

# A Case Study of Children in Small-Small Mining

Research Paper No. 1998-02



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## **A Case Study of Children in Small-Scale Mining Abstract**

This study was undertaken to assess the health and working conditions of child miners working in small-scale mines in Paracale, Camarines Norte, It aims to determine the role of parents/family in the employment and/or recruitment of child miners and to examine the health conditions of child miners. Results of this study will provide information for policy-makers on effective interventions for the protection of children and elimination of child labor in very hazardous industries.

A medical assessment of 92 child laborers in 4 mining areas of Camarines Norte was done (Gamaus and Tugos in Paracale, Luklukan Sur in Jose Panganiban, and Dalas in Labo). Data was obtained through questionnaire/interviews, physical examination and the ff. laboratory tests: complete blood count, blood chemistry, mercury in blood and urine, blood lead and urinalysis. In addition, pulmonary function tests and chest x-rays were carried out.

Out of 94 children, 67% were adolescents, 17 years and younger, 20% were younger than 11 while 7.4% were 18 and older. 46% were no longer in school and 28% were migrants from Quezon, Cavite and Masbate. Underground mining work was done by 13.5% of the children while 18% were involved in processing and 5% carried ores. On wages, 32% received P 5 to P 100 on a piece-rate basis while 19% received P 50 to P 800 per week. Most of the children, 72%, decided to work while 38% claimed that the decision to work was made by their parents or relatives. Most of the complaints were respiratory in nature (cough, wheezing, shortness of breath) and chest x-rays showed 3

children with Pneumonitis, and 2 with PTB. 65% (61 of 94) of the children had lead levels above 10 ug/dl with the highest value at 25 ug/dl.

The study showed the risks of child labor in the small-scale mines owing to extremely dangerous underground work, their generally poor working conditions, exposure to toxic substances and very limited access to welfare, healthy and safety facilities. However, given the community and its quasi-total dependence on small-scale mining, there is a need for concerted efforts by all sectors to the creation of alternative livelihood, facilitate access of child laborers to education and basic health services and immediately remove child labor from mining work.