88 Antonio Montalvan II, "'Ka Eric' Was No Ka Eric," VERA Files, December 16, 2023, https://verafiles.org/articles/ka-eric-was-no-ka-eric.

I. METHODOLOGY & DATA ANALYSIS

RESEARCH DESIGN. A qualitative research design was used for this project, utilizing interviews and observations. Qualitative research provides an understanding of a situation or phenomenon that tells the story rather than determining cause and effect (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Glesne, 1999)[89]. The data collection techniques used in this study consisted of structured interviews and observations.

DATA COLLECTION. Data were collected using the following methods: interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observations. Multiple sources for data collection has allowed the researchers to use different data sources to validate and crosscheck findings (Patton, 1990). A total of thirty-four (34) were selected as participants through a purposive sampling method. Patton (1990)[90] cited that in purposive sampling, individuals, groups, and settings are

89 Jack R. Fraenkel and Norman E. Wallen, How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375288491_Online_assessments_in_Maldivian_higher_educati on_institutions_Challenges_faced_by_students. Corrine Glesne, Becoming Qualitative Researchers, 2nd ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999),, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375288491_Online_assessments_in_Maldivian_higher_e ducation_institutions_Challenges_faced_by_students.

90 Michael Quinn Patton, Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378272696_Types_of_Purposive_Sampling_Techniques_ with_Their_Examples_and_Application_in_Qualitative_Research_Studies.

considered for selection if they are "Information rich". Selection and identification of participants from a pool of readily available contacts. Referrals were requested from their personal contact (snowball) and were refined using the following criteria: (i) environmental defenders; (ii) members of indigenous cultural community; (iii) experienced attacks for being an environmental defender.

Our position as researchers can be affected by our social identities, researchers with experience working with members of the indigenous cultural community in Palawan and Baguio. This insider information is advantageous because it can be argued that we are grounded on the topic. However, it should be highlighted that there is an attempt from the researchers to interpret and analyze the data objectively and make the research process scientific and ethical.

INTERVIEWS. Fraenkl & Wallen (2003) have suggested that interviewing is an essential method for checking the accuracy of the impressions that a researcher has gained through observations (p. 455). Interviews can be conducted in several ways through prepared questions, a protocol or interview guide, or as an unplanned event. Patton (1990)90 described six different types of questions that all contribute valuable information to the research study: (a) experience/behavior questions - what the individual does in this situation or has previously done; (b) opinion/value questions - what the individual thinks or believes about a situation or issue; (c) feeling questions - what the individual's natural emotional responses would be to a situation or issue; (d) knowledge questions - what facts the individual knows about the situation or issue; (e) sensory questions - what sensory response the individual would have to the situation or issue; and (f) background or demographic questions - what characteristics describe the individual. Each of these

questions guides the researcher in developing an understanding of the phenomenon. Formal structured interviews were conducted for each participant at the beginning of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS. Data analysis is a key component of qualitative research. Transcripts made of audiotaped interviews were checked for accuracy against the original recordings. Data analysis was also conducted simultaneously with data collection. Extensive coding of the interview and observation transcripts was conducted by researchers. The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyze the qualitative data from different sources over time. Data were organized around each research question, which related to technology-facilitated attcks experienced by environmental defenders and the factors that shaped those experiences. Key themes and supporting quotations were extracted from interview transcripts and translated to English by bilingual research assistants. In addition, the quality of translations was assessed by bilingual senior researchers by checking and rechecking the translated transcripts against the translated interpretations.

INFORMED CONSENT. Written informed consent from the indigenous peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) in Cordillera and Mindanao before the interviews and focus group discussions were obtained. The informed consent was translated and explained to them in Filipino. They were ensured that their anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. Lastly, they were advised of their right to withdraw their participation at any time, although none of the key informants did so.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This section presents the summarized lived experiences of the Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities in Cordillera and Mindanao relative to technology-facilitated attacks and other related attacks. Likewise, salient themes from these accounts that shaped and contributed to these experiences are described.

The findings of this research are grouped into two clusters: (1) IPs in Cordillera and (2) Lumad in Mindanao. The following themes are notable and dominant in this research paper: attacks experienced by environmental defenders, gender-based violence, and technology-facilitated violence.

IPS IN CORDILLERA

1. CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE (CPA)

Five (5) participants from the local organization, Cordillera Peoples Alliance, participated as key informants. Two (2) are male, while three (3) are female, and most, if not all, hold or have held crucial positions

in the organization. Participants shared that their organization was formed mainly to fight for their right to self-determination as well as defend the ancestral domains of the indigenous peoples in Cordillera against development aggression in the 1980s during the administration of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. The main aggressors then were the Chico River Dam Project in Kalinga and Mountain Province which was funded by the World Bank and the Cellophil Resources Corporation in Abra. The latter was owned by a Marcos Sr. crony, Herminio Disini. Since then, they lamented that despite the change in government administrations, attacks on Indigenous People continued and even worsened.

One shared that despite changes in administration, the government has continued to push for aggression against their ancestral lands under the guise of national development. This is extremely difficult for them specifically because of their indigenous belief that land is life. Another informant stated that their land is communal; it cannot and should not be sold or owned by an individual.

A key informant expressed concern over the increasing mining activities in the Cordillera region, particularly for nickel and manganese. He highlighted a perceived contradiction in the discourse on "just transition" as it relates to the Cordillera region. He added that such developments reflect an "unjust transition," wherein the structural logic of extractivism remains intact. Although the transition is marketed as transformative, it continues to prioritize profit generation while externalizing environmental costs to local communities and ecosystems. In this view, the process constitutes "business as usual," with the same exploitative patterns persisting under the guise of climate action.

The key informant notably observed militarization in areas hosting large-scale development projects. As recounted, security forces reportedly employ strategies that erode community cohesion,

including fostering interpersonal conflict, coercing individuals to "surrender," and disseminating accusations that certain residents act as informants. These practices generate mistrust both across and within communities, thereby undermining collective capacity to oppose projects perceived as detrimental to local interests and well-being. The key informant referred to the case of the Karayan Dam, where, despite sustained efforts to fragment local solidarity, communities have mobilized collectively to defend their livelihoods. In this instance, the shared reliance on threatened resources has served as a unifying factor across diverse groups. Nonetheless, the informant stressed that repressive measures remain acute. In Apayao and Balbalan, locations of two large energy dam initiatives, there are reported incidents of bombing.

1.1 ATTACKS

Weaponization of the Law

Through the interviews conducted, the key informants uniformly cited the prevalence of criminalization of environmental defenders which involved mainly state agents or those wielding the power of the state. One of the key informants mentioned that the military has long been identified as one of the main perpetrators of harassment and attacks on environmental defenders. An informant even noted and shared:

> ***"[K]nown activists are visited by the military and told to leave the organizations that are affiliated with CPA. [H]ere in the Cordillera, we have what is called 'Dumanon Makitungtong', where the military will just go and visit you in your house and harass you, make you sign papers that you don't want to be affiliated with CPA."***

In the same vein, it can be gleaned from the interviews that there is a pattern of instrumentalization of the law and weaponizing justice and law and order to continue to oppress and threaten the environmental defenders. One of the ways the law has been weaponized by the state to harass the environmental defenders was through passing resolutions declaring their organization, the CPA as persona non grata.[91] Nothing could be worse than being designated as a terrorist and having CPA's bank accounts frozen.[92] One of the key informants who currently holds a high position in CPA shared, "So, all of these attacks, we have to admit, have really spread a climate of fear..."

Often, their identity as members of the CPA was equated as members of the New People's Army (NPA), the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the communist insurgency that intensified during Marcos Sr.'s martial law. One key informant narrated that criminal charges were filed against her because she refused to sign the statement of cooperation from the government and, later on, was branded as NPA. She recalled:

> ***"Ang first na gawa-gawang kaso ko ay arson dahil sa pagsunog ko raw sa dalawang sasakyan ng Philex Mining. Arson with other forms of robbery and intimidation. Kasi daw itong mga NPA na nagsunog ng mga truck [...] [,] kinuha nila ang baril ng gwardiya. Dinisarmahan nila, so robbery 'yung [kaso] nila [...] tapos intimidation. [...] Tapos mayroong two cases ding alleged violation of the International Humanitarian Law. Tapos case of rebellion. [D]ito sa rebellion, naglabas sila ng warrant of arrest." (The first case filed against me was arson because***

91 The participant shared that there were instances when local government units issued resolutions declaring them persona non grata. These resolutions were even cited on tarpaulins printed by the local government units for everyone's knowledge.

92 The participant who is an officer of CPA was designated as a terrorist and accused of using the organization's bank accounts as a means to fund terrorism.

I allegedly burned two vehicles owned by Philex Mining. Arson with other forms of robbery and intimidation. According to them, it was the NPA who set the truck on fire [...], they took the gun of the security guard, disarming him. That is why the [charge] was robbery as well as intimidation. Then, there were two other cases — alleged violation of the International Humanitarian Law and alleged rebellion. In the rebellion case, they issued a warrant of arrest.)

Abductions, Extrajudicial killings, and Enforced Disappearances

As the rule of law shrinks, impunity has become commonplace concerning the rights of environmental defenders. Furthermore, the collective rights of the environmental defenders are constantly under attack from the state.

One of the key informants narrated his abduction by state agents. It was sometime in August 2022, he was in the office at Appas, Tabuk City, Kalinga when he was abducted by the state agents and kept somewhere for more than 26 hours. One of the conditions of his release was to never report to the authorities, and he was threatened with his family members' lives. They told him that they knew his family's whereabouts and all the pertinent information relative to his family. He said:

"First, hindi ko i-re-report na na-abduct ako. Gumawa sila [...] ng alibi [...] Once na i-re-report ko... Siyempre from the start, kung hindi ka magsasabi ng... 'Alam naman namin san ang mga anak mo, san ka nagtatrabaho, saan ang mga kapatid ko.' Alam nila lahat. Until noong nag-release sila, parang ang first condition nila is never to report to anybody, not to cut off their number na binigay nila sa akin [at 'wag] papalitan 'yung aking number. ." (First, I could not report that I was abducted.

They made an alibi about what happened. They said that if I do end up reporting this, they know where my children are, where I work, and the whereabouts of my siblings. They know everything. Even until my release, the first condition was to never report to anybody, to not cut off the phone number they gave me, and to never change my phone number.)

While this key informant was lucky enough to survive the abduction and be released, others did not share the same fate as him. Other environmental defenders were extrajudicially killed. One key informant shared that in their organization, seven (7) have been extrajudicially killed. In 2006, during the Arroyo administration, one of their staff members, an organizer for peace pact holders and tribal elders was shot dead in Echague, Isabela in front of his son while traveling to Baguio. Another CPA member who was attacked was a doctor who was bringing his children to school. On the way to school, his car was gunned down; he and his three (3) children survived but his wife who was beside him died instantly.

There were also instances of enforced disappearances. A key informant narrated that in 2007, a member of CPA was taken by state agents in broad daylight, and when he pleaded for help from people, the people who took him identified themselves as police. Since then, he was never seen again. She said:

"He was actually once the head of our commission for education. In 2008, he disappeared. This happened in La Trinidad. He's from La Trinidad. Malapit sa bahay niya. So, a car came, men manually got him, took him. He was shouting, [...] asking, telling the people, 'Ah, please help me. Ask them what is wrong.' [...] They put him [...] in a van. And then since that time, he has been [...] disappeared [.] So, every September 17, we commemorate his disappearance. It's already been how many years? 2008, 17, it's already been [...] almost decades."

Surveillance and Coercion

It can be gleaned from the key informants that they have all experienced various forms of attacks from state agents. These include being tailed, surveilled, and having their photos taken. Later on, these are published, printed, and distributed to the community -imputing their participation as members of New People's Army (NPA). They are also frequently visited at their homes. Few key informants recounted being constantly followed or monitored. One key informant explained:

> ***"Naranasan ko yung nasusundan. Nasusundan ka. Naranasan ko rin ang kakausapin at yung poproyektahin ka. Hihikayatin kang mag-cooperate sa kanila... Hihingan ako ng datos." (I experienced being followed—constantly tailed. I also experienced being approached and projected as someone under suspicion. They would try to persuade me to cooperate with them... even asking me to provide information.)***

Surveillance was not limited to physical tracking but extended to coercive conversations where individuals were pressured to provide information about others. In some cases, security agents attempted to entice individuals with money to become informants.

One key informant narrated:

> ***"Somebody... introduced himself as Major Alexander Melgar... he was convincing me, he was willing to give me P200,000.00 for even just a cellphone number of the people they are looking for. And then he was trying to convince me to become an informant maybe... In exchange for money, I turned him down because I am serious with my advocacy work."***

Key informants described how security forces often entered communities and occupied public and private spaces such as houses, schools, and barangay halls. As one informant stated:

> ***"Pag hindi pa sila nag-de-detachment sa community, mag-o-occupy sila ng bahay, school, church, or brgy halls mismo. Neutralized kaagad ang may-ari ng bahay." (When they have not yet established a formal detachment in the community, they occupy private homes, schools, churches, or even barangay halls. In such cases, the homeowner is immediately neutralized.)***

The key informants recounted instances in which legal instruments were perceived to have been mobilized against them as a form of political repression. One key informant described facing multiple criminal charges, both for murder and for rebellion, despite maintaining no connection to the alleged incidents or locations.

The first case occurred during the height of COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, when the respondent was accused, along with eight others, of involvement in the 2018 killing of a Lumad individual in Davao del Norte. The alleged act was attributed to New People's Army (NPA) units. The key informant stressed their unfamiliarity with the area and lack of prior awareness of the charges:

> ***"Noong 2020 bigla akong sinampahan ng murder case sa Tagum, Davao del Norte... Isa ako sa siyam na kinasuhan... which happened noong 2018... I have never been to Davao del Norte, lalo sa Tagum o sa Kapalong." In 2020, I was suddenly charged with murder in Tagum, Davao del Norte. (I was named as one of nine accused in connection with an incident that allegedly occurred in 2018. However, I have never been to Davao del Norte, much less to Tagum or Kapalong.)***

The filing of the case was followed by heightened security measures, including a "shoot-to-kill" order, public circulation of a wanted poster both offline and online, and the posting of a bounty:

> ***"Noong January, nilabas yung shoot-to-kill order tapos inilabas ng PNP yung wanted poster ko... at tsaka patong sa ulo, bounty."*** *(In January, a shoot-to-kill order was issued against me, followed by the release of my wanted poster by the PNP, both offline and online, along with a bounty on my head.)*

In January 2023, the key informant was charged again, this time with rebellion, in connection to an armed encounter between the military and suspected NPA members in Abra in October 2022, which resulted in the deaths of two soldiers. The case involved seven accused, later referred to as the "Northern Luzon Seven," comprising members and officers of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) and allied organizations and said:

> ***"Ako daw ay bahagi ng NPA operative kaya kinasuhan kami, pito... Ito yung tinaguriang Northern Luzon Seven... Nalaman lang namin noong biglang na-arrest sa bahay niya dito sa Baguio."*** *(I was accused of being part of an NPA unit, which led to charges being filed against seven of us—later referred to as the so-called 'Northern Luzon Seven.' We only learned of the case when one of our colleagues was suddenly arrested at her home in Baguio.)*

A recurring practice involved coercing individuals into signing documents under the guise of "clearance" or "cooperation." One key informant described:

> ***"Husdar. H-U-S-D-A-R. Isa siyang... parang ipo-profile ka. I-interview ka, kukunin yung profile mo. Tapos pipirma ka... ginagamit din nila. Parang statement of cooperation mo... Na hindi ka lalaban sa gobyerno."*** *(Husdar—spelled H-U-S-D-A-R—is a process where an individual is profiled, interviewed, and their personal details recorded, after which*

they are asked to sign a document. This is then used as a so-called statement of cooperation, signifying that the individual will not oppose the government.)

Another recalled refusing to sign such a document:

***"Oo yung ganyan... pagpaclear na tinatawag nila. Hindi ako pumirma doon. After that, nagkaso na naman na kaso, kaya na-filean ako ng first na kaso."** (Yes, that process they call 'clearance.' I refused to sign it, and afterward another case was filed against me—this became the first formal charge lodged against me.)*

The refusal to cooperate often led to legal harassment, including fabricated charges and arrests. This accounts for the observed patterns of weaponization of the law by the strategic use of criminal charges to delegitimize activists, disrupt their work, and foster a climate of fear.

One key informant reflected on the decline in organizational membership within the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), attributing it to sustained political attacks and militarization in rural areas. He said:

"Yung 307 ah member organizations I am sure lumiit na yun. Kasi nga may mga organizations na naging inactive dahil nga dito sa matinding attack sa kanayunan, probinsya na biro mo maraming pumupunta na militar na umalis at mag-surrender na as is ang CPA ay armadong organization at surrender na parang wala sa law at mag-take sila ng oath of allegiance to the Philippine government tapos itatakwil ang CPA... Tapos yung maraming ah anong tawag dito, peace and order council resolutions declaring CPA as persona non-grata... Tapos yung

> ***basta kinakasuhan, yung dinudukot, pinapatay... Siyempre may chilling effect yun. Kaya ah yung dating 307 member organizations noong 2019, I am sure nabawasan yun." (The 307 member organizations, I am certain, have already decreased. Many have become inactive because of the severe attacks in the rural areas and provinces, where the military would pressure members to leave and 'surrender' under the framing that the CPA is an armed organization. These surrenders are carried out outside the bounds of law, with individuals made to take an oath of allegiance to the Philippine government and renounce the CPA. Added to this are the numerous peace and order council resolutions declaring the CPA persona non grata, along with the continuous filing of cases, abductions, and killings. Naturally, this has a chilling effect. From the original 307 member organizations in 2019, I am sure the number has already been reduced.)***

This points to a pattern of state and local government actions, including public labeling, forced "surrenders," and the passage of peace and order council resolutions, that collectively stigmatize the CPA as an "armed organization." Such measures are compounded by incidents of legal harassment, abduction, and extrajudicial killings, which the key informant identifies as producing a "chilling effect" on grassroots activism. The perception of heightened risk has reportedly led to decreased participation and the inactivity of certain member organizations, weakening the alliance's network and its capacity for coordinated mobilization.

Red-tagging

As culled from the narratives shared by the key informants, state counterinsurgency efforts, particularly under the framework of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict

(NTF-ELCAC), intersect with militarized development projects and community resistance in the Cordillera.

Some of the CPA Officers described the heightened risks associated with leadership positions, noting how state designation mechanisms have had direct organizational impacts:

> ***"As an officer of CPA, ikaw yung center of attack ng state... hanggang ngayon ako yung red-tagged, including yung pamilya... biglang na-freeze yung bank account ng CPA... Although CPA is not designated as an organization, ako ang person na na-designate, pero bakit naapektuhan ang CPA?... ihanda mo yung sarili mo na madukot, ma-red-tag, mapatay."*** *(As an officer of the CPA, you become the central target of state attacks. To this day, I continue to be red-tagged, along with my family. The CPA's bank account was suddenly frozen. Although the CPA as an organization was not formally designated, I was designated as an individual—yet the organization has been directly affected. In this position, you must always prepare yourself for the possibility of abduction, red-tagging, or even being killed.)*

Here, personal designation under the Anti-Terrorism Act is perceived to extend punitive measures to the organization itself, constraining its operational capacity.

Key informants noted a systematic process in which state agents, following military operations, profile residents and label legal organizations as NPA "fronts." This is followed by campaigns to compel community members to "surrender," sometimes multiple times. One of the key informants mentioned:

> ***"They will list all those, saying they are members of NPA-CPP or... front organizations... Some surrenders were faked. They***

> ***were forced to sign blank sheet[s]... later... the armed forces will... claim the reward money... may nag-surrender na ng apat na beses, limang beses... bahay-bahay na iniisa-isa yung mga staff, mga organizers, mga leaders."*** *(They compile lists of individuals, alleging that they are members of the NPA-CPP or its so-called front organizations. Some of the supposed surrenders were fabricated, with individuals being coerced into signing blank sheets of paper that were later used as evidence of surrender. In some cases, the armed forces would claim reward money from these falsified accounts. There were even individuals reported to have 'surrendered' four or five times. Security forces would also conduct house-to-house visits targeting staff, organizers, and community leaders.)*

The state-led repression through judicial and extrajudicial means, situating recent events within a broader historical continuum of political targeting, have intensified against the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA). One key informant explained how the Anti-Terror Law has become a key instrument for state suppression following the dismissal of earlier court cases:

> ***"Ngayon ang ginawa na nila, dahil kung sa korte ay na-di-dismiss, ginamit na nila yung Anti-Terror Act... na-designate na kami na terrorist noong June 07, 2023."*** *(What they have done now, since the cases were being dismissed in court, is to use the Anti-Terrorism Act. On June 7, 2023, we were designated as terrorists under this law.)*

This escalation was linked to earlier measures under the Duterte administration, particularly Executive Order 70, which institutionalized the (NTF-ELCAC). The same key informant recalled being among over

600 individuals named in a 2018 Department of Justice petition to proscribe the CPP-NPA-NDF as terrorist organizations:

> ***"...Kasama yung pangalan ko doon... being named as officers or members of the CPP-NPA-NDFP and being called terrorists, basically... that is a real threat to your security." (My name was included there, listed as one of the supposed officers or members of the CPP-NPA-NDFP and publicly branded as a terrorist. Such labeling poses a very real threat to one's security.)***

Although legal intervention eventually led to their delisting, public branding them as "terrorists" carried enduring reputational and security risks.

Another key informant placed these contemporary threats in historical perspective, recounting earlier waves of violence against CPA members. They noted that since its founding in 1984, the organization has experienced repeated episodes of extrajudicial killings, beginning under the Aquino administration, when the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) was given license to rule in the Cordillera. She recounted:

> ***"They killed a number of Cordillera People's Alliance officers and members... our vice chairperson... our organizer in Abra... two development workers in the Mountain Province... The CPLA had a reign of terror in the Cordillera... some of our offices had to close down kasi natakot na sila nang husto." (They killed a number of Cordillera People's Alliance officers and members... our vice chairperson... our organizer in Abra... two development workers in the Mountain Province... The CPLA had a reign of terror in the Cordillera... some of our offices had to close down out of fear.)***

The abduction of one of the CPA leaders illustrates both the acute danger and the critical role of rapid mobilization. One key informant recalled:

> ***"Kasi he was abducted... talagang madidisappear na yan... mabilis yung pagtugon... the 'Surface Steve Now' campaign... internationally... one reason kung bakit siya na-release... kailangan talaga yung quick response... disseminate as widely as possible... internationally... the United Nations."*** *(He was abducted and was on the verge of being disappeared. The rapid response was crucial—the 'Surface Steve Tauli Now' campaign, which gained international traction, was one of the reasons he was released. Quick mobilization and the widest possible dissemination, even reaching the United Nations, proved to be essential.)*

This underscores how visibility, both domestic and international, is perceived both as a protective factor against enforced disappearance.

Forced FPIC as a Form of Harassment

A key theme that emerged from the interviews is the use of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process not as a genuine mechanism of consultation, but as a means of control and harassment. While FPIC is enshrined under the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) as a safeguard for indigenous communities, participants emphasized how it has often been instrumentalized to push extractive projects without proper and transparent participation.

As one key informant recounted:

> ***"Most of the activities like for example the Saltan JBD along the Saltan River... most of their activities with the NCIP is doing the FPIC process so... Uhmm... sometimes the community***

> ***people do not know that there is an ongoing FPIC, they will just... they will just... Some communities will just inform them so even if... so... even if they were not formally invited (laughed) they go because somebody informed them that there is a... so meaning to say they were actually vigilant about the things happening during that time because they know that there is an ongoing application."***

Despite attempts to exclude or misinform them, communities relied on informal networks of communication to ensure their presence in FPIC activities. This vigilance reflects not only distrust of state-led processes but also the collective knowledge that non-participation could be used against them as tacit consent.

This resistance culminated in the establishment of a local organization, the sungkad, specifically mobilized against dam projects along the Saltan River:

> ***"So like for example, in between Balbalan and Pinukpuk in 2022, they were able to put up their... the sungkad or the local organization to fight against the dam... even with the restrictions, they were able to gather I think a hundred, more than a hundred delegation to the launching of the organization..."***

The ability to gather over a hundred delegates despite lockdown demonstrates how forced FPIC and extractive pressures catalyzed stronger organizing rather than silencing communities.

Overall, the key informants depict a pattern in which counterinsurgency tools such as designation as a terrorist, financial restrictions, surrender campaigns, surveillance, and direct military action, are mobilized not only against armed groups but also against legal, rights-based organizations opposing development

projects. The resulting climate of fear, harassment, and coercion is understood by the key informants as part of a sustained strategy to weaken organized dissent in resource-rich regions.

The attacks on environmental defenders, which created a climate of fear, have contributed to the dwindling membership of CPA over the years. Many of them find themselves helpless with limited resources or lacking the capacity to assert their rights against monied corporations and state agents with technical resources and manpower at their disposal.

1.2 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

While as a whole, the IPs of the Cordillera are constantly attacked, they also specifically experience gender-based violence, especially in the remote militarized communities.

Forms of gender-based violence

SEXUAL HARASSMENT. Sexual harassment cases are not unheard of among the communities in the Cordillera. Some women are courted by military personnel and impregnated only to be abandoned later on. However, some victims of rape and sexual violence choose to settle the matter amicably, due to social stigma attached to the subject. One informant said that cases are also not often pursued because of this.

It was mentioned by one of the key informants that the settlement is usually orchestrated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the national military organization:

> ***"For instance, [...] during the struggle diyan sa Lepanto, diyan sa Mankayan, Benguet. She was 16 years old at the time eh. And, the man, the military man was actually identified. [I]t was a case [of rape] na hinandle [ng] women's alliance, Innabuyog.***

So, kinuha 'yung victim, kinausap 'yung family. Pero, you know, in cases like this, ang mahirap kasi, the family has to file the case and then has to be strong to pursue the case, etc. In many cases, what happens is the military, his unit, or the accused will try to negotiate [...]. They'll try to convince the family, 'Aaregluhin na lang natin', or they will try to pay [.] And then, syempre, the stigma kasi of sexual violence ano or abuse like rape, it is never easy naman, 'di ba, for a woman to really talk about and pursue. So this case, akala namin, kasi it had reached the court nga eh... Akala namin it would really be pursued to the end. Pero somewhere in the middle or whatever, nag-give up 'yung victim and the family." (For instance, this was documented during the struggle at Lepanto, Mankayan, Benguet. She was 16 years old at the time and the man, a member of the military, was identified. It was a case handled by our women's alliance, Innabuyog. So we talked to the victim and her family. This was difficult because the family had to file the case and the case had to be strong, evidence-wise etc. In many cases, what happens is the military, his unit, or the accused will try to negotiate. They will try to convince the family to settle the matter amicably and they will offer to pay. Other than that, of course, there is stigma attached to sexual violence like rape, which is never easy for a woman to talk about and pursue. So this case, we thought, since it reached the court, we thought they would pursue and see the case to the end but somewhere in the middle, the family of the victim just gave up.)

Another informant said that before, when mass leaders are assigned to different areas, military personnel would sleep with wives of said leaders. There are also instances when they start rumors that the said leaders are having an affair, the goal being to destroy the

relationships of the mass leaders.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. While state forces are often the perpetrators of gender-based violence in Cordillera communities, there are also a few cases of domestic violence according to one informant. Often, they said, the ones guilty in this case are men in the same community who also lead "difficult lives".

TRUMPED UP CHARGES AND ATROCIOUS DETENTION CONDITIONS. Another key informant identified the filing of trumped-up charges against women organizers and community leaders as a form of gender-based violence. While all organizers, including indigenous leaders and environmental defenders, face the same risks, particularly, women are more vulnerable to more atrocious conditions when these charges happen.

Such was the case of Beatrice "Betty" Belen. She is an indigenous woman human rights defender, a member of Innabuyog, and part of the Uma people in Lubuagan, Kalinga in the Cordillera region. She was awarded Gawad Bayani ng Kalikasan (Environmental Hero Award) in 2018; and in 2012, she led a barricade with her fellow Kalingas against the Chevron Energy company's geothermal power project in their province.[93] At the time, Chevron was already installing their implements without the people's consent.[94]

In 2021, houses in their community were searched, including hers. After the search, she was arrested because of trumped up charges, namely, the possession of firearms and explosives. She was then detained in a cell with male detainees, a blatant violation of and disrespect to her rights. The key informant said:

> ***"[S]he's a mother, grandmother pa nga, and everything eh. […] [S]he's a woman leader and then parang to be treated like that,***

93 Drop All Charges and Release Betty Belen Now! - Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

94 Four heroic women for Mother Earth

> ***and then to be brought to a jail where there are no facilities naman for women, 'di ba? And then [...] it had to be a demand actually that she be given a separate facility, kasi syempre there should be separate facilities for women prisoners." (She's a mother, a grandmother, a woman leader. To be treated like that... She was put in jail where there are no facilities for women. And she had to demand to be given a separate facility because there should be separate facilities for women.)***

This affirms the earlier note that while all members of the indigenous community suffer from oppression and attacks from the military, it is women, especially, indigenous women defenders, who bear the additional brunt.

Responses to gender-based violence

As stated earlier, rape cases and other sexual violence cases are not often pursued in the indigenous communities of the Cordillera largely due to stigma and shame. However, in CPA, they mentioned that through their educational work, they discuss and advocate for gender sensitivity. These discussions include what steps women in communities may take should they be sexually violated. They also offer psychosocial processing for victims through their women's organization.

One informant admitted though, that despite efforts, it is difficult to campaign for gender sensitivity for communities. This is because campaigning for it entails convincing the victim and their family to discuss, face, and be open about the gender-based violence that they experienced again.

In the rare instances that the case is brought to court, CPA looks for lawyers to represent the victim as this is also a way to show the full impact of militarization in communities.

When it comes to domestic violence, the two clans involved would discuss. Sometimes, the berangay officials would facilitate this discussion if complaints were raised at the barangay level. The clans weigh if the couple can still stay together and reiterate the obligations of the couple to each other. In the discussion, they also determine the roles and responsibilities of both clans to right the wrong.

Evidently, the mechanisms to respond to gender-based violence are not yet deeply developed in the communities because of social stigma and the power held by most perpetrators as state forces.

1.3 TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED VIOLENCE

Attacks on the ground against the Indigenous Peoples of Cordillera, especially the organizers, continue. However, with the rise of the digital age, attacks against them have also been hurled digitally. As aforementioned, this will be referred to as technology-facilitated violence since technology is used as a tool to perpetuate violence against victims. Often, this violence involves the use of smartphones, social media, and the Internet.

All the key informants shared that they have experienced technology-facilitated violence, often perpetuated by state agents. These attacks take on many forms, but a common theme is that the attacks target not only the key informants, but their families as well. There are instances when their siblings, spouses, and children are also harassed.

Forms of technology-facilitated violence

DISINFORMATION THROUGH SMEAR CAMPAIGNS *(Photoshopped posters*, misleading videos)* Sometimes, counterparts of these online posters are also printed and distributed in various places, especially near the neighborhood of those they want to attack.

The key informants expressed that they are the target of disinformation online, especially on Facebook. Often, this would take on the form of Photoshopped posters of them and their families. Their faces are strewn all over social media where they are branded as members of the NPA. Sometimes, the posters would also assert that they have corrupt values.

For example, one key informant has received accusations of being a member of the NPA since he became active in the organization. This worsened in 2020 during the pandemic; at this point, he was also being accused of being a terrorist and a corrupt leader. A poster from a random Facebook account inserted his face with his children's, implying that he is encouraging his kids to launder two million pesos. The post is still uploaded (as of time of writing). He also shared:

> ***"Yung isa palang ginagawang nakasama, attack sa aking pamilya, 'yung inilagay ang mukha ko [at] apat kong anak in our Igorot indigenous attire na kinuha nila sa iba't ibang account ng mga anak ko[,] kinopya, Phinotoshop [at] pinagtipon kami. Tapos siyempre hindi man lang binlur ang aming mga mukha. At sinasabi, 'O, itong mga anak mo [...] dahil NPA recruiter ka, sila nga 'yung papuntahin mo sa bundok para maging NPA.' [...] [L]ater on, 'yung aking pinakabunso in 2020, he was still 16 years old, [...] liban doon sa overall na attack sa akin, mayroon ding attack sa kaniya. [May] pumapasok na unknown person sa kaniyang Messenger [at sinasabing], ''Yung tatay mo NPA, ang tatay mo mamamatay-tao." (One thing that really affected me was when they attacked my family. They compiled and Photoshopped different photos of me and my children in our Igorot indigenous attire from our Facebook accounts. In the post, they were tagging me***

> ***as a recruiter of the NPA and challenging me to send my children to the mountains to take up arms. Aside from this, in 2020, his youngest who was 16 years old then, would receive messages on Messenger from unknown people, telling him that his father was an NPA rebel and murderer.)***

One of the informants also shared that the attacks feel even worse when they are tagged, not just as rebels, but as terrorists:

> ***"Pero 'yung sabihan kang terorista, matindi na 'yun kasi demonyo ka na eh. Ang terorista kasi, tulad ni Osama bin Laden, [ng] Abu Sayyaf, 'di ba. [...] '[Y]ung nilalabas ng troll accounts, 'yung aming picture, ginagawa 'yung mukha namin na Osama bin Laden." (But when they call you a terrorist, that's really intense. They're comparing you to Osama Bin Laden, to the Abu Sayyaf. The troll accounts post our photos, editing them to make us like Osama Bin Laden.)***

One of them also experienced having a wanted poster with their face and a bounty of PHP 100,000. This was posted on Facebook by the Kalinga PNP page in 2021 when the informant was accused of alleged murder in Tagum, Davao, a place he has never visited.

Other photos of other informants are made to appear as mugshots, usually taken during arrest for a criminal case, and circulated within their barangay and neighbouring barangays.

Another example of this kind of propaganda was in the form of videos. One of them detailed that the AFP or PNP would go around communities with video materials they edited containing stolen photos of the Cordillera activists in rallies or forums, discouraging those in the area from joining their organizations. They would also ask people to report them to state authorities. Some of these videos would even be shown in regular meetings of barangay councils and

in schools, allowing CPA to confirm that they are state forces as they are in uniform.

An informant also mentioned how her daughter's video was spread online:

> ***"There were military personnel who circulated the video of my daughter. My daughter was in Manila [...] She was at a rally. And the issue was intense militarization and bombing in Mindanao [...] [S]he was speaking [...] [T]he military edited that video and projected that my daughter is a [member of the] NPA, and then they circulated that on social media."***

She said she found the video through an OFW (overseas Filipino worker) relative who shared the post. When the informant mentioned that they were sharing malicious content about her daughter and their own niece, the informant's family began tracing for the original source and was successful in having it taken down after.

One also recounted how specifically, PowerPoint presentations were used against them and their family:

> ***"PowerPoint was used against us. Lt. Marcelo from the 54thIB [Infantry Batallion] I think. [In an NCIP (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples) conference in Baguio], there were more than a thousand participants in that meeting. I'm not sure what the agenda was, but he presented a PowerPoint presentation against my family–me, my husband, my daughter, who was also an activist in Manila. Half of his presentation [was] trying to vilify us, telling the audience that we are NPA. [S]ome of the participants know us, so they were worried. They sent us the Powerpoint presentation. It was [...] a PowerPoint presentation and a video. So, we complained at the CHR [Commission on Human Rights]. [W]hen finally,***

> ***the CHR summoned Lt. Marcelo, he [admitted] that he did it, [reasoning that] we are members of the NPA [...] I was dismayed by the reaction of the CHR. [The] CHR did not even reprimand them."***

One of the key informants also mentioned having experienced being the subject of a smear campaign intended to malign and vilify him, accusing him of being a womanizer:

> ***"Hindi nila ako masira, hindi nila ako ma-vilify, hindi ako maatake. Alam niyo kung anong ginawa nila, nag-imbento sila online na ako ay nambababae, immoral. In fact, hindi lang 'yun online eh, pati ano 'yung offline poster. Tapos ikinalat doon sa gilid ng kalsada papunta sa amin. [...] Eh hindi 'yun umubra. [P]revious to that, kinukurakot ko daw 'yung pera ng CPA. Pero 'yung mga nauna, [sinasabi na] ako ay NPA recruiter, komunista, ito daw 'yung aking pangalan na alyas ko sa NPA, at ito ang aking ranggo. Tapos siyempre hindi umubra 'yun kasi luma na, hindi pinapansin yan. [...] Ginawa namang ako daw ay immoral. Tapos alam mo, 'yung napakasama doon? 'Yung gagawin nila 'yung isang poster, [...] i-pho-Photoshop kayo."*** *(They cannot vilify and attack me. Do you know what they do? They make up stories online that I am a womanizer, immoral. In fact, this is not just online but there was an offline poster too. [...] But they were not successful. Before that, they made up stories and rumors that I was an NPA recruiter, I was a communist, even saying my supposed alias at the NPA with my supposed rank. Of course, that did not work because that's an old tactic. Then, they said I was stealing money from the CPA. That I was an NPA recruiter, I was a communist, even saying my supposed alias at the NPA with my supposed rank. Of course, this was also unsuccessful.*

That's when they began saying I was immoral. What's worse is they even Photoshopped photos and made it appear that I was immoral.)

ONLINE HATE AND TROLL COMMENTS. Even when the informants ignore posts about them, posts that they make on their own profiles are also attacked ruthlessly online.

One of them narrated that after protesting about the transfer of the burial of then President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. at the Libingan ng mga Bayani[95], his comment section was swarmed with hate:

"Noong [...] kailan ba yung pambansang lakbayan sa Manila [noong 2016] [...] Noong sikretong inilibing si Marcos [Sr.] sa Libingan ng mga Bayani, that time nasa Manila kami. At ah isa kami sa nagprotesta. Naglabas ako ng one-minute video. Grabe. Two thousand comments [...] siguro 96% [...], lahat 'yan ay bash." ([In 2016] It was during the time when Marcos [Sr.] was secretly buried at the Heroes' Cemetery. [...] We were in Manila then and I released a one-minute video protesting Marcos' burial at the Heroes' Cemetery. The video garnered two thousand comments and about 96% was pure bashing).

In the Philippines, troll farms are prevalent. These farms are used to create fake identities on social media with multiple accounts which either post political propaganda or attack critics.[96] In the case of the informants, it is the latter.

95 Ferdinand Marcos Sr. was the president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986. He is known to be a dictator who implemented martial law in the Philippines to extend his presidential term. His administration was responsible for widespread human rights abuses and corruption.

96 Philippines Troll Patrol: The woman taking on trolls on their own turf

administration was responsible for widespread human rights abuses and corruption.

SURVEILLANCE AND THREATENING MESSAGES. Unfortunately, surveillance is not new in the Philippines. Activists and organizers often assume that they are surveilled even without any evidence so that they can take the necessary precautions, protecting themselves early on.

However, with social media, it has become easier to track people. Some of the informants are relentlessly messaged by strangers, often through Facebook Messenger or text. One of them said that she was being tracked on Messenger in 2022:

> ***"In 2022, they used Messenger to track me. I don't know when it started but [I remember the date,] May 30, 2022 just after the election. They kept on messaging me to invite me to talk to them, at the same time threatening me [that] if I don't face them, if I don't talk to their boss, something [would] happen to me. Telling me that if [I] don't cooperate, a case will be charged against [me]."***

In January of 2022, she was arrested on the grounds of alleged rebellion or insurrection.

There was also a case where a stranger on Messenger pretended to be a member of the informant's tribe, claiming to know the informant personally:

> ***"[H]e was asking if I [was] the one who surrendered and then, when I said, 'No, I did not surrender because there is nothing... There is no reason for me to surrender', he said, 'Oh, why are you ashamed to accept that you are a surrenderee?'. I said, 'No, I didn't really surrender'".***

The same person asked them to give up the location of their hideouts and warehouse for supposed armaments implying that the arms exist in the first place. Whoever was messaging the informant was trying to gather 'evidence' that the informant was really a rebel.

One informant also shared that once, a co-organizer was attending a meeting when her spouse received a malicious text message saying:

> ***"Alam mo ba kung nasaan ang asawa mo? Ang galing-galing pala niya sa kama."*** *(Do you know where your wife is? I didn't know she was so good in bed.)*

Another experienced being surveilled through the comments section. He said:

> ***"[H]alimbawa, [...] may isang post noong bina-bash ako, [...] biglang may pumasok na comment tapos inilagay 'yung aking picture na kumakain ako sa isang restaurant. Ibig sabihin, under surveillance ako. Kung saan ako pumupunta, pinipicturan ako, biglang inilagay doon. Kaya ibig sabihin, saan nanggaling yun? Ibig sabihin, kahit pala sa pinupuntahan kong kumakain ako, may nakaabang sa akin, sumusunod sa akin. Anong ibig sabihin nun? Talagang ibig sabihin nun na saan ka man pupunta, sinusundan ka namin, o papatayin ka namin."*** *(For example, there was a post where I was being bashed and then a comment appeared posting my photo eating inside a restaurant. This means that I am under surveillance. They take my photos everywhere and they post these as comments. I asked myself, where did that come from? This means, even when I'm eating at the restaurant, someone is tailing me. That seems to tell me that wherever I go, they would follow me, they would kill me.)*

Another key informant said that before his abduction, he would constantly receive text messages from unregistered numbers. The messages indicated that if he did not speak with "them", something bad would happen to him. Whenever he would try to call them, the number would not be available anymore. He also mentioned that when he was abducted, he was interviewed. And despite his phone being turned off, his interviewee was able to access his files. Moreover, they connected his phone to a laptop and they were able to open his messages from Signal which is supposedly an end-to-end encryption providing security.

It is clear that despite an attempt on safety protocols in the digital space, it is difficult to be untraceable with the current technology.

Causes and perpetrators of technology-facilitated violence

The key informants all shared that most of these posts come from troll accounts of whose identities are close to impossible to trace. These accounts are usually small, but their posts are sometimes shared by official pages of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and the PNP (Philippine National Police).

There are also instances when the official pages themselves red-tag the informants. They also noted that the online attacks have noticeably worsened in 2020 during the beginning of the pandemic, taking advantage of the lockdowns.

One example of a post from the state forces was made on Facebook in 2020 by the 54th Infantry Battalion (IB) of the Philippine army. This IB is assigned to Baguinge, Kiangan, Ifugao. They posted a statement made by then mayor of Sadanga, Mountain Province, Gabino. P. Ganggangan. The statement stated that the CPA, together with other affiliate organizations, is an "insurgency virus" and the youth must be shielded from them.[97]

97 54th Infantry Magilas Battalion, Philippine Army, "WHO WERE the TRUE DEFENDERS?," Facebook, May 26, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=702225107268726&set=a.447765262714713.

An informant also mentioned that she was able to confirm that the military was behind messaging her on Messenger:

> ***"But I know that the military is behind that because when I was tailed [physically] by the military. I was approached by the Intelligence several times and they were telling me, 'We have messaged you on your Messenger but you were not responding."***

It is boldly apparent that the state and its forces–particularly the military, the police, the local government units, and NTF-ELCAC–are responsible for many of the technological attacks. While some attacks come from troll accounts, the official pages who share or interact with the posts are evidently involved.

One informant called the shift to technological attacks from the state as a "more sophisticated tactic" to dampen their resistance.

Responses to technology-facilitated violence

When the informants were asked how they responded to online attacks, specifically on Facebook, they gave a few courses of action. The first option they mentioned was reporting the malicious activity on Facebook, so that the post can be taken down and the account can be suspended. However, they did not always do reports. One said:

> ***"I did not report [to] Meta because at that time, I don't know how they [could] help me. In the first place, they are allowing it to happen so I [didn't] have the trust that they [could] help me at that time."***

While reporting posts and accounts can definitely help at times, it is not lost that Meta can be frustrating with its lack of content regulation that may harm some of its users.

To protect their families, some of them had their children change their surnames on their Facebook accounts, so that they are not easily tracked and associated.

The second option, especially as individuals, was to block or unfriend people who turned out to be trolls. The informants added that they tried to selectively respond to online accusations to set the record straight. Often, responding only worsened when they did choose to respond. As the key informants were older, they also said that they left responding to the younger members of the organization, as they were more knowledgeable about online spaces.

One of the informants also narrated that in 2021, the youth leaders of Cordillera experienced a victory regarding online attacks. In Baguio City, Judge Emmanual Cacho Rasing granted a Writ of Amparo. This writ ordered the Cordillera PNP to, "[R]efrain during the pendency of this case from making any publication in social media or otherwise, which brands or tags petitioners and the organization they belong, as stated in the petition, as communist terrorists, NPA/CPP fronts, NPA/CPP recruiters and other similar contents." For a time, the respondent said, incriminating posts were taken down. However, these cases are arising again.[98]

Meanwhile, one informant admitted that even in digital spaces, local indigenous communities were at a disadvantage, especially compared to the resources of corporations and the government who used technology as an apparatus (e.g., troll farms).

While the key informants and the communities they work with try their best to respond in appropriate ways to defend themselves, there is a stark difference between their power and capacity

98 Philippine Collegian, "Baguio City Judge Emmanuel Cacho Rasing Issued a Writ of Amparo," Facebook, March 26, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=3781477051933214&set=pcb.3781477448599841.

compared to the ones who attack them. While they try to set up mechanisms to respond to this dilemma, it remains insufficient.

It is also apparent that technology-facilitated violence deeply affects them and their relationships. In addition, the attacks pose serious security risks affecting their mobility. This underscores how serious the violence in the digital space is, and how important it is to find effective ways to respond to these attacks.

2. INDIGENOUS PEOPLE/INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMMUNITIES IN ITOGON, BENGUET

The focus group discussion (FGD) was joined by eleven (11) members of a small-scale mining indigenous people/indigenous cultural community, composed of about five hundred twenty-six (526) households in Sitio Dalicno, Brgy. Ampucao, Itogon, Benguet.

In terms of livelihood, about ninety percent (90%) of the community relies on small-scale gold mining, while the remaining ten percent (10%) relies on agriculture. As small-scale miners, the participants have a united goal of protecting the environment and their ancestral domain. They identified the places they can mine, and are very particular about the waste from mining, or if these would be a source of accidents. They also strongly disapprove large-scale mining companies that are trying to encroach their ancestral domain, and mining activities conducted in places that are not part of their Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA).

The established social relationship and cultural practices among the indigenous people/Indigenous Cultural Communities in Itogon, Benguet play an important role in their community. In general, these are instrumental in keeping the unity and harmonious relationship in the community. One cultural practice that emphasizes the culture of sharing is called “watwat”, a traditional way of cooking

meat. Often prepared during special occasions, watwat is pork boiled in a pot with no spices, and is given by the hosts to the guests as part of the celebration.[99] It encourages the host to invite their neighbors to join them.

As small-scale miners, they also share whatever they were able to mine with the elderly, the women, and young children. The key informants further shared that they have a bayanihan system which they call "gamal", an Ibaloi term for free and collective labor, which also encourages the community to increase their capacity.[100] The community in Dalico practices this through coming together to support a neighbor in need. They would give what they can, and give out gold that they mined (or its cash equivalent) to all the members of their community. Likewise, this practice has resulted in the community's independence, allowing them to build their own school for their children, put up their own water tanks, and pave the roads from their community to the school.

Their small-scale mining customs are also communal. They make their own tunnels which they call "adit". Each tunnel is approximately 1.5 meters by 2 meters, and is shared with others in the community. They have regulations for this practice: for one, if an area is being proposed to be a tunnel, it is inspected first. Tunnels cannot be built under a house, or directly above or below the community, because of the waste it creates. They also added that these tunnels are shared among the community. An association manages small-scale mining in their area. While they have been mining for a long time, they give credit to their customs and traditions for prolonging their resources, such as butchering pigs and praying, and practicing the culture of sharing.

99 Manila Bulletin, "Cordillera 'Mangan Taku' Food Fest Features 'Watwat' in Baguio City," Manila Bulletin, April 23, 2022, https://mb.com.ph/2022/4/23/cordillera-mangan-taku-food-fest-features-watwat-in-baguio-city.

100 KAIABANG-CPA Benguet, "Residents of Aleb, Baayan, and Pigeng Relived 'Gamal' to Restore Their Water System," Facebook, October 28, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/cpabenguet/posts/gamal-an-ibaloi-term-for-free-and-collective-labor-the-practic e-signifies-the-at/1161467964768 56/.

When asked what the differences are between small-scale mining and large-scale mining, they said that small-scale mining is much less invasive. While their tunnels are 1.5 meters by 2 meters, large-scale tunnels are about 10 meters. In addition, large-scale mining requires machinery, while small-scale mining in their community only involves tools such as shovels, mattocks, mallets, and chisels.

2.1 ATTACKS

Beginning of attacks

The group shared that they first experienced attacks in 2023, when they opposed the large-scale mining company, Itogon-Suyoc Resources, Inc. (ISRI), from operating in their community.

To obtain their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), a requirement to mine ancestral lands, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) talked with the Itogon locals, which concluded in 2023. These talks spanned years, however. They began in 2012 with ISRI, offering an application for production sharing agreement (APSA 103) to mine 581 hectares (1,426 acres) of Itogon land, covering nearly the whole of Dalicno. This agreement would have given ISRI access to 22 million tons of gold-bearing ore for the next 25 years.[101]

The talks stopped for a while after this. This resumed in 2018. Thereafter, their APSA 103 was rejected by Itogon communities in 2022.[102] One of the respondents even shared:

> ***"Dumating na itong ISRI, 'yung APSA 103 nila. [...] Tinanggihan talaga ng community 'yung APSA 103 application ng large-scale [mining company] kasi kasali nga 'yung mga kabahayan,***

101 Michael Beltran, "Indigenous Philippine Village Rejects Gold Mine, Cites Flawed Consultation," Mongabay Environmental News, May 1, 2024, https://news.mongabay.com/2024/05/indigenous-philippine-village-rejects-gold-mine-cites-flawed-consulta tion/.

102 Ibid.

> ***water source, 'yung mga pamumuhay ng mga small-scale [miners].*** *(The ISRI arrived with their APSA 103 application. The community really rejected the APSA 103 of the large-scale mining company then because it encroaches our houses, our water source, and the livelihood of the small-scale miners.)*

However, ISRI responded with a motion for reconsideration in 2023, causing another series of talks to be launched. By September 2023, an agreement was finalized between ISRI and Indigenous representatives with the help of the NCIP. However, residents from Dalicno, the area most affected by ISRI's mining, were unaware that their supposed FPIC was finally secured, and that an agreement was set in place.[103] They shared in the FGD:

> ***"Nag-motion for reconsideration sila [ISRI]. Nag-pick sila ng mga elders daw. 'Yun 'yung kinausap nila sa FPIC. 'Yung mga elder leaders daw. Sila 'yung nag-represent doon sa community. [D]apat yung ISRI sana, pinrisenta ulit doon sa affected area [Dalicno]. [...] Hindi ko alam kung anong pinag-uusapan noon at bakit biglang nabaliktad yung decision."*** *(ISRI filed a motion for reconsideration. They said they picked elders whom they spoke with to obtain the FPIC. They represented the community. What ISRI should have done is speak with the affected area [Dalicno]. I do not know what they discussed then and why the decision to reject their APSA 103 was suddenly overturned.)*

Another participant of the FGD said directly:

> ***"In short, there is no FPIC sa directly affected na community [....] Ang tinawag na nila 'yung representative namin na IP***

103 Ibid.

> ***pero hindi namin alam. Hindi nagpa-meeting [...] Hindi naman sinabi sa community. Walang information. Kulang." (In short, there is no FPIC from the directly affected community. When they called for an IP representative, we did not know. There was no meeting. No one told us in the community. There was a lack of information.)***

A journalistic case study from Mongabay also cited an elder from the Dalicno community who was not part of the discussion regarding the motion, but took part in the FPIC talks until 2022. They said, "When we said 'No to APSA' in 2022, I thought that was the end of it. I never knew about any motion for reconsideration. I just found out there was a signed agreement that nobody informed me about." They also mentioned that the representative who replaced him was not chosen through a community decision.[104]

When Dalicno residents began opposing the ISRI mining project, as well as the supposedly approved APSA, the attacks in the community also began.

Forms of attacks

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY THROUGH ECONOMIC INTERESTS. ISRI has employed several tactics, primarily economic, such as offering jobs with compensation packages to the members of their community. This resulted in a division in their community, as some accepted the job offers extended by the large-scale mining company, while some refused, as this would make them employees of the company. From the FGD, one respondent stated:

> ***"Bumalik doon sa community [ang kompanya]. Syempre nag-offer 'yung [ISRI sa] mga ibang tao doon. Kaya nag-divide na 'yung... Nagkagulo na 'yung mga tao. Dahil sa mga offer***

104 Ibid.

> ***na, 'Dito kayo magtatrabaho.'" (The company returned to the community. Of course, they gave offers to the residents. This caused division and chaos amongst us. They offered residents jobs.)***

They also discussed the Big Brother-Small Brother (BBSB) initiative, which the ISRI follows. It is a government initiative requiring mining companies to employ locals in the areas affected as contract miners. A few participants of the FGD were part of this. However, when the conflict between ISRI and the community began, they were removed from the program and their association was not renewed:

> ***"Kaming tatlo ang naalis, kaming tatlo ang leader sa BBSB. 'Yung mga kasama namin, yung lima yata, hindi sila naalis." (The three of us who were leaders of BBSB were removed. Meanwhile, maybe five of our other colleagues were not).***

Even the law was effectively used as an instrument to restrict their livelihood. They described their ordeal in detail and shared that a stoppage order on small-scale mining operations of members of the Dontog Manganese Pocket Miners Association (Domapma) was implemented, allegedly violating the Philippine Mining Act or R.A. 8942. The community felt railroaded when the Mines and Geosciences Board (MGB) issued the stoppage order without conducting an investigation.

The group lamented the discord sowed by the large-scale mining company in their community. Because other members of their community were enticed by the offer to be employed by the company, they resented those who vehemently refused the company's offer. One of the members of the community who worked for the large-scale mining company, while drunk, fired a gun, held two bolos, and threatened those who oppose the large-scale mining company

for fear of losing his job. The one who threatened them was told a different story regarding their opposition:

> ***"Yung linalabas kasi nila [ISRI], ina-apply-an daw namin 'yung trabaho nila. Matatanggal daw sila sa trabaho, para kami 'yung susunod. Parang nasisiraan kami na, parang inaagaw namin yung trabaho nila."*** *(ISRI told them that we are applying for their jobs. They will be removed from work so that we can replace them. From the stories they hear, it sounds like we want to steal their jobs.)*

They also talked about other instances of community relationships being affected:

> ***"Isipin mo yun, imbes na kumakain kayo sa kainan, kumakanta nang magkakasama doon sa community, [...] mayroong magsasabi sa 'yo, 'Itapon sa kanal na yan.'"*** *(Think about it, instead of eating together at a celebration, singing together with the community, you would hear someone tell you that you should be thrown in the sewer."*
>
> ***"Nagbago talaga po. Pati 'yung mga magkakapatid, magkakamag-anak, magkakakapamilya, [nahati]."*** *(The community really changed. Even siblings, relatives, and families got divided.)*
>
> ***"Kung magkakasulubong kayo sa makitid na daan, walang ibang daan [...] [h]indi nila [maitapat] 'yung mata nila sa amin."*** *(If you encounter each other in a narrow path and there is no other way, they cannot look you in the eye.)*

SURVEILLANCE AND RAIDS. The attacks escalated as a substantial number of their community continued to resist the entry of the large-scale mining company. They experienced being surveilled

by military personnel; some of them were visited in their houses, and tracking devices were attached to their vehicles to monitor their movements:

> ***"Pinupuntahan [kami] ng mga intel ng army, [...] pini-picture-an 'yung bahay [...] Alam namin na 'yung sasakyan namin 'yung nilagyan ng tracking device[.]" (Intelligence from the army would visit us and take pictures of our houses. We know that our vehicles themselves have a tracking device too.)***

Their houses were also raided because they were falsely accused of being in possession of guns and explosives. Before the raid, they got a tip that 1) their house will be raided and, 2) to withdraw all their money from the bank as their bank account might get frozen.

These and other varied experiences of attacks for their strong opposition towards the large-scale mining company have particularly altered their lives as a once-united community.

Response to the attacks

Despite being overwhelmed with fear, they had no other choice but to remain calm, as shared by one of the key informants:

> ***"Kalma lang po. Hindi po kami nag-re-resist. Parang wala po kaming kalaban-laban kasi tingnan nyo naman 'yung armas, pang-giyera talaga na naka-bullet-proof [vest pa.] [...]." (We stay calm. We do not resist because even if we do, we acknowledge that we pale in comparison to them to have weapons for war. They even have bullet proof vests.)***

While the attacks continued, eventually, even the police and military personnel sent to their community adapted to the situation. They recalled that they felt like criminals whenever the police came to

their community. However, they took these visits as opportunities to explain their situation. The majority of the respondents acknowledged that resorting to violence would just get them killed, so the consensus was to fight back through the legal mechanisms in place. One described:

> ***"Dinadaan lang po namin sa legal basis lahat. Wala pong kumokontra na pagkita ng at least, kahit paano, naiintindihan nila yung sitwasyon namin. Kaya wala silang magagawa kasi may order 'yung mga pulis. Wala pong kumokontra na nagpapakita ng mga violent moves doon sa amin. Ngayon lang po ginagawa namin is mga legal moves. Talagang magastos. Malaki talaga, kasi alam naman natin pag may legal counsel. [...] Kaya ang ginagawa po namin is nagpapatulong [...] doon sa mga kaso." (We use legal means [...] We don't use force or violence as a form of opposition. Now, what we do is resort to legal mechanisms. It is really expensive because it is expensive to have legal counsel. That's why we ask for help for these cases.)***

Another mentioned that they experienced doing a barricade, as the large-scale mining company wanted to close down the small tunnels they dug for mining:

> ***"Nagbarricade po doon sa trabaho kasi talagang gusto nilang sirain 'yung... Itikom nila 'yung mga mining grounds ng mga small-scale miners, hindi naman po nila pag-aari..." (We barricaded at work because they [large-scale mining company] really want to close the mining grounds of small-scale miners which they do not own.)***

Currently, the members of the community who remain steadfast in rejecting ISRI's APSA 103 as it encroaches their resources have filed a petition. They are asking the court to issue a temporary

restraining order (TRO), and/or a writ of preliminary injunction, to stop the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Central Office from processing APSA 103, and to bar the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) from approving it.

They continue to resist and assert their rights to their ancestral lands.

2.2 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The group shared that there are little to no instances of gender violence perpetrated by state agents in their community, but instances of gender-based violence within the members of their community exist. One noted that there are few instances of physical abuse to wives and voyeurism, but denied any occurrence of gender-based violence. Even with the members of the LGBTQIA community, the group shared that there is no known instance where they are discriminated against.

2.3 TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED VIOLENCE

Online red-tagging and smear campaigns

Concerning technology-facilitated violence, all key informants shared experiencing attacks in the digital space. The most prominent attack, still, being red-tagging. One mentioned that when CPA began helping them with their fight against large-scale mining, they started being red-tagged as NPA members.

One of the key informants shared experiencing harassment on social media, and being called members of the NPA by the employees of the large-scale mining company. He narrated that it did not faze him being called an NPA, because he is not; but when it was posted on Facebook, it bothered him, especially reading comments from

random people insinuating that their daughters have also been recruited. He described:

> ***"Ako, wala ma'am sa akin personally 'yun. [...] May nag-comment doon na, ah malalaki na yung mga anak nila pwede na nilang isali sa NPA. 'Yun 'yung masakit kasi 'yung anak ko po, mga babae na dalaga po, siyempre active siya [sa social media]. Kasama rin dyan 'yung kapag nabasa niya 'yun, malaking impact doon sa mga bata na bakit nadadamay sila doon. Actually nasa akin 'yung screenshot para pwede nating magamit sa susunod kung sakali[.]" (For me, ma'am, it does not affect me personally. [But] someone posted a comment and said that my children are now adults and can be recruited as members of the NPA. This is what hurts me the most because my daughters are also active on social media. They would read these things online. These have a great impact on them; they might wonder why they are getting dragged into the situation. Actually, I have the screenshot that we can use for our next action plan.)***

People who are pro-large-scale mining in the community would also sometimes make up stories on Facebook. They would say that leaders of the anti-large-scale mining roup are actually in talks with the company but are just not sharing it, attempting to create division within the opposition. One of them detailed that they were invited to play golf with the management of the company, which led to their photos being taken. With these photos came a made-up story saying that they were playing golf to draft a deal, when in truth, the participant just wanted to try playing golf.

Surveillance

Technology, they said, is also being used as a tool to surveil them:

> ***"And then biglang nalaman namin na 'yung mismong [cellphone] number namin ang tina-track nila kaya 'pag may meeting kami, may sumusunod na intel na nakukuha 'yung information para lang pangkontra sa amin." (We learned that our cellphone number is being tracked so, when we have a meeting, an intelligence officer follows us and extracts information which is used against us.)***

It is evident in their stories that they are vulnerable targets of technology-facilitated violence. When asked about the main perpetrators of this violence, two respondents shared that it was mainly perpetrated by members of their community who openly support the large mining company, while state agents are also used. This was confirmed by the silent nods from the other key informants.

Technological capacity and response of community

Because many indigenous communities in the Philippines lack technological capacity given that most of them are in remote areas, it is easier to attack them online. Often, they lack access to newer devices and internet connectivity. However, some of them are content with this setup, while younger people still find ways to go on social media.

One participant shared that in terms of technology and digital spaces such as Facebook and new cellphones, he is not as adept as his children or the youth. He said that he uses a phone with a keypad, and is fine with it as long as he can still call and text. When asked whether he uses Facebook, he shared:

> ***"Mga anak ko. Ako, 'yung pindot-pindot lang na cellphone, keypad basta makatawag, makatext." (My children use Facebook, I use a cellphone with a keypad that allow me to call and text.)***

They also mentioned that the group opposing the mining project has a Facebook page called Save Dalicno. They affirmed that while Facebook can be harmful, it also sometimes helps when it comes to sharing the issues they face:

> ***"Sa Facebook naman, nakakatulong nga rin na siyempre. Nai-expose mo 'yung mga ginagawa nila parang katulad nung nangyari doon sa amin na nagbabarikada kami, nakikita na pinapa-stop 'yung minahan dun. Lahat ng mga small-scale dito sa may federation ng Benguet, at least pumunta sila sa lugar at tumulong magpa-presscon para i-expose 'yung ginagawa ng mga large-scale. At least dito, umayos ang mga large-scale."*** *(Facebook sometimes helps, of course. You get to expose what they [large-scale mining companies] are doing. For example, when we did the barricade, people on Facebook saw that small-scale miners were being made to stop operating. All small-scale miners from the federation of Benguet, they visited and helped us do a press conference exposing the actions of the large-scale mining companies. At least, that forces the companies to act right.)*

While acknowledging that technology has helped the community in terms of connection and their advocacy, it is clear that they do not have the same resources as the large-scale mining company to launch big campaigns online. So while they are able to use it to their advantage, they continue to be subject to attacks.

THE LUMAD OF MINDANAO

Fifteen (15) Lumad and Lumad advocates from different organizations participated as respondents, composed of seven (7) males and eight (8) females. The respondents are members of different organizations with varied primary purposes, but are united in their stand to help the members of their community. Over the years, the Lumad experienced displacement from their communities due to military aggression spearheaded by the state agencies. They have been under militarized conditions for many years, and the respondents mentioned that military and paramilitary groups are weaponized by big corporations that have capital interests to encroach their ancestral lands. They deplored the prevalence of violence and red-tagging in their communities, which have significantly dwindled the membership in most of their organizations. The systemic oppression experienced by the Lumad has likewise subjected them to cycles of displacement.

All participants shared the various benefits and takeaways of their members in joining their organizations, which vary from free education, education about the culture of Indigenous Peoples, human rights violations, agricultural support and education, among others. In terms of livelihood, farming and agriculture are their primary source of livelihood.

THE LUMAD SCHOOLS IN MINDANAO

Lumad schools play a crucial role in empowering communities by fostering unity and collaboration. With a diverse curriculum that includes nine subjects, agriculture stands out as a vital area of study. For the Lumad people, the land is not just a resource; it is the very essence of their existence. This understanding highlights

the urgent need to protect and cherish their land. Unfortunately, the closure of Lumad schools in Mindanao has impacted approximately 10,000 students, jeopardizing their education and the future of their communities. Supporting these schools is essential for preserving their heritage and ensuring a sustainable future.

SALUGPONGAN TA'TANU IGKANUGON COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER INCORPORATED (SALUGPONGAN)

Salugpongan was born out of the community's deep-seated desire for education. This initiative was a collective effort led by the Datus and the local residents to establish schools, a clear response to the urgent needs expressed by the community itself. For years, they petitioned the barangay captain and the mayor in Talaingod for a school, but their calls went unheeded.

It wasn't until the year 2000 that Salugpongan was formally established, operating under the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines. In 2008, it took on the name Salugpongan Ta' Tanu Igkanugon Community Learning Center, marking a significant milestone as it began offering formal education from Grade 1 to high school—a beacon of hope for many before it was ultimately closed. The name symbolizes its mission: "salugpongan" signifies unity, "ta'tanu" represents land, and "igkanugon" embodies ownership. Salugpongan not only provided free education, but also championed health services and upheld Indigenous Peoples' rights.

As time passed, the movement flourished, leading to the establishment of more campuses across the provinces of Davao Oriental and Davao de Oro. The network grew to include 19 campuses in Davao de Oro and 21 branches in Talaingod town, Davao del Norte, totaling to a total of 54 campuses all over region XI, which covers the Southern part of Mindanao.

Participants in this research initiative highlighted the profound impact Salugpongan has had on their community. One participant conveyed that the primary mission of Lumad schools is to empower students to defend their land and preserve their rich cultural heritage. This is why they are steadfast in their commitment to protect Lumad schools—because a strong educational foundation is essential for future generations to thrive.

MINDANAO INTERFAITH SERVICES FOUNDATION, INC. (MISFI)

One participant described how their community's cultural practices, prior to the establishment of a MISFI school in their village, involved early marriages and the exchange of dowries. In fact, girls were often promised to boys before they were even born, with arranged marriages decided by their families long before childbirth. However, thanks to education, these deep-rooted traditions within the Mandaya tribe are beginning to transform.

The community also practiced the tradition of the baylan, a revered figure who conducted rituals for those who were sick and assisted during childbirth. Yet, as education took root in their lives, this practice has slowly given way to modern scientific methods, signifying a shift toward more informed choices, in combination with traditional but tested forms of natural or organic healing.

Previously, the absence of a school forced children to undertake a challenging trek to the next community, where the nearest public school was located. This arduous journey consumed half a day, with children returning home every Friday and making the trek back on Sunday afternoons, a routine that drained their energy and enthusiasm for learning.

However, once MISFI arrived in their community, a monumental change took place. No longer would children be required to travel

far and wide; a school was established right within their reach. Like countless others, the people of this community harbored a deep yearning for education. Through hard work and collaboration with MISFI, this dream became a reality, paving the way for a brighter, more empowered future for their children.

COMMUNITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF SOUTHEASTERN MINDANAO (CTCSM)

A participant from CTCSM shared that this school was created to offer a pathway to education for those who cannot afford it. CTCSM stood as a regular mainstream private institution, overseen by a board of trustees composed of Catholic educator-nuns and priests, and other members of the academe. In contrast to their own schools managed by their own congregations, CTCSM was at its core a charity institution that inspired Lumad students to pursue their dreams and complete their schooling. The institution's core mission is to uplift the Lumad community, champion their right to education, and advocate for marginalized groups. As one of the few schools registered at the Department of Education dedicated primarily to Lumad students, CTCSM operated between 2014-2020 as a boarding school that intentionally waived tuition fees, making quality education accessible to all who sought it.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT THE LUMAD SCHOOLS IN MINDANAO

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS NETWORK (SOS)

One of the participants shared that the Save Our Schools (SOS) organization was established around 2010 in direct response to the alarming increase of military encampments in schools. These

encampments have a profound impact not only on teachers and students, but on entire communities. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, SOS was formed to document these attacks, especially given the United Nations' declaration that such actions constitute a serious violation of children's rights. A key mission of the organization was to launch powerful campaigns demanding an end to attacks on schools, and to lead lobbying efforts at local, national, and international levels.

In 2014, SOS expanded its scope by uniting *Datus* and community leaders alongside teachers and students in several provinces in Mindanao. By 2018, the organization was actively focused on safeguarding schools within these communities, particularly as Lumad schools faced imminent threats of closure. Consequently, many students from Lumad and rural communities were compelled to relocate to the highly urban cities Davao, Cebu, and Manila to continue their education. Continuing classes in their home communities was rendered impossible due to severe harassment from paramilitary groups. The decision to relocate was not taken lightly; it followed tragic incidents of killings and the detention of local leaders. It is within this critical context that the Save Our Schools organization emerged.

SOS stood robustly for the educational rights of Lumad youth, and actively raised awareness about the challenges confronting Lumad schools. These endeavors have sparked significant public engagement, resulting in many individuals volunteering as Lumad school teachers and contributing to the growth and expansion of these vital institutions.

The participant recounted that the roots of school attacks can be traced back to 1994, when the Alcantara and Sons logging company began harassing the Manobo community amid the expansion of their tree farms in Davao del Norte. The Lumad group led by Datu Gibang

Apoga responded assertively, recognizing that the company's presence threatened their way of life.

In addition, there is a clear agenda among certain groups to prevent the Lumad from receiving an education. Educated individuals are harder to mislead, which directly impedes the ambitions of mining companies and logging concessions to exploit the land and its people. The existence of these schools is crucial; they not only provide education – but also serve as a powerful means of protecting the ancestral domain and the integrity of the community.

SABOKAHAN

Founded in 2003, Sabokahan emerged as a beacon of hope and unity, with Bai Bibyaon among its pioneering members. The name "Sabokahan," rooted in the Manobo language, embodies the spirit of communality. This organization was born out of a vital need to empower women, especially during the challenging times of evacuation in Haran.

In response to Bai Bibyaon's call for another form "pangayaw" (tribal defense) among what is popularly known as 'bakwit' schools, Sabokahan organized an assembly for female students, fostering leadership through a democratic election. Bai Bibyaon died on December 2023, leaving a legacy of resilience and inspiring countless young women leaders not just from the Lumad, but other women human rights defenders and activists as well. Today, Sabokahan remains steadfast in its mission, providing crucial support to fellow Lumad who are seeking safety and refuge.

Although Sabokahan once boasted a large and vibrant membership, including many kin of Bai Bibyaon, the harsh realities of attacks and school closures led to a significant decline in numbers. Many of its officers and members were compelled to return to their communities

when the schools shut down. Currently, the organization perseveres, led by six dedicated secretariat members—four students and two committed individuals—continuing the fight for unity and resilience in the face of adversity. Together, they embody the strength and determination of the Lumad women and women Lumad advocates, proving that even in the toughest times, the spirit of community endures.

ATTACKS

The Lumad of Mindanao are no longer strangers to armed conflicts and attacks. The interaction of different political and economic causes exacerbates the systemic oppression experienced by the Lumad, who are considered as minorities. The respondents share their personal and community experiences, with all respondents attesting to the attacks they witnessed, as perpetrated by military personnel supported by the Philippine government.

One respondent shared that, "Even before Duterte, the attacks were already happening, away from public eye, without media able to go to our place, no one can witness the situation. For instance, there were students who were killed, by the Alamara (Lumad paramilitary group), but they came with a narrative that there was an ongoing tribal war. This was happening before Duterte, but it got worse during Duterte, when he declared Martial Law and threatened to bomb Lumad schools."

Without access to education, Lumad are often perceived as people who come down during Kadayawan festival, a yearly holiday in Davao City, which features the city's Indigenous Peoples. One respondent described the discrimination they experienced when they go around the city:

"Here's discrimination when you go around the city, there will always who will say, "Hey you're a Lumad!" This is why some Lumad would deny his or her own tribe, their idea that the Lumad are not educated, so they are being looked down. That has an impact on us Lumad."

FORMS OF ATTACKS

Development Aggression in Mindanao

A fundamental reason behind the persistent attacks, as highlighted by a key informant, is the insatiable greed of large corporations that ravage the ancestral lands of the Lumad. One informant vividly recalled:

"The harassment started in 1992, before the schools existed. When the schools were there, the attacks continued. They camped out in our community not because of the schools, that's not it. The schools are not their reason why they are there, nor the NPA, because even without the NPAs they have been attacking us. In 1992, they attacked because of the company Alsons, and the NPA were not around. That means the attacks happened because of the presence of big companies supported by the government, they turned the military into their private army. It's been like that ever since."

This troubling cycle persists. "We don't see any other source for the attacks except for the presence of investors, be it "legal logging", mining, plantations, eco-tourism, dams. All these, when there are interests over the ancestral land of the Lumad, there's the presence of the military. When the military is present, human rights violations will happen," And with their presence comes a pattern of human rights violations.

> ***Their ancestral domain is under siege. Ultimately, it is the Lumad who suffer the gravest consequences. "The ones who get affected are the Lumad, our culture, our source of livelihood."***

The key informant referenced the situation in Talaingod, highlighting that the primary catalysts for violence in the region are its natural resources, including water, forests, and land. Historically, this has contributed to the presence of military forces within the community, a situation that has persisted since the martial law period in Mindanao. The military's involvement has, unfortunately, led to instances of violence against community members, including the targeted killings of various leaders.

Furthermore, the participant noted that,

> ***"In addition to his point, that time was Martial Law, that's why the Lumad were dispersed. Then they (military) wouldn't reveal to the public their purpose, or who they are protecting, which are the mining (companies), that would plunder the Lumad territories. We were affected of course. With the schools that time, there were many threats, leaders who built the school were threatened to be killed or filed with cases if they don't close the schools. And it happened, they killed some of the Datus, such as Datu Kaylo, and some students."***

The respondents identified several companies that are encroaching on their ancestral land. They also mentioned that a Chinese-owned company is constructing a hydropower dam in the Pulangi River.

> ***"Sa Pulangi, yung Pulangi river na pinaglalagyan ng dam yung hydro power dam na pagmamay-ari ng Chinese company na ngayon ay inuumpisahan na para doon, para yung electricity niya na makukuha mula doon sa dam ay isusuporta doon***

> ***sa mga plantasyon at minahan malapit doon sa Pantaron."*** *("In Pulangi, the Pulangi river where a Chinese-owned hydropower dam is being constructed, the electricity that they will harness from the dam will be used to supply the plantations and mining companies in Pantaron.")*

She also added:

> ***"Sinisimulan na rin yung ano mining na pagmamay-ari din ng Chinese. Pinasok ito 2018. Marami yun eh nag-apply ng exploration permit. Dalawa yung na-approve, tapos kasagsagan ito ng sinasabi na ni Duterte na siya na mismo ang mamimili ng investors para sa lupang ninuno namin. Tapos kasagsagan din ito nung uhm pag-o-okay ni Duterte doon sa mga Chinese companies."*** *("The mining operations of a Chinese-owned company is already starting. Several companies were applying for exploration permits. Two were already approved, it was at the peak of these applications when then President Duterte said that he would personally choose the investors who can enter in our ancestral lands. This was also during the time when then President Duterte gave his approval to Chinese companies.")*

There is also the open pit mining in Brgy. Ned, Lake Sebu. She added:

> ***"San Miguel din dun, San Miguel Corporation. Ang sa Ned coal mining. Tapos yung uumpisahan na mining, open pit mining sa South Cot ay yun yung isa sa pinakamalaking mining sa South East Asia."*** *("It was also San Miguel, San Miguel Corporation. The one in Ned coal mining. Then, the mining operation that was about to start is the open pit mining in South Cotabato, that is the biggest mining in South East Asia.")*

There have been several tragic incidents involving the brutal killings of individuals who opposed the establishment of large industries in the region, such as the Danyun Massacre in South Cotabato, and the Capion Massacre.

Despite claims that the cessation of school operations would lead to a halt in these violent incidents, the attacks have continued unabated. This suggests the presence of an underlying agenda, centered on the appropriation of ancestral lands belonging to the Lumad people. The interests at play seem to include the extraction of minerals, logging, and the utilization of extensive areas for agricultural plantations.

Militarization

The intensified military presence in communities often aligns with the influx of large corporations into their ancestral territories. As one respondent pointed out:

> ***"[...] Sa community namin dahil inaagaw na yung lupa, lumalala na rin yung militarization. So, akala ko dati normal na may giyera kasi bahagi siya ng pang-araw-araw na buhay, yung giyera, yung putok. Parang ok lang, tapos nakikita namin yung helicopter, ganon. Tapos akala ko dati, normal lang na makikipaglaro yung mga military sa amin, parang habang may mga dala silang baril. Hep, hep, horray, sinong pangalan ng nanay mo? Magtatanong sila kung kilala mo yung sa picture [...]. Tapos bibigyan nila kami ng limang piso, tapos magtatanong sinong pangalan ng nanay namin. Tapos siyempre magsisinungaling kami, kasi alam din namin yung risk pag sinabi naming yung totoong mga pangalan o kilala ba namin yung mga tao."*** ***("In our community since they were trying to take our lands, it resulted in heavy militarization. So, I first thought that it is normal because it had been a***

day-to-day incident, the firefight. It feels like it was okay, then we will see the helicopter. Then before, we also thought that it was normal that the military will play with the children while they were carrying their weapons. We will play, hep, hep, horray, what's the name of your mother? They will also ask if we know who is in the picture. Then they will give us five pesos, then they will ask our mother's name. But of course, we will lie because we already know the risk if we told them our mother's name or if we knew the person in the picture.")

Another respondent added:

"Madalas mga bata, akala nila madali kaming mauuto. Pero oriented kami ng buong community na kapag tinanong yung pangalan ni ganito, ni ganyan, hindi namin sasabihin kung saan." *("Mostly children, maybe they were thinking that we are easily swayed. However, we are told by the community that if someone asked the names of someone, we won't tell them.")*

Another respondent shared the same sentiment:

"Tapos, parang na-immune na yung mga bata. Na-immune na kami sa laging bakbakan, ganon. Tapos yung mga bata, hindi na natatakot. May iba na-tra-trauma, yung mga baby-baby pa, na-tra-trauma tapos nagtatalukbong sila ano ng kumot." *("Then, it was like the children were already immune. We are immune to the firefight. Then the children, they were no longer afraid. While others were traumatized, those who were still very young, they suffered trauma, they were running around with blankets.")*

Communities affected by militarized conditions have reported that military personnel establish detachments within their areas and regularly conduct operations. These actions have resulted in

a climate of fear, with human rights defenders, community leaders, and even students facing harassment and threats. Students are often forcibly sent home from school by military personnel, which has contributed to the displacement of the Lumad people, who feel compelled to evacuate to ensure their safety.

One interviewee shared a troubling memory from their elementary school days, recounting an incident where military personnel entered their school, damaging textbooks and defacing school property. They even drew symbols associated with political groups on the chalkboard, misattributing the actions to students and teachers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the challenges faced by these communities have intensified. One respondent reflected on how the situation has worsened, indicating a need for increased awareness and support for those impacted by these circumstances.

> ***"Lumala yung atake noong pandemic. Bawal na yung outsider. Halimbawa bumisita ka doon, kailangan mong magpunta sa barangay para bumisita sa komunidad namin or ganon. Tapos hinahanap nila yung mga taong wala doon. Yung latest, may isa kaming friend na school, yung Cascade sa Mandaluyong. Tapos nag-offer sila na magbigay ng school supplies. So yung sinuggest namin, [...] yung community namin yung bibigyan, kasi gusto nila mga IP yung population. [...] Tapos pumunta sila doon sa community namin mismo. So, nagbigay sila ng school supplies. Tapos, pag-alis nila, hinanap sila ng mga military. Tapos kasi baka maging daan daw sila para makabalik yung mga NPA. Pero hindi mga tibak yung mga teachers na pumunta doon. Mga ordinaryong teacher."*** *("The attacks worsened during the pandemic. Outsiders are no longer allowed to enter the community. For example, if you will visit the community, you have to first inform the*

barangay officials the reason for your visit. Then they will also look for the residents who are not in the community. The latest incident was involving Cascade, it's a school, that we in Mandaluyong, has been helping us. They offered to give school supplies. So we suggested to give their donations in our community since they want to donate to IPs. They went to our community to give the school supplies. When they left, the military were looking for them. The military were saying that maybe they will be the reason that the NPA will be back in the community. The teachers from Cascade, who went there were all ordinary teachers.")

A respondent vividly illustrated the profound impact of the military's presence on the community's dynamics. Children were compelled to fetch water for the soldiers, while even the barangay chairman found himself under orders, unable to refuse out of fear of retaliation. This situation highlights the unsettling reality of power and intimidation that now governs daily life in the community.

One of them shared,

"Kung naay manukan sa ilang community, maski dili nimo gusto ihatag, walay choice kay pugson man sila sa mga military nga ihawon ang manok, ang uban dili na bayaran." ("If they have a chicken coop in the community, even if you don't want to give your chicken, you don't have any other choice because they will force you to, most of the time, they don't pay for the chicken.")

Another respondent narrated that:

"Psywar sa mga taga komunidad, pugson na ipagawas ang pusil maski wala gyud pusil - ang mga babae ang mangusog aron buhian ang lalaki nga ginapugos sa mga military." ("They

will only employ psywar methods on the community, they will force us to surrender firearms, though we do not have any – the women in the community will then insist that they will set the males free.")

One of the respondents also shared:

"Kung naay mahitabo nga gyera, ang balikan sa mga sundalo ang komunidad kung asa sila gika, paninglan ngano wa sila nagsulti nga adunay mga NPA. Gibaharan ang Purok leader na kug mahitabo utro, pamatyon ang ilang pamilya kay kuno giprotektahan ang mga NPA." (If there is an encounter between the NPA and the military, the military will retaliate in the community where they have passed through, and they will be held responsible for not reporting that there are NPA ahead. The purok leaders are threatened that if it happens again, they will kill their families for being NPA protectors.)

Forced recruitment

In Talaingod, a local interviewee recounted a pivotal moment that forever changed the community: the establishment of the paramilitary group known as Bagani. This development marked the onset of significant turmoil. The police directed these paramilitaries to keep a vigilant eye on the residents, intensifying the sense of unease.

In another community, one respondent recalled:

"Ay ayun pala, yung mga tatay at mga lalaki sa komunidad, ginagawa nilang bagani. Yung mga bahay may mga baril na tapos may anon a kubo-kubo para daw doon parang guard house, ganon. Nagtayo yung mga military ng guard house daw tapos doon nag-du-duty yung mga tatay namin. Kailangan

> ***mong mag-duty at kailangan mong magpa-member, kasi kapag hindi ka nagpa-member, sasabihin supporter ka ng NPA." (What happened was that the fathers and men in the community were made into so-called bagani (local defense force). Firearms were placed in the houses, and small huts were built to serve as guard posts. The military established these guard houses and required our fathers to take turns on duty. Membership was compulsory—if one refused to join, they would be labeled as supporters of the NPA.)***

Baganis have been entrenched in the community, serving as enforcers for the police, who have begun erecting posts right in the center of daily life. This alliance between law enforcement and paramilitary forces raises urgent concerns about safety and autonomy for the people of Talaingod.

Displacement of the Lumad

The impact of militarization on the Lumad people is starkly evident, most notably through their forced evacuations. In 2015, the military invaded their community, going from house to house to intimidate local leaders. Living in constant fear for their safety, the community was compelled to flee, finding temporary refuge at the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) Haran in Davao City. This evacuation marks one of the longest and most tragic displacements in the region's history. A harrowing account from one of the evacuees reveals the devastation they faced upon returning home. Their once vibrant community lay in ruins: homes were destroyed, corn seeds were strewn about, and personal belongings were left in tatters. The military had not only defiled their cooking pots but also vandalized their possessions—pot holes were drilled, spoons lay broken or scattered, and livestock, including their pigs and chickens, had been stolen. The extent of this destruction underscores the profound

trauma and loss suffered by the Lumad, a reminder of the urgent need for justice and support for those affected by militarization.

Surveillance

One of the teachers shared her experience of being heavily surveilled by the military while teaching in a community in Davao del Oro. She first noticed the surveillance in June 2018, shortly after the school opened, when she saw 2-3 unidentified men loitering around the school. In July, two more unidentified men visited the school during their Nutrition Month culmination event.

The situation escalated when she was traveling to Tagum City to submit her monthly report. She was followed by men on a motorcycle without a license plate, which made her extremely scared. She warned her driver, saying, *"Sir, if they pull out a gun, it could be an automatic .45, we have to jump."* Fortunately, it rained and that stopped the men from tailing them.

However, the harassment did not stop there. Just days later, soldiers arrived and set up camp in the community, only about 10-15 steps away from the school. The military kept questioning the students about who was in charge of the teaching staff. Once they learned her name, they discovered she was the daughter of an extrajudicial killing (EJK) victim from 2016. They interrogated her uncle, asking why she was teaching in Lumad schools. Due to these escalating threats, the school administration decided to pull her out of the community for her safety.

In August 2024, as Sabokahan diligently prepared a heartfelt tribute for Bai Bibyaon, several months after her death due to a lingering illness, disaster struck—their office was ransacked. When they arrived, a shocking scene awaited them: laptops were lined up with their top panels forced open, and their funds had vanished without a trace. Upon reviewing the CCTV footage, the faces of the intruders

remained hidden from view, eluding justice. To make matters worse, it became evident that they had been under careful surveillance leading up to this brazen act.

Red-tagging

Things took a turn for the worse when President Duterte assumed office and red-tagging became more prevalent. President Duterte even announced on national television that he would bomb the Lumad schools, which also contributed to the cycle of displacement the Lumad have experienced.[105] He shared, "*It got worse during Duterte, when he declared Martial Law and threatened to bomb Lumad schools. Then they closed down. That's how brutal Duterte was.*" Another key informant echoed a similar sentiment and shared that President Duterte is the cause of the division in their communities.

Aside from the military, one respondent identified the NTF-ELCAC, overseen by Loraine Badoy, officials from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police (PNP), then President Duterte, and now President Marcos, to be perpetrators of the attacks against the Lumad. Former President Duterte was always remembered as the president who threatened to bomb Lumad schools, kill, red-tag, arrest the Lumad, and burn their schools. He shared that one of the primary reasons Lumad are attacked is not because of their schools but to take control of their ancestral domain.

One of the respondents had experienced continuous and severe harassment, to the extent that wanted posters featuring her image have been displayed in various public locations, including shopping malls, markets, and bus terminals in Butuan City. She was falsely labeled as a New People's Army (NPA) rebel. In addition, she became a target of criticism from Sonshine Media Network International

105 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/26/philippines-duterte-threatens-to-bomb-indigenous-schools

(SMNI) following claims made by a former student who identified her as part of an underground group. As a result of these threats, she is currently unable to return to her home, as she remains a subject of active search efforts by military personnel.

The impact of red-tagging significantly affects the Lumad and their culture. One respondent shared that they were compelled to avoid wearing beads, as doing so leads to being labeled as NPA rebels.

> ***"Noong martial law sa Mindanao, 2017, dumating sa punto na hindi kami puwedeng magsuot ng beads. Bahagi siya ng identity namin as Lumad, bilang IP. Tapos ipinagbabawal siya kasi kapag may beads ka lalo na sa mga Lumad communities, sasabihan ka na NPA. Tapos ngayon, sarado na yung Lumad school pero automatic yun, kapag estudyante ka ng Lumad school, automatic yun NPA ka agad. Sasabihin ng military na kailangan kang pumunta sa detachment nila, sa kampo nila para linisin yung pangalan mo. Ipapatawag ka. Ganon ang nangyayari sa amin noong pinupuntahan kami ng iba-ibang mga tao. Tapos sasabihan na kailangan naming linisin ang pangalan namin, kailangan naming pumunta sa barangay. So, kahit mga minor na mga bata, military mismo ang nagtatanong kung kilala niyo ba ito, ganito, ganyan. Tapos mga minor yun ha pero papupuntahin mo sa detachment para linisin daw yung mga pangalan nila."*** *(During martial law in Mindanao in 2017, it reached the point where we were prohibited from wearing beads. These beads are part of our identity as Lumad, as Indigenous Peoples, but they were banned because in Lumad communities, anyone wearing beads would immediately be accused of being NPA. At present, with Lumad schools shut down, students are automatically branded as NPA. The military would say that one must report*

> *to their detachment or camp to 'clear' one's name. We were repeatedly summoned this way. Even minors were subjected to questioning—asked by the military whether they knew certain individuals—and were told to go to the detachment to supposedly clear their names.)*

When asked who prohibited from wearing beads, one answered:

> ***"Mga military. So, pag dadaan kami sa checkpoint, maggunting kami ng beads."** (***"The military. So, when we pass by a checkpoint, we have to cut our beads."***)*

One of the interviewees described the relentless attacks he faced. He received personal messages from Lorraine Badoy, a prominent figure associated with NTF-ELCAC. His image appeared on posters, where he was subjected to red-tagging. In addition, former teachers from local Bakwit Schools and Salugpongan applied for public school teaching positions with the Department of Education (DepEd). However, once it was revealed that they had connections to Salugpongan, they were red-tagged, leading to the rejection of their applications.

FILING OF TRUMPED-UP CHARGES

One key informant, a teacher, mentioned that attacks on their schools began as early as the year 2000. He reported that false charges were filed against the teachers, cases were brought against the students, and several Datus were murdered. He himself faced three criminal cases, including human trafficking, child abuse, and recruitment.

Another informant shared that he was confronted with multiple false charges, including kidnapping, illegal detention, libel, and trafficking. The trafficking allegation was connected to the Bakwit School in Cebu, and he was one of the individuals whose names were removed

from the original list of 32 who were charged. The attacks against him temporarily ceased since 2021, after he took medical leave for mental health reasons.

Another respondent explained that some minors who were taken back from Cebu had actually received their parents' consent prior to traveling, as traveling without consent is not permitted. However, following the incident in Cebu, these minors are now claiming that they did not have parental consent. Subsequently, they were made state witnesses in the false trafficking charges filed against the teachers and students. The families of these minors live in militarized villages; thus it came as no surprise when they were made to give false testimonies for fear of reprisal.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

In 2018, one of the interviewees recalled that her mother was abducted by the 71st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army under Colonel Esteveyn Ducusin. Her mother went missing for a month. While searching for her, the interviewee received calls from both the local mayor and Ducusin, who said they would help look for her mother if she agreed to surrender. As the campaign to find her mother intensified, she received another call in which she was offered one million pesos. Fortunately, she eventually found her mother in Surigao.

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

All these attacks culminate in extrajudicial killings; if they can't stop those who strongly oppose them, they will silence them forever. In 2016, Alibando Tingkas, a student of Salugpongan, was killed by the Alamara. He went to sell his abaca fiber. On his way home, he was carrying rice and chicken when he was killed. Before this incident, the NPA attacked the military, and some were killed in action. After

this, the military retaliated not by coming against the NPA rebels but against the unarmed civilian community.

Another killing in 2016 was the Guianga massacre.

One of the respondents recalled that in 2017, one of the teachers, Ramil Miguel, was shot by an Alamara member while he was in class. The paramilitary group also killed one of the students named Obello Bay-ao.

One of the respondent shared:

> ***"Tapos noong 2018, oh yun nga, dahil hinahanap ang tatay ko, napaslang siya. Pinatay ng militar. Pero hindi doon nangyari sa barangay mismo namin, sa kabilang barangay kasi nagtatago na siya. Dumating pa sa punto na parang kung may makakita o may reward na matatanggap, ganon. So, pinaslang siya habang natutulog."*** *(Then in 2018, because they were searching for my father, he was killed—slain by the military. It did not happen in our own barangay but in the neighboring one, as he had already gone into hiding. It even reached the point where informants were promised rewards. He was killed while he was asleep.)*

One of the worst incidents was the massacre of Chad Booc and others when they conducted research for SOS in New Bataan, Davao de Oro.

FORCED CLOSURE OF THE LUMAD SCHOOLS

The state propaganda argues that the NPA (New People's Army) is behind the establishment of Lumad schools, which they claim justifies their efforts to shut these institutions down. Their ultimate goal is to prevent the youth from receiving an education deemed threatening to their narrative.

A respondent revealed a troubling reality in their community: in 2023, there were new schools being established and the police are the ones teaching in these schools, instructing students on how to dismantle firearms.

Another interviewee lamented that the closure of these vital schools has had dire consequences, leading to a rise in early marriages among students who returned home from Bakwit (evacuee) schools. Many of these students had dreams of contributing to their community and aspired to become doctors or health professionals to address pressing health issues. But those aspirations have been dashed due to their interrupted education. Consequently, communities are slipping back into outdated practices, resorting to early and arranged marriages that stifle the potential of future generations. This is not just a loss of education; it's a loss of hope and progress for an entire community.

RESPONSES TO THESE ATTACKS

Due to the ongoing attacks, several respondents who were interviewed said they have been working closely with the Commission on Human Rights, which participated in the International People's Tribunal. They received recognition from the international committee for their efforts. On the domestic front, they initiated legal actions, such as reporting incidents to the local CHR offices, implementing security measures and protocols, and aptly relocating to ensure their safety. Despite these efforts, red-tagging continues. Lorraine Badoy and Rurelyn Mandacawan Bay-ao, both from the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), traveled to the United States and included red-tagging in their PowerPoint presentation.

Sabokahan members have filed a police report regarding the incidents which occurred at their residence. They also encouraged members to participate in discussions about basic rights and emergency responses, aiming to empower individuals to assert their rights.

One respondent shared that they launched a campaign to locate her mother and sought assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Davao. Furthermore, she became a petitioner in a case filed before the Supreme Court to oppose the extension of Martial Law in Mindanao, as her mother was the first known victim of enforced disappearance under this regime.

In response to the attacks, particularly in educational institutions, there was a campaign to stop the militarization of communities and the harassment of teachers. At the height of the campaign was the establishment of several 'bakwit schools' in Davao, Cebu, and Manila, which aim to amplify demands from the educational sector. Another measure undertaken was to report all attacks on schools, teachers, and students to barangay offices, documenting abuses perpetrated by state forces. However, even within Bakwit Schools, attacks continue; for example, the Bakwit School in Cebu was raided and several students were detained on trumped-up charges.

These events have significantly impacted students, teachers, and the entire community. The harassment of children, who are then labeled as members of the New People's Army (NPA) rebels, alongside the murders of teachers, has caused severe emotional and psychological trauma, resulting in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for many individuals. This atmosphere of fear also strains family relationships and interactions among students. The consequences extend beyond the personal level, affecting both organizations and the wider community. There has been a loss of count regarding the number of attacks against Indigenous Peoples, as many have been unable to return to their communities.

One of the respondents elaborated that their relationship with fellow students was affected by these attacks:

> ***"Hindi puwedeng gumala na kasama yung mga kakilala dati sa kasi kailangan mo ring i-check yung background nila eh kasi madami na rin yung mga nagsundalo na ah estudyante ng Lumad school dati. Parang gusto mo silang kitain pero ay wag na lang. Ganon, kailangan mo pang i-check yung background nila, baka ginagamit na din sila nung NTF-ELCAC."*** *(It is no longer possible to freely associate with people we used to know, because we now feel the need to check their background. Many former students of Lumad schools have since joined the military. You may want to meet with them, but then decide against it. There is always the concern that they might already be working with the NTF-ELCAC.)*

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Half of the key informants confirmed the occurrence of gender-based violence in their communities. They noted that it was women who experience and bear the brunt of gender-based violence. They noted that the unequal treatment of men and women began with the arrival of large companies, which contrasted with traditional practices:

> ***"In the community of Bai Bibyaon, a striking balance exists in the roles of men and women. The women cultivate the fields while the men venture out to hunt, creating a dynamic of mutual contribution and respect between the genders. However, the arrival of a logging company disrupted this harmony. Suddenly, the women found themselves unable to access their farms and were forced to seek work within the company. This shift not only undermined their traditional roles***

but also ushered in a patriarchal and misogynistic culture that devalues women. The company's policy of hiring only men further marginalizes women, stripping them of their economic independence and reinforcing damaging stereotypes. It is crucial to recognize and address these changes to restore equality and empower women in the community."

One form of violence against women is sexual violence, often against young women, mothers, and female teachers. A respondent shared that these cases involve sexual abuse or harassment perpetrated by military personnel and their cohorts. These transpired in the military encampment in the schools and communities. He narrated:

"Some boys were forced to urinate in front of them when they excused themselves from their classrooms. Some parents were offered 100 pesos for sex with soldiers. There was one rape incident in Talaingod, it came out in the news, the soldier admitted it, they offered more or less 80,000 pesos. There were many cases of sexual abuse, gender-based abuse in relation to their attacks on schools."

The sexual violence orchestrated by military personnel and their cohorts against the Lumad underscores and reflects the policy of violence and killing. As narrated by one key informant:

"During the time the Lumad schools were around, the soldiers were having a trip, showing that video where the soldiers raped a girl in Talaingod. They raped and handcuffed the girl.

There was a case, a young Lumad girl, the AFP went to the community and attempted to rape her. Good thing that didn't happen. Then there was this elderly Lumad who was tied up in her hands and feet, and was forced to ride a helicopter. Those instances are human rights violations against women."

One respondent elaborated:

> ***"Tigulang nga gisakay sa helicopter, 2014 gikan sa Sitio naluba moadto San Fernando (3 sila puro babae) naa sila dala nga binhi sa humay. Naabtan sila sa mga sundalo sa Pantaron, ang duha ka babae, mga 15 yrs old, nakadagan, gikuha sa mga military ang tigulang ug gihimo nila og guide, pagkagabie, nagkampo sila then gihiktan ang tigulang, while nakahikot, gihubuan siya ug nag-ingon sila nga dili na daw kaya hilabtan. 1 week siya gi-uban-uban sa sundalo. Gibuhian siya sa usa ka sundalo. Niwang na siya kaayo unya na-trauma na. Maski naa lang pato nga magtingog sa ilaw, mahadlok na siya kay abi niya mga sundalo."*** *("In 2014, there were three (3) women, one was elderly, and the other 2 were fifteen (15) years old. They were travelling from Sitio Naluba to San Fernando carrying rice seeds. They were apprehended by the military in Pantaron and were forced to board a helicopter. The 2 minors were able to run and escape from being held captive by the military. The elderly who was left behind was then made as a guide of the military. On that evening, they camped out, and the elderly person was tied. While being tied, the military undressed her, and they were saying that "dili na daw kaya hilabtan". She was held captive for a week, when one of the military personnel set her free. The elderly person has become so thin and was traumatized after the incident. Every time he hears sounds, even the sound of the duck below her house, she thinks it is the military."*

Despite numerous documented cases of sexual violence, countless victims find themselves trapped in a cycle of helplessness, ultimately choosing not to report these incidents to the police, for

fear of retribution and disillusionment with the justice system. This reluctance is understandable, as military personnel often operate with impunity, emboldened by their ability to bribe their way out of accountability. Such a grim reality not only allows perpetrators to freely continue their blatant violations of human rights but also perpetuates a culture of brutality that silences and harms those who suffer in silence. It is crucial to confront this injustice and advocate for a system that protects victims and holds offenders accountable.

One of the respondents explained that the military stayed in the community (in their homes) for one month. During this time, a fourteen-year-old girl from Sitio Laslasakan, Brgy. Palma Gil, Talingod, was sexually abused. When the incident came to light, the military quickly resolved the matter with the family by paying approximately 80,000 as indemnification. The perpetrator was a member of the 56th Infantry Battalion, and the girl's mother was threatened not to tell anyone, with warnings that something bad would happen to their family if she did.

Another interviewee recounted an incident involving a teacher who is part of the LGBTQ community. In this case, the military courted one of the gay teachers and they entered into a relationship. He was given money and manipulated until he returned home. This teacher was later used as a pawn in a raid in Cebu, which led to the detention of other teachers and students.

In the community, there have been other similar incidents where soldiers courted the daughters of community leaders to silence them and monitor their actions, thereby ensuring their continued presence in the area. Reports have also surfaced regarding former students.

In addition, one participant shared that the military who camped in their community showed obscene videos to the children. When asked what these videos were, she answered, "These were porn videos."

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED VIOLENCE

In this digital age, some of the key informants have no cellular or mobile phones and are not accustomed to using one. One key informant cited security risks as one of the reasons why they do not use social media or technology. Thus, at present, they have no access to social media or technology. Similarly, other members of their community share the same perspective as regards the use of technology and social media.

While technology and social media can undoubtedly facilitate communication, streamline news gathering, and document important work, it is crucial to acknowledge the darker side many key informants have faced—technology-facilitated violence. They have been targeted by military personnel who exploit these tools not only for surveillance but also as instruments for spreading disinformation and delivering chilling death threats. This reality underscores the urgent need for a safer and more inclusive technological environment. One key informant narrated:

> ***"There were threats, death threats through private (direct) messaging. But one thing they always use is to spread disinformation, fake news, like on the story on Kuni Cuba, the news spread that he is an NPA, but a Catholic brother in the ministry there disproved that he was an NPA through his public (Facebook) post. But no, the government, the soldiers could not take back their statements that Kuni was an NPA. They even put a rifle beside him, took photos of that rifle to legitimize their claim. That's their way of attacks."***

In one of the communities, they mentioned how the piso wifi in the community was used for surveillance, but they had no other choice but to use it, as it was their only means to connect to the internet: As one said:

> ***"Surveillance sa community kasi pag naghulog ka sa piso wifi, may website ka pa na pipindutin. I-click para makapag-connect sa wifi. Siyempre sa data, mapapasok nila yung data, tapos ayun."*** *(There is surveillance in the community because when you use the coin-operated Wi-Fi, you are required to access a website before connecting. Through this process, they are able to enter and capture data.)*

There were also instances where military intelligence would add them on Facebook for surveillance.

> ***"Pero minsan naman nalalaman naming ano intel sila kasi uhm wala nga silang profile picture pero 'pag nagkalkal ka, may mga sundalo, naka-uniform. Ang ginagawa namin, kilala mo ba 'to. China-chat namin yung mga kasama. Tapos na-te-trace naman, ah si ano yan."*** *(At times, we are able to identify who the intelligence agents are. For instance, some of them have no profile picture, but when you look further into their accounts, you find photos of soldiers in uniform. What we do is ask among ourselves, 'Do you know this person?' We chat with colleagues, and eventually we are able to trace and confirm their identity.)*

Another participant added:

> ***"Minsan sundalo talaga yung nag-a-add sa'yo."*** *("Sometimes, it's really the military who will add them.")*

He noted that the use of technology was heavily relied on by state agencies to legitimize their operations and further their agenda. Through technology, disinformation, fake news, and red-tagging, state forces are able to validate the abductions, threats, and killings claiming that respondents are NPA members. These government-funded and orchestrated attacks have been perpetuated through

the use of social media and technology. They print out publications, make Facebook pages with the intent to malign and red-tag them, and even go as far as freezing their bank accounts by weaponizing the law against them. He deplored that the government even took interest in their properties and wanted to seize them.

With the advent of technology and social media, it has become relatively easy to monitor the movements and activities of these individuals. Frequently, they post photos on social media, which are then branded by state forces as evidence of their affiliation with the NPA and labeled as terrorists. This has resulted in an increase in the abduction of human rights defenders. One key informant cited the death of Chad Booc and said:

> ***"One of their ways of maximizing social media is to use troll pages like Quiet No More, Kalumuran, and from time to time they would post our faces and describe us in the ugliest ways. It really affects how people look at us, because not everyone got informed of our issues through SOS or from the schools, not everyone got educated about our real situation, not part of those massive sharing of stories that would spread the issues. Just like the story on the deaths of Chad, they were massacred, but many believed they were NPA because they were red-tagged by Badoy in her page, she called Chad a terrorist."***

There was also an incident of being personally messaged and red-tagged by Loraine Badoy, the spokesperson of NTF-ELCAC. She said:

> ***"That incident with Badoy, she messaged me and then posted those red-tagging posters against us. Kalumuran also did that. That's as far as I can remember, but there were more."***

When asked what Lorraine Badoy told her, she said: ***"NPA, Terrorists, Trafficker, posted it with our faces."***

There were also Facebook pages that were created to malign and red-tag them. Often, the people behind these Facebook pages will post their faces on social media platforms and call them terrorists. Another tactic employed by state agencies to threaten them is through incessant messages sent to their mobile phones and even went as far as bombarding the school's Facebook page with messages.

Salugpongan, SOS, and Sabokahan are making powerful strides in raising awareness through their Facebook pages. Salugpongan utilizes its platform to highlight school activities and educate the public about its mission. Meanwhile, SOS has maximized the use of social media for advocacy, effectively drawing attention to the plight of the Lumad people. When you search for "Lumad" online, it's often the striking images of Lumad youth participating in rallies in Manila that dominate the results. This demonstrates SOS's remarkable ability to harness social media and technology, thereby reaching wider audiences and illuminating the urgent issues facing the Lumad community.

Furthermore, SOS plays an essential role in alerting the public about attacks on schools, ensuring that these critical incidents are not overlooked. Similarly, Sabokahan recognizes the challenges of engaging mainstream media, and actively releases alerts to keep the community informed. Their understanding of the risks associated with social media usage is commendable, and they have implemented protocols to protect themselves and their messaging.

In today's digital landscape, Facebook is pivotal in the dissemination of information—yet it is also a breeding ground for fake news. Consequently, many individuals within the community find it difficult to separate truth from misinformation. One respondent keenly observed that this challenge extends beyond Facebook;

it also encompasses traditional media like radio and television. In light of these realities, it's crucial to support organizations that are committed to truth and transparency, and to empower community members to discern fact from fiction.

> ***"Malaki talaga yung epekto nung Facebook napapanood ng community kasi, yun nga. Yung umuwi kami sa galing dito sa Diliman na Bakwit school isang beses. Uhm tinanong ako ng Tiyo ko kasi napanood niya daw sa Facebook na mga NPA daw yung mga estudyante dito sa Diliman. So, yun talaga. Yun hindi nila alam kung saan yung totoo tsaka fake." (Facebook has had a significant impact because communities closely follow what they see online. For example, when we returned home from the Bakwit School in Diliman, my uncle asked me about it because he had seen on Facebook that the students in Diliman were being labeled as NPA. This shows how people are left uncertain about what is true and what is fake.)***

Several interviewees recounted experiences of receiving disparaging comments following their arrest in Cebu. They only had the opportunity to read these comments after their release from prison. One comment stated, "Looks like you weren't fed," while another remarked, "Maybe the NPA ran out of budget to feed you." Other comments included, "Your parents raised you well and sent you to school; why did you choose this path?" One user expressed a desire for one of the individuals to "rot in jail" because he was allegedly a recruiter trafficking children to Cebu, insinuating that he and others were masterminding this operation. The interviewees noted that the sheer volume of negative comments was overwhelming, and they struggled to remember all the specifics, but most comments were mocking and degrading.

Since 2013, SOS has actively documented attacks in the community and has successfully exposed many of these incidents. Teachers

have played a crucial role in communicating these attacks on the ground. SOS utilized their Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts to amplify awareness of the issues. However, they faced challenges in consolidating victims' testimonies, as many were threatened which quickly paid off, leading them to withdraw their complaints. Consequently, legal battles did not progress.

In response to the online attacks, SOS documented and compiled these incidents, producing extensive reports against online pages such as Kamatuoran, Kalumuran, and other troll pages. They also filed complaints with the Commission on Human Rights.

It is worthy to note that all key informants who experienced technology-facilitated violence believe that these attacks are perpetrated not only by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, but also by other related agencies such as the Philippine National Police, NTF-ELCAC, and the like, orchestrated by then-President Duterte.

One of the respondents added that,

> ***"[...]They would monitor and establish who are the human rights defenders and freeze their bank accounts, like what they did to (UCCP) Haran, they froze their bank account. Not only that even their property the government wants to seize it. They really exploited everything and they have many schemes they improved on. It's only now that they use this freezing of bank accounts.***
>
> ***There's also those posters spread in Davao City and also on Facebook, which they used red-tagging, and of course, the worse is their monitoring and fixing the location of human rights defenders, and that's why there are abductions by utilizing social media. They could monitor the movements and activities of the people."***

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to generate a deeper understanding of the nature and magnitude of attacks experienced by Indigenous Cultural Communities in the Philippines. Likewise, it sought to identify the forms of attacks and violence that are experienced by the Indigenous Cultural Communities. Much has been written about the struggles and forms of attacks experienced by Indigenous Cultural Communities. At the root of attacks, this study revealed empirical evidence of the main precursor for the attacks on the Indigenous Cultural Communities. The findings underscore that resistance to developmental projects that threaten their ancestral domain appears to be the primary reason for the attacks that Indigenous Cultural Communities experience. They are often labelled as "terrorists" and "insurgents" which have become the pretext to legitimize the attack on Indigenous Cultural Communities. Violence against the vulnerable members of the community are notably highlighted in this study. Women from Indigenous Cultural Communities primarily experience sexual violence from their aggressors, who were identified as state agents or members of the military.

Despite the forms of attacks and violence experienced by the Indigenous Cultural Communities, they have challenged and fought

against these oppressions. The study revealed that these attacks have not prevented them from engaging their communities in fighting for their rights on their ancestral lands and domain.

Looking into the future, it is critical to strengthen and facilitate the genuine implementation of the existing laws, specifically the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (Republic Act 8371), meant to safeguard the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities. In addition, existing mechanisms should be strengthened, to ensure that the proper Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of IPs on all activities within their ancestral domain are secured. Lastly, prioritizing the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities over destructive profit ensures their security, which redounds to the national aspiration of protecting the nation's biodiversity.

Beyond strengthening legal and institutional protections, the findings also underscore the need to promote community-based defense systems, enhance digital literacy, and develop safety mechanisms that are culturally sensitive, community-centered, and grounded in the lived realities of environmental defenders, particularly Indigenous communities defending their ancestral lands. Given the evolving nature of both digital and physical threats, the development of practical safety toolkits is recommended to equip communities with accessible strategies for prevention, documentation, response and protection.

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