



MINING, GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

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Welcome address

Mining, Gender and Sustainable Livelihoods International Workshop

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Introduction

Colleagues, partners and friends, Good morning.

The year 2005 marked a watershed in the history of mining. In October that year, International Council for Minerals and Metals (ICMM), the global body for the extractive industries, published a Community Development Toolkit (CDT) for use by the major mining companies in their outreach work. For many of us, who have been working on mining and gender, the document was disappointing because of its complete neglect of gender analysis. Clearly, ‘the community’ envisioned in the document is an imaginary, homogeneous entity, in which gender does not make any difference. This omission embodies the inherent assumptions that the interests of some people within the community can be conflated with the ‘interests for all’. More explicitly, the naïve assumption in the Toolkit is that if the benefits reach to men, they will trickle down automatically to women. We disagree.

As researchers we are more than aware that the notional ‘community’ into a reductionist collective noun hides many critical differences and divisions, and is hence misleading. As Robert Chambers (2008) has pointed out, there are biases that are to be recognised and offset; attitudes and behaviours which are dominating and discriminatory are common among the more powerful. Most often, these more powerful groups and individuals included men within the community. Maguire (1996: 29-30) observes: ‘Gender was

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hidden in seemingly inclusive terms: “the people”, “the oppressed”, “the campesinos”, or simply “the community”. It was only when comparing ... projects that it became clear that “the community” was all too often the male community.’ By ignoring these realities, the CDT turned itself into a blunt tool that fails to have cutting edge impact.

What is to be mainstreamed and where

Even before the CDT was published, a good amount of scholarly work had been done on the subject. Whilst there has been research to make visible women’s *past and present roles and contributions in mining* – in the industry and in mining communities – there has also been a steady stream of policy-related work that has highlighted why and how *developmental interventions work better* when the benefits reach both women and men. Human rights organisations and activists have consistently put forth a *rights-based perspective* and have demanded that women are part of the new participatory approaches in any resource management process. The research project that gave rise to this workshop contributes to this body of work

The topics that will be discussed over the next two days are complex and there is no doubt that the terms are highly contested. First of all, we are moving on towards the concept of ‘sustainable livelihoods’ from the ‘sustainable development’ framework accepted by the mining industry. This framework, whilst useful in raising awareness of and prompting concrete actions on care for the environment, has neglected crucial areas of concern to the extractive industries sector such as unequal access within the community to sources of power, the assets that are valued by the community, the activities that sustain the community, and their entitlements which are linked to legal and customary rights. Our approach will thus not only gender-sensitise the mining sector but will also broaden out the definition of sustainability. Such a broad definition allows the inclusion of artisanal and small-scale mining which is an integral part of mineral-rich developing countries, and in which women continue to play a major role as against the large-scale mining operations.

Even if we do not directly deal for the time being with the largely unresolved and hostile relationship between mining and development, the theme of the Workshop involves treading on a complex and difficult terrain. For example, the mplication or functional

meanings of the term ‘gender mainstreaming’ itself have been debated widely. In our context, we can see it as institutionalization of gender equality, that is achieved by, following Daly (2005: 435) ‘embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes and environment of public policy.’ However, more than a process, gender mainstreaming can be seen as an end, rather than the means, for achieving gender equality (Eveline and Bacchi, 2005). For the mining sector, we may follow (Reeves and Baden 2000; Walby 2005) definition that it is an organisational strategy to be applied internally, a means of bringing a gender perspective to all aspects of an institution’s policy and activities, through building gender capacity and accountability. This would enable the integration of gender perspective and analysis into – as per the recent UNDP definition (2007) – all stages of design, implementation and evaluation of projects, policies and programs whether within the organisation or outside of it in the organisation’s area of operation. Thus, we can see gender mainstreaming as happening both *within the industry* and in the *community development work of the industry* – in making both women and men visible in their roles and contributions, in giving voice to women as well as men, in ensuring women’s participation in consultations, and in reaching the benefits to them.

The question may be raised: how can such a contested concept be crystallized within a corporate body? In my view, to put simply, the principles of gender equality can be applied *vertically* and *horizontally*. The vertical approach would involve creation of a separate unit or department to deal with gender equity issues, whilst the horizontal approach implies the use of ‘the gender lens’ in every aspect of its work, not restricted purely to community relations department. Developing a gender policy, addressing gender issues at work, or providing gender training in new staff inductions by specialised and dedicated personnel hired specifically for these purposes is the first (vertical) approach. Looking at how each and every policy and project – such as a new expansion of the project or setting up a new water filtration plant - affects women and men differently and making sure that most negative burdens are not borne by women would be the second approach.

Main areas of concern in the mining sector

In the specific context of mining, in my view, we have **five** main areas of concern, which are at times overlapping in nature.

The first area of concern is **policy evaporation**. One reason of such poor attention to mainstreaming gender in the mining sector is the assumption that engendered participatory processes would automatically feed into the industry's policies. Whilst there have been some efforts to ensure community participation and engagement, these processes have yet to become gender inclusive and flag up key gender issues. This dilution of gender focus is described as 'policy evaporation'. Another example of this is where Community Development professionals feel that a greater attention to gender would turn CommDev into a gender strategy.

The second area of concern is the **conceptual confusion on choosing GAD over the WID approach**. Most Community Development strategies produced to date apply an obsolete, women in development (WID) approach mentioning a few female problems in isolation, such as girls' education, women's reproductive health problems and domestic violence². These policies fail to apply a gender and development (GAD) approach that can analyse the inequalities between men and women and then propose measures that can address these inequalities. There is also a need to move away from 'women only' approaches; involvement in and advocacy for gender equality can be and should be for men too. For this reason, we need to find allies within governments and the industry who can champion gender issues. Although women are still marginalized from the decision-making processes in mining, higher numbers of women in planning and decision-making bodies do not necessarily mean that gender issues will be or are being addressed. Moreover, women in most cases are still not involved in crucial areas of participatory consultations such as compensation for land.

The third area of concern is the **staffing patterns and 'mining culture' of the industry**. One of the essential elements for gender mainstreaming is knowledge, skills and commitment of staff to address gender issues in their work. So far, the mining industry has seriously lacked strength in these areas. Usually, the jobs of 'Community Relations' departments involve a broad range of tasks that may include external relations and publicity in addition to community development. Most commonly, these departments are

² Diane Elson (1991: 1) noted how WID approach facilitates the view that "women" as a general category, can be added to an existing approach to analysis and policy, and that this will be sufficient to change development outcomes so as to improve women's position. It facilitates the view that "women's issues" can be tackled in isolation from women's relations to men. It may even give rise to the feeling that the problem is women rather than the disadvantages women face; and that women are unreasonably asking for special treatment rather than for redress for injustices and for removal of distortions which limit their capacities.'

‘ghettoised’ within the organisational hierarchy and are poorly staffed with relatively lower budgets. Again, even if the players involved in Community Development in the industry are committed to gender equity, policy commitments generally fail to be translated into implementation and have serious impact.

Another area of concern is the **roles played by country laws**. Besides industry culture, country laws play a dual role in hindering gender equity in mining areas. First, in countries like Australia, they create an illusion in some countries that gender equity exists in all spheres of life because there are gender equal laws and women’s associations. Second, in some others, particularly in less-developed countries, many laws relating to women’s economic citizenship have remained discriminatory. For example, the officially recognised ‘Head of a Household’ in some countries must be a man – the father, brother or the husband of a woman – who will determine whether or not to agree to the cash offer. Another example is that in instances where jobs could be offered against land losses, discriminatory country laws may put women in a low priority position because their work in mines (or in mining work) can be subject to restrictions imposed by protective legislations. Lastly, laws tend to give the impression that they themselves are adequate measures for achieving gender equality, and may result in relieving other players of their obligations and responsibilities. In India, the Constitution for example appears as a ‘woman-friendly’ document, but in reality many of the rights (for example, equal inheritance and land ownership) of women do not translate into practice.

Finally, as women receive employment in mining, the emergent area that needs further understanding is the **mining as work and corporations as workplaces**. Workplace issues include developing a culture of equity and diversity within the mining company and deal head on with issues such as gender-based occupational health and safety issues, issues such as sexual harassment and bullying by men in the workplace, women’s place as against men in the industry’s structure, and the wage gap and such other indicators of inequities. There are some serious considerations here; for example in pushing aboriginal women’s employment, there has to be adequate attention to building in measures that can ensure the rise to positions of power by these women. Another example is the proverbial use of ‘women are safer’, ‘women take fewer risks’, ‘women care for machines’, or ‘women are more docile workers’ arguments; There is a need to critically reflect on such statements; we do NOT want to mobilise gender for these reasons in mining. These unverified

statements can easily lead us to the trap of biological essentialism that sees all women as only mothers and carers, and reinforce pre-determined notions about who they are and what they should be like.

Conclusion

I see this workshop as a continuation of consistent efforts by all those present here – the Tunnel Vision conference organised by Oxfam, the Voices of Women meetings organised by the World Bank, the Pit Women and Others international workshop at ANU (held in July 2004), and various other efforts by those present here. I am delighted to be here with you today in our shared purpose to critically reflect on the lasting gender inequalities in the mining industry and in areas of its operation, and to explore ways in which a change could be initiated.

I encourage us not to see this meeting as yet another workshop. It is a privilege that we are here to discuss means that can potentially positively affect many people's lives in mining regions; ideas that can create conditions for women to be empowered, and for men to support such empowerment so together they can achieve gender equality. Being here is a privilege that helps us avoid the traps of tokenism; we all bear a responsibility to ensure, push, challenge, advocate and insist that strategies are gender sensitive. In order to achieve gender equity we can't give up till it happens.

Our privilege also comes with a sense of engagement with and duty to promote and respect the rights of men and, in particular women, that are enshrined in the international conventions and agreements that have been endorsed by the world and that are generally guaranteed in the constitutions of countries around the world.

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