

# Small Scale Mining in an Indigenous Community in Northern Philippines<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The paper presents a case study of small scale mining (SSM) in an indigenous community in Northern Philippines. The research documents gold as it undergoes a fascinating transformation from a seam in the ground to the hands of the consumer—as jewelry, part of an everyday product like a mobile phone or medical device, or as an investment. During this journey, the conversion is tracked and analyzed using the value chain approach—from an unprocessed ore and almost indistinguishable from a worthless rock—to a pure, valuable metal recognized the world over for its intrinsic value and cultural significance. The paper traces the legal definitions of SSM and tests the practice of mining in the study area on whether these follow legal and technical criteria and conditions. The paper likewise presents the contributions and correlates of mining-related and macroeconomic variables as context of the value chain analysis. Though subject to sustainability issues and debate, stakeholders acknowledged the SSM sector's critical contribution as a source of subsistence livelihood of the people as well as an important marker of the people's identity, culture and tradition.

*Keywords: Small scale mining, scale economies, value chain, indigenous community, Philippines*

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