



Research assistants David Guilingen and Christian Balboa discuss details of the study plans with the community leaders of Tublay.

The Bio+Mine PH Team held a pre-conference with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) on September 6, 2022 at the Benguet Provincial Capitol. Its main goal was to present the project to the community leaders and discuss their concerns and involvement in the project.

The pre-conference started with a presentation by Dr. Arnel Beltran, the project lead. He provided a brief and discussed the objectives of the project, highlighting the rehabilitation of the Sto. Niño mine. Dr. Dennis Alonzo presented the social engagement activities to be conducted with the community members. In his presentation, Dr. Alonzo emphasized that the Bio+Mine project is focused on the rehabilitation of the mining area, not to revive the mining operations. This was followed by a presentation of plans for the study of water, rocks, soil, and plants by Christian Balboa and David Guilingen, research assistants of the project.

Elders from various communities in Tublay, Benguet raised concerns after the team's presentation. The community's primary concern, raised by Brgy. Capt. Sison Balawen, was the term "mine", which was reflected in the project's name. The local community's understanding of the term was collection of minerals, but the team further emphasized that their goal was to rehabilitate the mining area, not to recover minerals from it.

The types of samples to be collected, the sampling plan, and the sources of the samples for the project were also raised. The team clarified that authorities such as the DENR shall be approving the sampling plans, and that humans will not be involved in the sampling collection.



A forum wherein the community leaders can raise their concerns was done after the team's presentation.

After the team's presentation, Lily Francisco, Community Development Officer III of the NCIP – Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) gave an orientation about the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, which ensures that members of indigenous groups are provided with the right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) on activities conducted within their communities and have protected rights to their ancestral lands. Throughout the program, the team assures that the rehabilitation project shall be beneficial to community members and only permitted activities shall be conducted.



Lily Francisco, CDO III of the NCIP, discusses the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 to the community leaders to assure them of their rights in activities conducted in their ancestral domains.

Overall, good engagement between the community leaders and participants was observed. The program served as a platform to discuss the program objectives and address concerns from the stakeholders' perspectives.