

# Philippines: Chevron's Geothermal Project

## Indigenous Women in the Struggle Against Chevron's Geothermal Project in Western Uma, Lubuagan, Kalinga

The Philippines is the second largest producer of geothermal electricity after the United States. The Philippine Energy Plan is opening energy resources in the country for corporate investments. In Kalinga Province, prospecting for the 120 megawatt (MW) Geothermal Project began in 1976. In 2010, Chevron signed a farm-in agreement to develop the plant with Guidance Management Corporation-Aragorn Power Corporation (GMC-APEC), which owns the concession, covering 25,682 hectares.

Chevron's project covers the tri-boundary area of Tinglayan, Pasil and Lubuagan municipalities consisting of 11 ancestral domains. Many of the affected communities notionally gave their consent, however, this research found that Chevron and the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) conducted the Free Prior and Informed Consent process fraudulently.

### Community Concerns:

**Loss of Ancestral Land** – The Chevron energy project will mean loss of access and control of the Uma tribe's land and resources.

**Militarisation** – Military presence will intensify with the commencement of the project.

State armed forces are expected to be deployed to secure company assets. Human rights violations, including threats, harassment and intimidation, threaten the well-being and security of indigenous women, men and children. The tactics scare and repress people and discourage them from resisting.

During the operation of the Batong Buhay Mines in the 1970s, the military raped and sexually harassed women. Indigenous women are wary of this significant problem repeating.

**Loss of livelihood** - The Uma women who rely on communal forests and rivers for food resources decry the foreseen destruction of these resources. Cash crops, such as tiger grass that support their children's schooling, will be lost.

**Environmental Concerns** - Drilling may trigger volcanic eruption. Wastewater and exhaust may include mercury, lead and arsenic, characteristic to Cordillera. Chevron stated that an error in drilling can never be repaired, resulting in continued gas emissions.

**Compensation** - Land owners will be compensated Php 50,000 (USD 1,190.48) each, not enough for relocation. Not all households are landed. Ancestral lands are communal and sale of individual residential lots and rice fields are prohibited by customary laws.



*They ask who I am? My umbilical cord is attached to this land. It is where I was forged. It is where I was born. And so it shall be my burial grounds- Beatrice Belen, community leader, Uma Tribe in Lubuagan*

### About the Research Programme

Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center (CWEARC) conducted the feminist participatory action research for this brief from August 2012 – July 2013 in Western Uma, Lubuagan, Kalinga. For the research, CWEARC worked together with Innabuyog Uma, the Uma tribe women's organization and Ag-Agama Community Organisation (AGCO).

This research is part of APWLD's FPAR Programme in 8 countries.

### Timeline of Events in Western Uma

- \*1976 - First geothermal exploration in the Region, met with Protests
- \*2006 – Free Prior Informed Consent process started. Community opposition to the project was articulated.
- \*17 May 2012 - Chevron conducted testing without community consent in a rice field along the Bon-ayan River.
- \*18 May 2012 - A leader asked personnel at the facility to leave because the community was not informed.
- \*18 May 2012 Late Morning - Indigenous women created a barricade, blocking Chevron officials from entering the community to conduct testing. The community asked officials to remove the equipment.
- \*18 May 2012 Afternoon - After removing equipment, Chevron tested in Sitio Latawan and was asked to leave.

## CWEARC & APWLD Rural and Indigenous Women Claiming Rights: Philippines

### Consultation with Indigenous Women

*We do not need the geothermal project in our land because it will not only destroy our environment, more importantly, it destroys our unity as a community.* - Ina Alupa, an elder, at a NCIP consultation meeting

*They set up their test below the houses like thieves. They did not bother to ask permission. We just saw them digging holes on May 17.* - Lim-ay Bommosao, Uma elder

#### Problems with the Free Prior Informed Consent Process in Western Uma:

Under the 1997 Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) is to facilitate processes of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), where indigenous peoples give or withhold consent to development projects within ancestral domains.

**Consent Not Given for FPIC or MOA** –The National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) has not taken into account Uma peoples' rejection of the energy project. After the Uma people blocked Chevron officials entering the area on 18 May 2012, strongly indicating their objection to the project, Chevron's June 2012 press release stated they had secured the FPIC of all indigenous communities within the project area. The Uma people only recall the signing of an attendance sheet but not a certificate related to FPIC or any other paper. Chevron also announced a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between them and the Uma tribe. The women of Uma clarified this was fraudulent, as the agreement was entered with elders who were bribed.

**Community Not Consulted about Temperature Testing Facility** – Chevron made an agreement with one landowner and set up a temperature testing facility on his land. Both the owner and the company must consult with the community, as private fields are part of tribal territory.

**Dangers Not Disclosed** - Uma women clarified that Chevron and NCIP only disclosed advantages of the project and not the implications or dangers.

**False Consensus** - According to NCIP's guidelines,



Cordillera indigenous women's summit on corporate energy and human rights on March 8, 2014 in Baguio City, Philippines

a declaration of a *failure of the FPIC* is to be drafted if there is just a single person in opposition. NCIP has attempted to change the process, calling a vote on the project. This is a violation of the IPRA as well as indigenous consensual decision-making.

**Bribery:** Chevron took advantage of prevailing poverty and essential needs for jobs and scholarships. Farm equipment and laptops were offered to select community members. Indigenous women are convinced that promised jobs will not be forthcoming since most have not finished high school and are therefore not technically trained for the required work. According to the Uma women, the FPIC process is not 'free' when Chevron distributes money or gifts, as it intends to persuade the people to accept the project, rather than providing rational facts of how it will affect them.

#### Changes Required/Policy Recommendation:

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Department of Energy (DOE) & Chevron must retract the fraudulent FPIC Certification Precondition and Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), and completely withdraw the project.

NCIP must fully disclose all information about Chevron's projects and serve as a responsible agency for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights.

Local government units & officials from provincial to Barangay offices must heed the call of Uma women and their communities to pull out military troops.

Local government units are called on to investigate human rights violations perpetrated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Chevron, particularly related to FPIC processes and take necessary actions.