

## **Gender Mainstreaming in the Mining Sector and Mining Communities**

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### ***A. The Case for Gender Mainstreaming in the Mining Sector***

#### **1) Mining's Gender Bias**

In 1995 I attended my first Mining and Community event which took place in Quito, Ecuador. I still have a vivid memory of one of the community women representatives at that event who complained strongly about the impact of mining on her village. Her concern was that mining had taken away part of the land traditionally used for subsistence farming and that the food security of her community was at risk. In contrast, the mining company pointed to the employment and other benefits that the community received. I remember thinking that if the mining company had recognized the food security concern, they could have worked with the community to find a solution – but somehow the company had not made the connection between its mining activities and community food security concerns. Hence, the women's pleas went unresponded.

Six years later in 2001, I helped organize a Mining and Community Event in Madang, Papua New Guinea. At this event, there was a good exchange between the mining companies and community representatives. Most of the participants were men, but there were a group of six women from communities around the Lihir gold mine. They were always among the first to be in their seats in the morning and the last to leave at the end of the day. They were listening carefully and taking plenty of notes. But they never spoke up during the Q&A times. When encouraged to do so by the organizers, they explained that women did not speak up in "men's" events. A combination of encouraging and cajoling failed to get them to speak up – but it did lead to another outcome – that the World Bank and the PNG Department of Mines would organize a subsequent "Women in Mining" event.

The "Women in Mining" event took place two years later in 2005, also in Madang. Those of us organizing the event had no idea what to expect. We imagined that perhaps 50 or 60 women would attend. Instead, we found that there were nearly 200 registrations of whom 90% were from women. Some were women workers and managers from the mining companies, but the vast majority was women from the mining communities. One group of women from the Porgera mine even hired a bus and drove 36 hours to attend the event. Invited to "their own" event, the women were not shy about speaking up. But what was said caught me completely unawares.

The women said that while mining development had certainly provided incomes and raised employment, very little had filtered down to them. For those women who were able to get mining company employment, mining opened some job possibilities they could not have previously imagined. But this was a small minority – since nearly 95% of the mining company jobs went to men.

For the vast majority of the women who did not obtain employment the picture was very different. Before mining came to the community, men and women would work together around the home and doing subsistence farming in the gardens. But after the mine arrived, men went to work at the mine leaving the women behind to take care of the home and work in the gardens on their own. There was no less work to do but one less pair of hands to do it. Before the mine, there was not much income and the family would decide how to use it. Now there was plenty of income but strong disagreements in the family over how to spend it and whether or not to save some. Even worse, in Papua New Guinea once men have money, they will often use it to take a second wife – to the great detriment of the first wife and children.

As the three day event unfolded it started to emerge that while women did see a number of benefits mining provided to the community, the two main benefits were employment and, to a lesser extent, company and government funded infrastructure programs provided to the mining communities. The main risks and harm from mining according to the women were family conflict, social dislocation, domestic violence, crime, and environmental damage including loss of gardens and deteriorating water quality. What became evident was that when examined from a gender perspective, the vast majority of benefits accrued to men – who gained the bulk of formal sector employment opportunities from mining and who had the main voice about how government and company funded infrastructure programs would be spent. In contrast, the bulk of the harmful impacts – family conflict, domestic violence, loss of gardens and dirty water for washing clothes and cooking fell upon women. This is the origin of the term “mining’s gender bias”. Mining’s benefits go mostly to men whereas its negative impacts fall mostly on women.

It is useful to stand back for a moment and place gender in a larger context of managing and improving the impacts of mining. Turning the clock back thirty or forty years, environmental impacts of mining were not well recognized or addressed. That has changed greatly today, with the introduction and enforcement of environmental legislation, regulations and compliance criteria and the use of well accepted instruments such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Environmental Management Plans (EMPs). That is not to say that all environmental harm is avoided – but there is a strong recognition and acceptance among governments and the mining industry of the need to minimize, manage and mitigate harmful environmental impacts. The recognition of the need to improve environmental impacts was followed a decade or so later by the recognition of the need to address social impacts. In particular, the issue of managing and improving the social impacts of mining and improving a mining company’s “social license to operate” has come to the forefront in the past decade or so. Much has been accomplished regarding the social impacts of mining, but equally much remains to be done. Within the social issues to be addressed, over the past decade gender has come to be recognized as the next wave of advancement for the mining industry – following in the wake of environmental and social issues.

## **2) Men get most of the benefits**

The impacts of mining can usefully be considered in two ways – first, the benefits that mining brings. Second, the negative impacts that result from mining. This section will consider some of the main benefits and how they are distributed between men and women in the local community.

*Mining Employment* As noted above, employment is the most important benefit. Mining company employment statistics indicate that mining companies typically employ 90%-95% men – with only 5% or at a very maximum 10% of employment going to women – even though there is considerable evidence that women can do most mining company jobs as well if not better than men (mining companies in Chile, Zambia and Papua New Guinea that have introduced women to become heavy equipment operators report that over the long term the efficiency is higher and operating and maintenance costs lower for heavy equipment operated by women than by men).

*Community Income* At the community level, there is a growing trend for mining companies to provide community programs and governments to provide additional income and infrastructure to mining communities, in part for them to share in the wealth that is being generated and in part to offset the local negative impacts of mining. But all too often the decisions about what the programs will contain and how the community income will be spent rests in the hands of committees or councils dominated by a community's male leadership, where women are not represented and their views are not heard.

*Size of Mine relative to Community* Consider a mining operation with say 3,000 employees, of whom 10% are women, in a surrounding area with a population of say 30,000, of whom one quarter are adult men, one quarter are adult women and half are children. In such a situation, the mining operation would provide employment to less than 5% of the women in the community, but it will also impact the lives of all the women in the community as well as the family members they care for. This matters because less than 300 women - a relatively small number – will benefit from mining employment but all of the women – 7,500 - will struggle and experience the negative impacts of mining, as will the 15,000 children they care for.

### **3) Most of the harm falls upon women**

Having looked in Section A.2 at some of the main benefits of mining and how they are shared between men and women in the local community, Section A.3 looks at some of the negative impacts and how they are distributed between men and women.

*Environmental Impacts* As noted previously, the mining industry has been seriously addressing environmental impacts for the past two to three decades and some are well recognized and mitigated but others remain scarcely recognized and hardly mitigated. Mining often increases increased sediment loads which can result in water becoming discolored but not chemically dangerous. The mining company can monitor water quality and demonstrate it to be scientifically safe, but for the women who use water from the local rivers to wash the clothes and cook food "dirty water" is not acceptable – instead they must seek other sources of clean water for their household chores. If poor water quality does lead to negative health impacts, it is women, not men, who typically care for the family when they are sick. The quality of women's lives can also be reduced by increased air and noise pollution from the mining operations. But for remote communities, the loss of gardens for subsistence farming can be one of the most significant impacts.

*Subsistence Farming* In many communities, even if they do not own the land, women are the main subsistence farmers and loss of land can cause loss of food for the family and loss income for the women. When the Ahafo gold mine was developed in Ghana, the mining company went to great lengths to compensate those losing their livelihoods, but much of the subsistence land was owned by absentee owners, managed by landlords and worked by women. Unfortunately in some cases the compensation for the lost land was received by the owners and landlords but not the women, who, having lost their livelihoods. then moved away.

*Social Impacts* Social impacts include the changes in community structure and stability and disruption that comes with a large influx of construction workers from the outside, increased crime, prostitution, and rising costs of food, land, housing, and transportation due to the increased activity associated with mining construction. As noted in Section A.1, it can also lead to breakdown in family relationships and, more often than is realized, to incidences of domestic violence.

*The Most Vulnerable* Those receiving employment linked to the mining development will be able to afford higher prices and will have increased living standards But those who do not benefit from employment – often those who are already the poorest and most vulnerable in the community - will be faced with increasing costs and little in the way of assistance to deal with them. Generally, the majority of the poorest and most vulnerable are women (often single women heads of households) and the families (not just children but often also the elderly or the disabled) who they care for.

*Increasing Cost of Living* When construction commenced for a major gold mine on the island of Misima in Papua New Guinea an unintended consequence was that all the local boats were chartered for mine construction with the result that transportation to the mainland became scarcely available or affordable, substantially increasing the cost of essential goods from the mainland and putting transportation to the mainland out of the reach of the poorest residents, the majority of who were women.

*Squatter Communities* Mining communities often become “islands of prosperity” in sea of poverty in developing countries, with the result that many impoverished people are attracted to mining areas seeking employment but are unable to find it. The Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea was developed at the end of a major highway with the result that a major squatter community rapidly developed with the influx of outsiders. The conditions in such communities results in especially harmful and risky living situations for the women who live there, as well as creating added stress and conflict for the women who were the original residents of the area.

#### **4) Harm that is often not recognized**

Beyond the negative impacts noted above, the introduction of mining often causes impacts within the family and community on the status and well being of women that are not generally recognized but can be equally if not more harmful for women – especially for communities, where mining is taking place for the first time.

*Weakened Family Relationships* Prior to the introduction of mining, men and women often work closely together especially in subsistence based communities. When mining comes along, the nature of the family relationship starts to change.

The men go to the mine site to work – leaving the women at home and often having to take on the men’s chores around the house as well as their own.

*Income Brings Discord as well as Improvements* With the men working in the mine, the family now has a significant cash income often for the first time – which can bring to the surface differences in how the money should be spent. The men often see the wages as “their income” and want to spend money on consumption whereas the women see the money more as “family” income and want to spend it more for the family members overall and also start regular savings. This can both drive a wedge in the family relationships and weaken the status of the woman in the family.

*Loss of Status of Women in the Community* The same often happens at the community level – men decide how the money will be spent and with greater disposal income to control not only in the family but also for the community as a whole, men see their status increase even more compared to women. In traditional matrilineal societies the influx of mining income can result in women losing their standing. Women are often the custodians in remote communities of “sacred” land or burial sites and where mining impacts such lands, it is the women who suffer most.

*Gender Based Violence* Beyond this, there is a frequent pattern of increased gender based violence in mining communities. The violence does not necessarily show up in incidents reported to the police, but does show up in terms of an increase in the number of women treated for physical and sexual abuse at health centers and hospitals.

*Second Wives* But perhaps worst of all is the impact on families in communities where the income from the mine enables men to take second wives and have second families. When asked about the impact of mining on their lives, community women in Papua New Guinea said that certainly their living standards were better but their lives were worse because many of the men had taken second wives because of their good mining incomes.

*Hidden Impacts* Such changes often happen well out of sight of the mining company and the monitoring done by development agencies, but discussions with the women in the community can quickly bring to light profound and harmful changes that are generally not recognized by those outside the community itself.

## ***B. Government and Company Actions to Increase and Improve Gender Mainstreaming in the Mining Sector***

### **1) Actions to reduce and mitigate the gender bias**

There are a range of practical actions, many of which are low cost, which can be taken by the mining company, the government and the community itself to mainstream gender and rectify the situation outlined above.

## **2) Role of government in supporting gender mainstreaming in the mining sector**

*Policy and Legal Environment* Governments can play two main roles. First, governments can promote policies and enact laws and accompanying regulations that support gender mainstreaming (i) in society as a whole so that women have equal legal standing as men including property ownership rights and equal access to employment (no job discrimination) and equal pay for equal work (no wage discrimination); and (ii) in mining development processes ensuring that women and women's groups are consulted in consultation processes and that their views and concerns are recorded and represented.

*Women's Representation and Voice* Second, governments can ensure that there is a certain minimum level of women's representation in consultative and decision-making bodies at the local, provincial and national government levels, including community-mining company bodies and government-mining company bodies.

## **3) Changes in mining industry policy and practice from the growing interest in gender equity and mainstreaming**

*The Process of Change* Over the past three decades environmental protection has become completely accepted and mainstreamed. Social mitigation is also well now on the way to being mainstreamed. Gender equity is following in the footsteps of social mitigation. It is still at an early stage but there is a growing recognition by governments, companies and civil society that addressing gender equity concerns will bring both development and business value.

*Recognizing the Concerns of Women* For the mining industry, changes in policy will relate to recognizing the importance of identifying and addressing the concerns of women in surrounding communities.

*Consultation* Changes in practice will include, first, mapping and identifying different women's groups in the local community and identifying which constituencies they represent (e.g. the "elite" women in the community, women who are employed, the unemployed and most vulnerable women in the community, and women from different religious or cultural groups); and second, consulting with women and women's groups to get a good representation of the different groups and assessing how the results differ from consultation with male dominated community groups and among the women's groups themselves.

*Introducing New Practices* Having understood the concerns and aspirations of the different women's groups in the community and how they differ from men, the company can then respond to the issues raised by the community women and what has been learned by improving the companies operational practices that impact community women. These may relate to providing more employment opportunities, reducing negative impacts or making sure those women are represented and have a voice on any committees or forums where the mine sits down with the community.

*Improving Community Programs* Taking into account women's views, companies can also re-design their community programs to respond to women's concerns and support projects designed for and by women. Considerable progress in this regard has been made by mines like Ok Tedi, Lihir and Porgera in Papua New Guinea who

both consult in depth with the local Mine Women's Associations (MWAs) and have re-focused their community programs to emphasize projects proposed by the MWAs.

*Gender officers* Mining companies that are now responding to gender issues are appointing gender officers who are responsible for addressing not only gender issues in the workplace but also mining-related gender issues in the community.

#### **4) Actions to improve women's economic and social empowerment**

*Direct Employment* There are a range of actions that can be taken to increase and enhance the benefits of mining for women in mining communities. Obviously companies can increase their employment of women – but as noted above it is rare for direct employment of women to increase above 10% of the mine workforce. Specific actions can include initiatives by both the mining company and the government to increase direct mine employment for women

- governments can develop “affirmative action policies” in which they set targets, provide incentives, monitor and dialogue with companies with a view to seeing women's employment increase. As part of its national initiatives to redress past injustices, South Africa is requiring mining companies to increase their employment of women to 10%.
- companies can set internal targets for women's employment and introduce women into jobs which have traditionally been the province of men – such as heavy truck drivers or shovel operators
- both governments and companies can provide training for women to improve both their employment prospects with the mine

*Indirect Employment* Mines have many local suppliers and these companies can often increase women's employment to 40% or more. Beyond that, women are well able to start their own businesses and cottage industries. Micro credit and related training schemes can be developed, not just by government, but also by companies, which can be targeted 100% at women. Specific actions include:

- initiatives by both the mining company and the government to increase the indirect (spin-off and “linkages”) employment of women
  - Companies can monitor the gender employment of local suppliers and encourage, provide incentives and/or require suppliers to increase their employment of women
  - Companies can make available training programs for women to improve their general skill levels to make them more employable
- Companies can also either directly provide literacy training for illiterate adult women or support women's groups or other groups providing such training, thereby giving community women a greater command of basic life skills and enriching their lives (a very low cost initiative with enormous payoffs in terms of goodwill and results)
  - Companies can ensure that women are consulted and have a say in how money that is received by the community is spent, including projects proposed by women and women's groups in community and social programs supported by the mine or the government.

## **5) Actions to improve women's safety and well-being**

*Replacing Lost Livelihoods* There are a range of actions that companies and government can take to reduce and mitigate the harm that mining causes women in surrounding communities. These include initiatives to replace lost land for subsistence farming and compensate the users (who are often women) as well as the owners (who are generally men).

*Counseling* Companies can provide counseling to their workforce and governments can provide counseling services within the community to reduce domestic violence and violence against women and support for women who are victims of violence.

*Income Support* Government can provide income support for the most vulnerable groups (especially women heads of households) who do not benefit from income from mine-related employment but face increased living and housing costs due to the increased buying power from mine-related employment.

### ***C. The Development Case and the Business Case for Gender Mainstreaming in the Mining Sector***

#### **1) The Development Case**

*The Development Case* for gender mainstreaming in the mining sector is that given that women constitute half of society, they should share equally with men in the benefits from mining and should not bear a greater burden than men from the risks of mining.

*Spending Patterns* In addition, women also tend to spend money differently from men – they spend on their dependants, on health and education and improved nutrition and often also try to save some of their income. Men tend to use money more for immediate consumption, for projects rather than services and for themselves as much as for their dependants.

#### **2) The Business Case**

*Core Business Focus* The first aspect of the business case is that companies want a stable and predictable local environment so that they can focus on their core business of mining. Most mining companies are well experienced in the technical and financial aspects of mining, in labor relations and in environmental protection. The issues which have tended to be most perplexing over the past decade have been achieving successful relationships with local communities. While companies have made great strides in improving their community relationships, there is still a long way to go and it is only recently that companies have started to recognize the importance and the potential benefits of engaging with women's groups.

*Reducing and Resolving Local Conflicts* If the mining operation causes more harm than benefits to community women, the women will tend to be resentful rather than supportive of the operation. Their discontent can lead to actions by themselves or support for actions by others that can disrupt the mining operations and cause mine

management to have to frequently divert its attention away from mining and towards resolving community conflicts. Engaging with women's groups can go a long way to avoiding or reducing conflict and production interruptions.

*Community Programs* The second aspect of the business case is that most mining companies have some type of community social programs, but often are not satisfied with the results in terms of improving conditions in the community and mitigating and compensating for local harm and risk. Listening to women and including women's ideas and preferences in designing and implementing community programs supported by the mine will give both a broader range of choices for the company to consider and often "a better bang for the buck".

*Gender Preferences* Women tend to prefer projects that improve services, e.g. they may want a health project that will provide more medicines and staff in a health post or an education project that will provide more teachers and books. In contrast, men prefer tangible projects such as buildings or roads and would generally want a health project that provides a new building or road to reach the health post or an education project that improves school buildings or facilities - rather than better medical supplies, more books or more nurses and teachers.

### **3) Implications for Sustainable Livelihoods**

*Use of Family Income* Where increased gender equity results in women having a greater standing in the community and more of a voice in how both family and community income and assets are used, then the income streams from the mining operation to the community are likely to lead more to sustainable livelihoods and sustainable incomes in the community. This is because as indicated above, there is considerable evidence that women place a much stronger emphasis than men on using their incomes for the overall needs of their family members, rather than just their own needs, and women tend to save more of their income than men.

*Women Heads of Households* This is all the more true in the case where women receiving more or better mining-related incomes are the heads of households. To the extent that women have a greater say in how money is used in the community, it is likely that the overall economic and social fabric of the community will be strengthened – leading to more sustainable development.

*Push Back by Men* However, a caution is needed. If there is a strong negative reaction from the men in the community to a greater standing and voice for women, which could happen if gender mainstreaming proceeds too quickly, then the contribution to sustainable development and livelihoods will be much less.

### **4) Can initiatives taken in one corporate, political or cultural context be applied to other contexts?**

*Role of Leaders* Generally speaking, initiatives regarding gender mainstreaming which have been successful for one country or one company can be applied to another country or company – providing that the leaders of the country or company make it a priority and provide both incentives and requirements for the changes to take place.

*Experience Across Countries* World Bank mining specialists have engaged in gender initiatives for mining communities in countries as diverse as Tanzania, Papua New Guinea, Peru and Poland. At the country level South Africa and Papua New Guinea stand out as leaders requiring mining companies to take account of impacts on women in mining communities.

*Societal Readiness for Change* A key issue how open the society is to gender mainstreaming and how much opposition there will be among both the male political leadership and men in the country and communities at large. Looking at progress towards gender equality and mainstreaming over the past fifty or one hundred years or more, steady progress for women can be seen on many fronts - whether it is receiving the vote or entering professions which were once restricted to men.

*Progress will be Faster in Some Countries than Others* There remain some countries today where women's rights are still restricted by law. Sooner or later it is to be expected that the countries that are the remaining bastions of gender discrimination will move into the modern age.

*More Progressive Companies* At the company level so far, it is mainly large international companies with forward looking management and competent human resource functions that been concerned about the gender-related impacts of their operations on surrounding communities and have taken gender-related initiatives.

*Learning Within the Industry* Companies do a good job of learning from each other and as the benefits of recognizing and responding to the concerns of community women and improving the impacts of their operations on community women are more widely recognized, it is to be expected that more companies will see the business case for improving the gender-related impacts of their operations.

*Litmus Test* A case can be made that the views of women in surrounding communities can be considered as a sort of "litmus test". If the women in surrounding communities consider that they are better off and their lives improved because of the existence of the mining operation, then the mining operation is doing a lot of things right in terms of its employment, environmental and social policies and programs.