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Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals in Mining

By Patricia A. O. Bunye

In September 2015, the United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2015-2030 and represents a comprehensive plan of action for social inclusion, environmental sustainability and economic development.

Mining, as an industry employing millions of people, often in the remotest and least developed countries, is viewed as having the opportunity and potential to positively contribute to all 17 SDGs. Conversely, it is also seen as the culprit for many of the challenges that the SDGs are precisely trying to address – environmental degradation, displacement of populations, worsening economic and social inequality, armed conflicts, gender-based violence, tax evasion and corruption, increased risk for many health problems, and the violation of human rights.

What are the 17 SDGs and how are they relevant to mining and metals?

SDG 1: No Poverty

Mining can help reduce poverty through direct employment, sourcing goods and services locally and the payment of taxes and royalties which enable the development of essential social and economic infrastructure. Where companies operate in remote areas, poverty levels can be significant. Mining's presence can either alleviate poverty through job creation and skills development or exacerbate poverty if traditional livelihoods and ways of life are adversely affected.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

Where mining companies operate in traditionally agricultural areas, the impact of mining on water, land and biodiversity resources can be a concern to farmers and local communities and can become a potential source of social conflict. Mining companies may also operate in areas with chronic malnutrition, especially among children. Companies can manage their impacts on natural resources, through limiting the amount of land they use and enabling access by communities to lands they manage which may provide important sources of food. They can also collaborate with development agencies to help eliminate hunger.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

Mine workers may be exposed to increased occupational health risks such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as communicable diseases like tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Certain working arrangements such as fly-in/fly-out have been linked to mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence. Community health can also be of concern where mining takes place in poorer areas with limited healthcare facilities, making communities more vulnerable to disease.

SDG 4: Quality Education

Major Issue Areas for Mining and the SDGs



Figure 1: Mining and the 17 SDGs. A selection of most major issue areas where mining may have an impact (positive or negative) on each of the 17 goals. Readers are referred to the individual chapters and diagrams for each goal for a detailed and more comprehensive discussion. Icons adapted from <http://www.globalgoals.org/>. Abbreviations: EIDs = emerging infectious diseases; OSH = occupational safety and health; TVET = technical, vocational, and educational training; CCS = carbon capture and storage; IFFs = illicit financial flows; FPIC = free, prior, and informed consent; PPPs = public-private partnerships.

Adapted from Global Goals (www.globalgoals.org)

Investments of mining companies in education improve local capacity, build the future workforce and strengthen relationships with host communities.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Mining companies have a responsibility to build inclusive access to jobs and economic opportunities.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Water is essential at every stage in a mine's life cycle. Mining and metals operations are significant users of water and can also negatively impact water access and quality if sound water management practices are not applied.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Mining is energy intensive and accounts for almost 2% of global energy use. As a major energy user, the industry can cut carbon emissions through accelerating energy efficiency measures and deploying renewable technologies.

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SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Where mining is significant in the economic life of a country, it can boost GDP by several percentage points. For growth to be fully inclusive, it requires government to effectively manage revenues from mining and encourage linkages to the broader economy.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Mining requires significant infrastructure investments in order to develop, operate and export mined products.

SDG 10 Reducing Inequality

While governments are primarily responsible for reducing inequality through policies and redistributive mechanisms, mining companies can actively promote inclusion through local employment and procurement and through supporting livelihood diversification. They can also embrace an inclusive approach to community consultation and participation in decision-making.

SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

The products of mining such as steel, copper and aluminum play a vital role in the construction of cities. They also help connect cities physically and virtually by supporting road, rail and air transport networks as well as ICT infrastructure.

SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production

While mining produces the materials essential for modern society, it also generates large quantities of waste. Concerted collaborative action is required to increase recycling rates.

SDG 13 Climate Action

Mining companies can contribute to addressing climate change by reducing their carbon footprint and by engaging in dialogue with stakeholders to enhance adaptive capacities and integrate climate change measures into policies and strategies.

SDG 14 Life Below Water

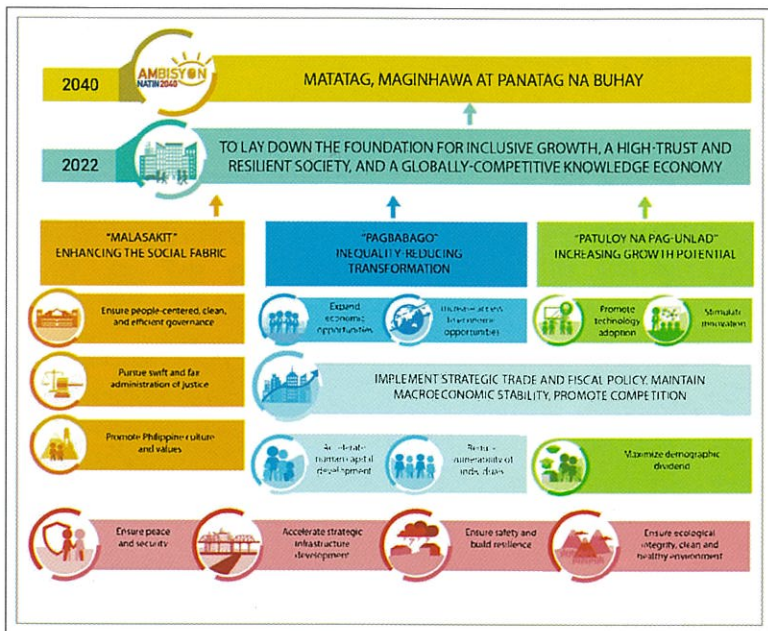
Mining companies can contribute to ocean sustainability by identifying marine-related impacts and mitigation strategies, understanding the dependence of local communities on marine resources that may be adversely impacted by mining and contributing to the protection and conservation of the oceans and seas.

SDG 15 Life on Land

Mining companies have a potentially important role to play in biodiversity and conservation management.

SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Mining companies can contribute to peaceful societies by respecting human rights, providing access to information, supporting representative decision-making, working to avoid company-community conflict and carefully managing their security approaches to ensure they decrease rather than increase the likeli-



hood of conflict. Companies can also commit to transparency across the scope of their activities that impact society, from transparency of mineral revenues and payments to transparency in commitments made to local communities.

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

The 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals) emphasizes that building a sustainable world is a multi-stakeholder endeavor.

First, governments are responsible for the laws, rules and policies on mineral extraction and all areas covered by the SDGs, including social services, public health, education, public infrastructure, economic policies and setting environmental performance standards.

Second, companies are responsible for undertaking their core business operations in a responsible manner that respects human rights, complies with government regulations, maximizes positive contributions to society, and avoids or minimizes negative economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts. Companies also pay taxes and royalties, engage in responsible policy dialogue and can collaborate to leverage resources and make social investments, ensuring that these are aligned with local development priorities.

Third, non-government organizations are responsible for working alongside governments and companies to address gaps and ensure governments and companies are fulfilling their responsibilities to society.

Fourth, development partners including multilateral institutions and bilateral donors can support in many ways: from providing project finance conditioned on adherence to sustainability standards to providing technical expertise and capacity-building support to governments, communities and local enterprises. They can also contribute to sharing cross-country best practices and promoting greater alignment between mining sector policies, practices and sustainable development.

In ensuring the attainment of the SDGs in the Philippines, the National Economic and Development Authority ("NEDA") performs oversight and monitoring to ensure coordination among the various stakeholders. Specifically, it is NEDA which chairs the Multi-Sectoral Committee on International Human Development Com-

A diagram of the country's 'Ambisyon Natin 2040' roadmap that includes the Sustainable Development Goals. Image from NEDA

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mitments ("MC-IHDC"), which is composed of national government agencies and non-government organizations and ensures the mainstreaming of the SDGs into policies of the government. On the other hand, the Department of Interior and Local Government oversees the localization of SDGs within local government units.

Other government agencies involved in mapping mining into the attainment of SDGs in the Philippines include the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, specifically the Mines and Geosciences Bureau ("MGB") and the Environmental Management Bureau, the Department of Energy, the Climate Change Commission, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Health and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

The SDGs have been integrated into the Philippine Development Plan ("PDP") 2017-2022 and in our various sectoral development plans and are measured and reported annually through the Socioeconomic Report.

To support the monitoring of the SDGs and the PDP, NEDA introduced the SDG Annex in the formulation of the 2018 Socioeconomic Report. Since the PDP is the de facto implementation mechanism of the SDGs and the PDP is assessed through the SER, each chapter of the PDP and SER is used to assess the contributions and consistency of the Philippines' actions with the global commitments of the SDGs. The SDG Annex of the SER identifies the Philippine policies, programs, activities, and projects ("PPAPs") that are implemented to

meet our SDG targets. The MGB's role in implementing SDG 13 on Climate Action, for example, is covered by the PPAPs for "Geological Assessment for Risk Reduction and Resiliency".

While each of the SDGs sounds lofty and difficult to achieve, there are concrete ways for these to be integrated by mining companies into their core business. Further, it is imperative for these companies, along with the mining industry as a whole, to collaborate with other stakeholders – particularly the government, civil society, and communities - to leverage their resources to achieve the SDGs. ■



Patricia A. O. Bunye is a senior partner at Cruz Marcelo & Tenebrancia and head of its mining and energy practice. She is also President of Diwata-Women in Resource Development, Inc. Questions and comments are welcome at po.bunye@cruzmarcelo.com.



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