

The Cost of Defending Natural Resource Rights in the Philippines

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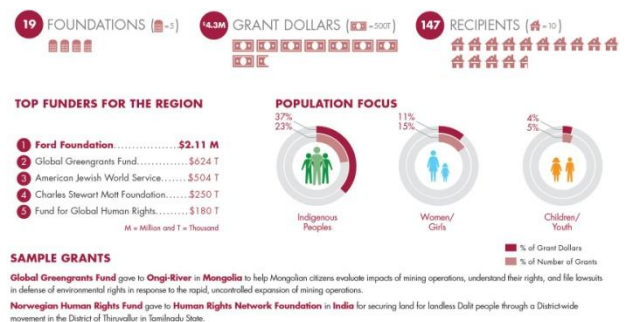
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In the early morning of October 18, 2012, soldiers from the Philippine army fired indiscriminately into the farm hut owned by Daguil Capion, a B'laan tribal anti-mining activist who had led a decade-long resistance against corporate incursion into Tampakan, one of the largest undeveloped gold and copper deposits in the world. Daguil was not present, but the gunfire killed his pregnant wife and two young children while they were sleeping. The Philippine soldiers unflinchingly maintained that Capion was wanted for murder and that his family got caught in a cross-fire between the military and his rebel group.

Immediately following the attack, several grantees of the Fund for Global Human Rights provided cash, medical services, food, housing, and witness protection to the surviving family members. They also launched a sophisticated media and legal campaign, along with a human rights documentation effort to publicize the event and press for swift government response and accountability. To date, no one has been brought to account for the Capion family deaths. This is indicative of a pattern of killings related to the Tampakan and other mines in Mindanao coupled with a deeply entrenched culture of impunity. Countless resource rights activists throughout the country have been silenced through intimidation and harassment, while extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances have become disturbingly common.

According to [a recent Global Witness survey](#), the Philippines posts some of the highest reported murder rates related to land and forest rights activism, with civil society regularly citing concerns of corporate and state security sector involvement. In 2012 alone, more than forty-five activists, mostly indigenous persons, were reportedly killed or disappeared while defending human rights related to land, livelihoods, and natural resources, especially those threatened by large-scale mining. The data in [Advancing Human Rights](#), a recent International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG) and Foundation Center report on human rights foundation giving, reveal a startling figure: only \$4.3 million in funds was directed to human rights organizations addressing [natural resource rights](#) in Asia and the Pacific in 2010. Given the scale and severity of the human rights violations and abuses related to the extractive industry in places like the Philippines, I was struck by the fact that the Fund for Global Human Rights ("Fund") was the fifth largest funder of resource rights in the region, contributing \$180,000.

Early findings from *Advancing Human Rights* may indicate the beginnings of a serious decline in funds flowing to – and a sharp drop in support for – activism to protect resource rights in the Philippines. From 2009-2010, foundation grants for environmental and natural resource rights provided directly to the Philippines declined by nearly 84 percent, from \$518,496 to \$82,000. Meanwhile, donors and activists have observed an increase in the criminalization and violence against resource rights activists in the Philippines, with sharp upticks in 2011 and 2012. Global Witness reveals the Philippines as the country



with the fourth highest number of killings of land and forest rights activists from 2002 to 2011, behind Brazil, Peru, and Colombia.

There is an enormous and continuing need for activism to protect indigenous people's land and human rights in the Philippines, yet local organizations are struggling to stay afloat. One Fund grantee was recently forced to conduct a major organizational restructuring, lay off nearly 80 percent of its staff, and close its regional office in Luzon. This occurred after several critical donors shifted from core program support to project-specific activities, three large donors pulled out of the Philippines altogether, and multilateral and bilateral funders shifted their development priorities. Fundraising is one of the most commonly requested trainings by the Fund's Philippines grantees working to promote rights related to natural resource extraction.

Despite the scale of human rights abuses involved and the level of investment and profiteering from the extractive industries, the level of funding for organizations defending human rights in the Philippines remains woefully disappointing. The research project by IHRFG and the Foundation Center highlights gaps where we as funders could increase our grantmaking commitments. The data further provides a chance to coordinate and collaborate in a way not possible before, by connecting with other donors to share strategies and information, pool funds and resources, and avoid common pitfalls. It allows us to engage in stronger donor advocacy to expand funding directed toward the regions and sectors that suffer the most egregious rights violations. As a more thorough map of the human rights funding landscape emerges during the next phase of the data research project, the donor community will face a crucial opportunity to craft a more strategic and thoughtful set of funding priorities.

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