

# Tunnel Vision

## Women, Mining and Communities

An anthology edited by Ingrid Macdonald  
and Claire Rowland



Oxfam Community Aid Abroad  
November 2002

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The views expressed within this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad.

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Front Cover Photo: A woman from a community affected by mining lifts a rock in a stream flowing from a mine tailings pond to show contamination, sludge and discolouration underneath. PHOTO: Ingrid Macdonald/Oxfam CAA

Back Cover Photo: Student at Uiaku Community School, Uaiku, Papua New Guinea. PHOTO: Martin Wurt/Oxfam CAA

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## Forward – the need for a forum

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad has pursued gender equality and women's empowerment in its development programs, humanitarian relief and advocacy work for many years. The agency has also supported overseas communities affected by the activities of Australian mining companies for the last decade, culminating in the establishment of the Mining Ombudsman in February 2000. In this work, we have found that the grievances of communities affected by mining activities often represent a direct response to the continued denial of their basic human rights - especially their rights to prior, free and informed consent, self-determination, land and livelihoods. These grievances have proved to be largely similar across the industry and throughout the lifecycle of mining projects. However, currently there is limited information available or discussion about women's roles and rights in relation to the activities of the mining industry.

As a result, on World Environment Day, 5 June 2002, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad convened the 'Tunnel Vision: Mining, Women and Communities,' forum in Melbourne, Australia. The forum brought together speakers from Indigenous Australia and the Asia-Pacific to explore the impacts of mining operations on women in affected communities. The forum illustrated how women tend to be excluded from the economic benefits of mining and bear the burden of many of the negative social and environmental impacts. It highlighted the need for all stakeholders to proactively pursue gender equality and women's empowerment in all activities and projects.

The forum's speakers came from wide-ranging backgrounds and perspectives. All have considerable first-hand experience in researching, addressing, campaigning and/or personally living with the impacts of mining on women. Their confronting papers describe situations where large-scale mining has often had devastating impacts on women in Indigenous Australia, Papua New Guinea, India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Their papers illustrate how it cannot be assumed that women will automatically benefit from large-scale economic development projects such as mining operations. They provide real life examples in which mining projects have overlooked or disregarded women's rights, resulting in increased gender inequality and further marginalisation, impoverishment and abuse of women.

The forum was the first of its type to be held in Australia and it provided an opportunity for a diverse group of participants and presenters to learn from one another, exchange ideas and build solidarity. However, it also highlighted the marked requirement for more research and action to address the differential and often destructive impacts that mining operations have on women from local communities.

We hope that this publication will be an important contribution in helping to improve gender awareness and sensitivity of all stakeholders concerned with large-scale mining activities. We would also encourage readers to complete the evaluation form within this Report so that Oxfam Community Aid Abroad can better inform its future work.

Special thanks must be extended to Anna Hutchens, who organised the conference and Claire Rowland, who coordinated the editing of the papers contained within this Report. The whole team of volunteers who edited papers, assisted in the organisation of the forum and provided transportation and accommodation for the speakers deserve the thanks and appreciation of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad. Finally, immeasurable thanks to the inspirational and dedicated women who traveled from throughout the Asia Pacific in order to share their expertise, insights and experiences with the forum participants.

**Ingrid Macdonald**  
*Mining Ombudsman*

# Introduction: women's rights undermined



**Ingrid Macdonald,**  
*Mining Ombudsman*  
*Oxfam Community Aid Abroad*

*Ingrid Macdonald was appointed as the Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Mining Ombudsman in September 2001. She has several years' experience in both the public and private sector in the areas of environmental and natural resource management. Ingrid has qualifications in politics, geography and law. She is currently enrolled as a PhD candidate in Law at the University of Melbourne, Australia.*

**Note: The following introduction was not presented at the Tunnel Vision Forum.**

**G**overnments do not have the sole responsibility for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Every individual and every private sector actor, including mining companies, their directors and employees, bear this responsibility, not just because it is ethically and morally the 'right thing to do', but because it is consistent with the requirements of the international human rights system; particularly women's rights.

## **Women's rights are human rights**

All people - men, women, girls and boys - possess certain basic human rights that provide them with universal claims against society. The universality of human rights means that every person is entitled to the same level of protection of their basic human rights no matter where they live and work. As a result, these rights transcend national borders, economic paradigms and political structures.

The modern international human rights system is founded on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR), the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR) and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1963 (ICESCR). The system is also

comprised of numerous other important human rights instruments.<sup>1</sup>

The rights guaranteed under the international human rights system are universal, inalienable, interdependent, indivisible, and complementary.<sup>2</sup> This means that it is necessary to protect and promote a person's civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, and what are commonly called their collective rights, to enable them to enjoy full human dignity. It also means that every person is entitled to the same level of protection of their basic human rights no matter where they live and work. However, some human rights continue to be perceived as more legally binding than others. For example, the prohibition on torture is a pre-eminent norm of international law whereas the right to social security is not.

Notwithstanding this on-going debate, human rights are guaranteed to all human beings 'without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.'<sup>3</sup> Women are therefore entitled to the same protection as men under the international human rights system. The Vienna Declaration of 1993 provides, '[t]he human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.'<sup>4</sup>



However, in practice this duty is often far removed from the reality of implementation, application and enforcement.

## **The barriers to realising women's rights**

There are many obstacles to realising equality between men and women, despite gender equality being a matter of human rights and social justice.<sup>5</sup> Women comprise 70 % of the poor and this proportion is growing. Throughout the world, women work longer hours for less pay than men employed in similar positions and they are grossly under-represented in private sector management and political positions.<sup>6</sup> Women comprise the vast majority of the world's unpaid informal and subsistence agricultural workforce. As a result, much of the work of women, such as child-care, household responsibilities and daily food and water provision, has no value within the current neo-liberal system of economic development. This system, based on so-called 'gender neutral' economic theories, only places value on paid labour.<sup>7</sup> Economic development often serves to further marginalise the roles and responsibilities of women and exclude them from any benefits of such development.

'The distinction between the public and private spheres operates to make the work and needs of women invisible. Economic visibility depends on working in the public sphere and unpaid work in the home or community is categorised as 'unproductive, unoccupied and economically inactive'.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the world women continue to suffer persistent and systematic human rights abuses for not other reason than they are women.<sup>9</sup> In the workplace, home, health system, the public domain and in conflict situations, women are subjected to violence, abuse and discrimination that is often sanctioned or ignored by judicial and political institutions. Examples include sexual assault, domestic violence, forced prostitution and lack of access and control over reproductive and employment choices.

The marginalised and impoverished position of many women is not a 'natural occurrence' or the result of biological differences. There are many illegitimate social, political, economic, civil and cultural barriers to the implementation of women's rights and the achievement of gender equality. These barriers enable others to infringe, abuse and violate women's rights, resulting in the marginalisation, oppression and impoverishment of women.

Given the considerable barriers to the implementation of women's rights, there are key international human rights instruments dealing exclusively with removing the barriers to women's rights and empowerment. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (effective 1981) and the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 are two key international instruments specifically concerned with women's rights and empowerment. These instruments provide an agenda for women's empowerment and the elimination of discrimination against women in the enjoyment of their civil, political, economic and cultural rights.<sup>10</sup>

## **Mining companies and women's rights**

Human rights, applied through the international human rights system and national human rights laws, are intended to ensure that the rights of those who have less power are not infringed, abused or violated by more powerful actors.

Traditionally, governments have been considered to have primary responsibility for upholding human rights. However, rights and duties under international law are slowly being extended to non-state actors and individuals. Thus far, individuals have been found legally responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other gross human rights abuses.<sup>11</sup> Within the current context of globalisation, non-state actors such as companies are not only morally and socially responsible for respecting and protecting the human rights of the people who their activities affect, but they may be increasingly legally liable as 'organs of society'.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the feminist critique of the international human rights system questions the traditional public (state/formal) and private (non-state/informal) conception that human rights duties are the sole responsibility of governments and their agents. The criticism has centred on the function of human rights law to protect those with less power from those who have more. The critics argue that women are not just subjected to violence, and therefore human rights abuse, by governments. In many situations, communities, families and partners inflict violence on women. Traditionally, such acts would be considered to be within the private sphere and therefore not within the direct realm of human rights law, even though the rights of women are being violated. As a result, human rights law is failing to protect those women who have less power from those non-state groups and individuals who have more. Catherine MacKinnon describes such situations as 'pure gender bias'.<sup>13</sup>

This critique of the private/public dichotomy is equally applicable to the responsibility of non-state actors, such as companies, to protect and promote women's rights. Over the last few decades, there have been considerable changes in the structure of international society. Transnational corporations, including mining companies, have unprecedented influence over patterns of economic development - particularly in developing countries competing for direct foreign investment.

The influence and power of transnational corporations has increased dramatically, in line with the global movements towards a free market system supported by international multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group. The pressure on developing countries to deregulate markets and privatise industries has made it easier for transnational corporations to have a far greater presence amongst some of the world's most vulnerable communities. Recent figures show that the revenues of five of the largest transnational corporations are more than double the combined Gross Domestic Profit of the poorest 100 countries.<sup>14</sup>

Given that the basis of international human rights law is to protect the less powerful from the powerful, it is archaic to exclude powerful globalised mining companies from direct human rights accountability. As a result, mining companies should be obliged to fulfil the duties required under the international human rights system, including those required in the area of women's rights and gender equality. The responsibility of private sector actors not to discriminate against women is also recognised in recommendations relating to CEDAW.<sup>15</sup>

## Tunnel vision: women, mining and communities

The papers within this Report provide practical examples of situations where women have not automatically and equally benefited from economic development and large-scale mining projects. In fact, the presenters at the forum spoke strongly about their own experiences in which women and children had consistently suffered the most from the negative impacts of mining projects.

Similarly, during the case investigations of the Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Mining Ombudsman, women from communities affected by mining operations have provided testimonies detailing the violation and infringement of their human rights.<sup>16</sup> The following list represents a consolidation of their grievances:

- Companies entering into negotiations only with men, making women neither party to the negotiations, nor beneficiaries of royalties or compensation payments - as a result, women are stripped of their traditional means of acquiring status and wealth;
- Companies not recognising the religious and spiritual connections of indigenous women to their environments and land, especially when they are displaced by mining activities;
- Women generally have little or no control over and access to any of the benefits of mining developments, especially money and employment. They therefore become more dependent on men who are more likely to be able to access and control these benefits;
- The traditional roles and responsibilities of women are marginalised as the community becomes more dependent on the cash based economy created by mine development;
- The workload of women increases as men work in a cash economy created by mining operations and women have increased responsibility for the household and food provision through traditional means;
- Women become more at risk of impoverishment, particularly in women-headed households;
- Women bear both the physical and mental strain of mine development, especially when it involves resettlement;
- Women suffer from an increased risk of HIV/AIDS and other STD infections, family violence, rape and prostitution - often fuelled by alcohol abuse and/or a transient male workforce; and
- Women suffer active and often brutal discrimination in the workplace.

These grievances represent a denial of the basic human rights of women from communities affected by mining. They do not represent natural occurrences within the community, but are the result of gender insensitive projects that fail to consider the strategic gender interests of women affected by the project. As a result, the mining operations have further disadvantaged and disenfranchised women in these communities.

## Realising women's rights

Mining companies have a moral and social



obligation and potentially a legal obligation under international law to protect and promote women's rights. Companies must therefore promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all stages of the project planning, implementation and life cycle.

Companies should ensure that a suitably qualified and experienced person undertakes an independent and thorough gender analysis, with periodic gender audits, at all mine sites. Projects should be gender sensitive, involving women in all elements of the decision-making and providing an opportunity for women to define what is appropriate development and participation for themselves. Projects should consider not only the practical gender needs of women, such as the provision of food and water, but women's strategic gender interests, such as ensuring that men and women have equal control and access over the resources and benefits from a mine.

Company policies, internal monitoring, evaluation and verification systems should ensure that all

employees and management are committed to and required to protect and promote women's rights and pursue gender equality and women's empowerment. There should be accountability and incentive mechanisms in place for encouraging and enforcing these policies and systems. Companies will also need to ensure that they develop appropriate capacity and allocate adequate resources, and most importantly, foster the political will, to achieve successful policy development, implementation and enforcement.

Overall, companies must commit to undertaking their activities in a manner that is consistent with the international human rights system. In order to do so, companies will need to commit to obtaining the prior, free and informed consent of female landowners and women from affected communities to any exploration or mining activity. Companies should also always seek advice from local women about what are the appropriate ways for ensuring that their views are heard and their rights are protected.

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## Footnotes

- 1 See Macdonald, I. and Ross, B. *Mining Ombudsman Annual Report 2001-2002*, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, 2002, p 4 & 57-68.
- 2 *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* - Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, (1995).
- 3 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted 10 Dec. 1948, G.A. Res. 217A (III), UN Doc. A/810, at 71 (1948) art. 2
- 4 *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* - United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993, 14 Human Rights Law Journal 352 (1993) 18.
- 5 *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, op. cit, 'Mission Statement', para 1 Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat.1.htm> [Accessed November 4, 2002].
- 6 See respective United Nations Human Development Reports, especially the Report for 1993, p25 Available at: <http://www.undp.org>.
- 7 Hunt, J. 'Situating Women's Development Needs Within the Human Rights Framework,' p. 24 - 34, in Moon, G (ed), *Making Her Rights a Reality: Women's Human Rights and Development*, Community Aid Abroad, 1996, p 25-26.
- 8 Charseworth, H. Chinkin, C. & Wright, S. Feminist Approaches to International Law, 85 *American Journal of International Law* 613, 1991, p 614.
- 9 *Human Rights Watch. Women's Human Rights*. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/women/index.php> [Accessed November 4, 2002].
- 10 United National Development Fund for Women, *The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. Available at: <http://www.unifem.org> [Accessed November 4, 2002].
- 11 See cases concerning: Trial of Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal Nuremberg, 1947; Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, UN Doc S/Res/827, 1993; Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, SC Res 955, 49 UN SCOR (3452nd meeting), UN Doc S/Res/955, 1994; and the requirements of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 37 ILM 999, opened for signature 17 July 1998.
- 12 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, op. cit, preamble; Macdonald & Ross, op cit, p 4-9.
- 13 MacKinnon, C. 'On Torture: A Feminist Perspective on Human Rights' in Kathleen Mahoney and P. Mahoney (eds.), *Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century* 21, 1993.
- 14 Utting, P. *Regulating Business via Multistakeholder Initiatives: A Preliminary Assessment*. United Nations Research Institute for Sustainable Development, 2002: Available at: <http://www.unrisd.org>.
- 15 CEDAW Committee, Violence Against Women, General Recommendation No. 19, Eleventh Sess. No. 1, 1992 UN Doc. A/47/38, 1 Int. Hum. Rt. Rep. 25 (No. 1, 1994), No. 9.
- 16 See Atkinson, J. Brown, A. & Ensor, J. *Mining Ombudsman Annual Report 2000-2001*, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, 2001; & Macdonald & Ross, op. cit.

# Mining, women and communities and Oxfam Community Aid Abroad



## Andrew Hewett

**Executive Director  
Oxfam Community Aid Abroad**

*Andrew Hewett is Executive Director of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad. Prior to taking on this role, he held the position of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's Director of Public Policy and Outreach for ten years. In addition to acting as an NGO Adviser to the Australian Government for the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, Andrew was also a member of the World Bank NGO Committee for four years.*

## The Oxfam Community Aid Abroad rights based approach

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad is an independent, secular, Australian non-government development agency. We are the Australian division of a global confederation of 11 development NGO's known as Oxfam International. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad undertakes work in local, regional and national development and humanitarian response projects, and advocates for policy and practice changes.

Both Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and Oxfam International take a human rights approach to their work on poverty, injustice and suffering. This approach reflects the view that poverty and suffering are primarily caused and perpetuated by injustice between and within nations, resulting in the exploitation and oppression of marginalised peoples.

There are five human rights that form the basis of the Oxfam approach and Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's strategic plan. These rights, listed below, are enshrined in international instruments and customary international law.

1. The right to a sustainable livelihood
2. The right to basic social services

3. The right to life and security
4. The right to be heard
5. The right to an identity (Which includes the right to equity in gender and diversity)

Oxfam International recognises that all the people of the world are responsible for ensuring their own and each other's human rights.

Governments, the corporate sector, NGOs, and society share this responsibility with individuals. Responsibility for upholding and not undermining these human rights also applies to the corporate sector, including mining and minerals companies and individuals working for these firms.

## Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and gender

Poverty is linked with the violation of women's human rights. As such, in Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, gender equality is central to all development activities and is a core objective of our advocacy work. In response to the Beijing Declaration in 1995, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad has promoted gender mainstreaming as a strategy for the advancement of women's empowerment. The underlying principle of gender mainstreaming is to integrate and promote women's practical and strategic interests into

organisational policies and practice and also into every aspect of our programs and projects.

Gender equality is addressed specifically in our 5th strategic aim: the right to an identity. However, we also promote gender equality as an integral part of every strategic aim, and as a facet of every human right.

Over the last few years, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad has directed funds into projects facilitating women's empowerment and the promotion of women's human rights. To achieve these aims, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad has supported gender sensitive projects, provided training on gender awareness and analysis and engaged in dialogue with partners. We have found gender mainstreaming to be an effective means of pursuing women's empowerment and the transformation of gender relations within Oxfam Community Aid Abroad.

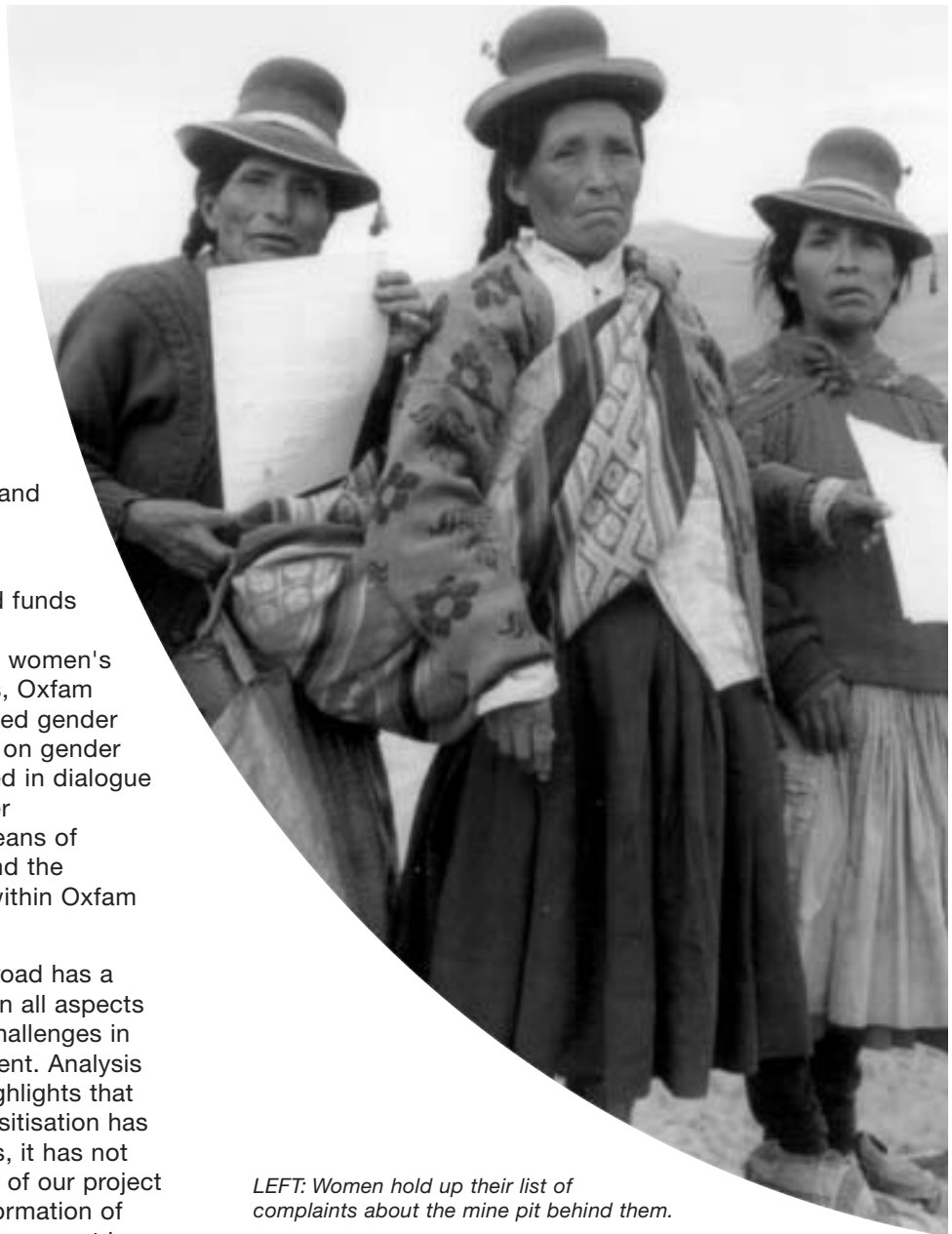
Although Oxfam Community Aid Abroad has a commitment to mainstream gender in all aspects of its work, there have been some challenges in the implementation of this commitment. Analysis of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad highlights that although gender awareness and sensitisation has taken place in many of our programs, it has not been fully integrated into all aspects of our project cycle. Programs aimed at the transformation of gender relations and women's empowerment have not provided consistent results.

Our findings demonstrate that we cannot assume that women automatically benefit from development efforts. Progress towards equality between men and women does not take place naturally.

It is clear that if women's issues are not explicitly incorporated into all stages of the programming and project cycle, achieving gender equality is difficult. Thus, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad recognises that the implementation of an effective mainstreaming strategy is essential to improve the position of women.

## **Why gender issues are relevant to the mining industry**

The private sector, including the mining and minerals sector, has an increasingly critical influence over human development. As such, corporations have an increasingly important role in areas affecting gender equality and the rights of women.



*LEFT: Women hold up their list of complaints about the mine pit behind them.*

*PHOTO: Ingrid Macdonald/Oxfam CAA*

In 1990, the private sector accounted for 25%, and foreign aid accounted for 75% of investment into the developing world. By 1996, the levels had reversed, with 75% of investment sourced from the private sector. Private sector investment can be an important driver of economic growth that generates poverty reduction, provided that appropriate regulations and controls exist. These controls and regulations must include benchmarks that promote gender equality and enhance the rights of women.

Inequality between and within nations is increasing rather than decreasing. We live in a world where 3 billion people - one in every two of us - survive on less than \$2 per day. 840 million people are malnourished. 1.3 billion do not have safe drinking water. 1 in 7 children have no school to attend.

A child born in Melbourne today will have a lifetime income that is 74 times the income of a child born in a developing country. 40 years ago

that ratio was 30 to 1. 100 years ago it was 11 to 1. With 95% of world births occurring in the developing world, the trend is clear. Current patterns of globalisation are creating opportunities for those with skills, education and assets. Those without the opportunities - the landless, the poor and the illiterate - are being left behind. These statistics are even more discouraging when they are disaggregated between men and women, boys and girls.

Given the increasing power of the private sector throughout the world, including the mining and minerals sector, it is essential that companies contribute positively to poverty alleviation and development by protecting and upholding the rights of women affected by their activities. This is especially important where mining companies operate in countries where governments have failed to implement national legislation consistent with the international human rights framework, or fail to uphold these standards in their own practices. Gender equality cannot be traded.

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad has been involved with overseas communities affected by the activities of Australian mining companies for over 7 years. This work has culminated in our establishment of the Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Mining Ombudsman. By hosting this conference, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad hopes to place gender equity on the mining advocacy agenda, and bring about changes in mining policy and practice. Qualified speakers have

come from as far away as India, Indonesian and the Philippines to provide insight today into numerous mining issues concerning women in communities around the globe. It is important to remember that the negative impacts of mining on communities generally affect women and children more severely than men.

In order to overcome gender injustices in mining operations, companies and individuals must recognise the essential role of women in the maintenance of the economic and social wellbeing of communities. Despite having this role, women are seriously disadvantaged in most communities. This disadvantage is evident in access to education, health, employment, resources, legal status, freedom of movement, control over their bodies and futures, and access to services and benefits of development. In addition, women are under-represented everywhere in decision making and suffer from domestic and public violence.

Women's low status is not 'natural' and is not due to biological differences. It is due to social, cultural, historical and economic factors. This is an injustice. All people, whether they work for non government organisations or mining companies, must be continually striving to achieve gender equality. This process must involve both men and women, working together to overcome poverty, injustice and achieve equality within society.

# Indigenous Australia, India and the Philippines





## An Australian indigenous women's perspective: indigenous life and mining



### Pat Kopusar

#### *Pat Kopusar Consulting*

*Pat Kopusar has a working history in Aboriginal Health and is currently employed by Yorgum, an Aboriginal Family Counselling Service. Her recent accomplishments include writing an Aboriginal Family Violence Training Package and co-writing an evaluation of education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Pat visited the tribal people of India as a member of Community Aid Abroad's Aboriginal program in the 1990's.*

**H**istorically, the greatest blow to Aboriginal people's existence came when the British Empire declared Australia to be 'Terra Nullius'. Land was then sold to the 'pioneers' of Australia and Aborigines were treated as a nuisance. This marked the beginning of homelessness for my people. Despite losing this war of spear against gun, cunning against might, Aborigines prevail in the fight for the return of their land.

Today I stand as an indigenous woman who comes from this warrior race, a race that is proud, strong and intelligent. A race that had and still has its intellectuals, singers, songwriters, dancers, story tellers, law makers, law holders, healers, medicines, hunters, providers, and protectors of our own family structures, our own way of life, our own systems, our own CULTURE.

I am a mother of six children, grandmother of twenty-four, great grandmother of six. I learnt about my heritage from my mother, and she learnt her stories and legends from her mother, who was born on the Vasse River on the South Coast of Western Australia in 1877. We are part of the Nyoongar Nation and are known as the Wardandji people: "the people who live by the ocean and walk the forest paths".

Aboriginal family structures are not 'nuclear'.

Instead, families consist of children, mothers and their sisters, fathers and their brothers, parents, uncles and aunts and grandparents, both paternal and maternal. Each member of this extended family has a specific role to contribute to the family and the community. Australia's modern housing model damages this family structure by placing members into separate housing facilities designed for 'nuclear families'. This style of housing has covertly changed the community structure, assimilating the indigenous population into "colonised" peoples.

### A statistical background

The Aboriginal population was first counted in 1971. In the most recent census (1996), the indigenous population was estimated to be 386,049, which represents 2% of Australia's total population. Compared with other groups, we have lower incomes, higher rates of unemployment, poorer educational outcomes, complex and poor health, and higher levels of homelessness. The Australian Bureau of Statistics stated "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people generally do not have the same level of access to affordable, secure housing as other Australians. This can be the result of low income levels, discrimination..." The report also states that our dwellings are often impoverished "sheds, humpies and tents". My observations are that



Aborigines also live on the fringes of mining towns, under trees, in creek beds, with little shade, no toilet facilities and no water. Women and children exist side by side to other women and children living in brick, tiled, air conditioned, subsidised rental housing. A few Aborigines also own their own houses.

Aborigines have high incarceration rates. We are 10 times more likely to be charged and arrested than other people are. Aboriginal juveniles between the ages of 10 and 14 years are 25 times more likely to be charged than other youth and our women were almost 14 times more likely to be charged and arrested than other women (Aboriginal Justice Council, 1998).

It is against this background that I present this paper.

### ***Through my eyes I see the land. A perspective.***

It is almost impossible to create a picture that captures the diversity of Aboriginal women's experience throughout Australia. Instead, I will provide a perspective based on 35 years of living and working across the state of Western Australia in remote and urban Aboriginal communities, particularly those located on or near mining sites and their ports. My work, both as a volunteer and an employee, has provided me with the opportunity to sit with my peers and discuss mining, the government, royalties, the mining organisations, and ourselves – Aboriginal women.

I have experienced first hand the flood of alcohol into small mining towns in the Pilbara Region. I have also seen the influx of men from strange countries brought to work on the mines. During this time our men could only stand and wonder.

The coming of the mines has brought more roads, noisy machines, tractors, semi-trailers and road camps into Aboriginal land. Large machines shift the ground from place to place, leaving great big holes in the earth. Strange men blast the rock and the mountains to create railway tracks. These activities have frightened and dispossessed the birds, animals, and small game such as the goanna, snake and porcupine. Our food has run away.

Mining has created a restless and confused environment.

The indigenous women of Australia have had their lives disrupted by the arrival of strangers bringing mining to their land. The women who provided care to the small children of the first nation have been dispossessed. They also suffer

discrimination through the introduction of new laws, and are constantly fighting against the process of disempowerment. This land is our home. The British Government's first step onto our shores created homelessness that has since grown to tremendous heights.

Before examining specific issues, we must look at the big picture, the total environment, the land in which women and their children live. Where do they live? They live in a vast landscape of hills and mountains, trees and forests, where strangers only see empty rivers and very little water. An empty land - a 'space' where there are no towns and strangers see no life. They only see areas that hold a promise of resources to be used by the government, the mining company, and the investor. A place to be 'developed'. But we believe that these areas are already 'developed'. If asked, Indigenous women will tell you that every tree has a meaning and a use, warmth and comfort, shelter and shade, healing and food. The land isn't empty. The bushes and trees are teeming with food for the children. The valleys, the mountains, the great boulders, the lakes, the water sources, the wind, the air, the sky, the fire, the lightning, the thunder; every part of the land has a message for the people.

### ***The trees - a law.***

Aboriginal culture outlaws the desecration of bushes and trees. On our land no tree can be taken, and no branch broken, unless the tree's caretaker or custodian has granted permission.

I was new to the Pilbara region when I spoke to the wise old man and his wife. They smiled at my ignorance when I asked why people didn't carve artefacts, the boomerang and spear, to make some extra money. The wise man explained that the boomerang was carved from a special tree, the snakewood tree, which grew a long way from where he was living. In addition, the trees belonged to another man, a man from another land that spoke a different language. "Anyway" he said, "I would need to ask permission from the caretaker of those snakewood trees before I could break a branch. I could not be bad mannered to ask for more than one or two at the most. How much would one boomerang sell for?" Not enough to feed and clothe him and his wife.

Not everyone knows these rules and obeys them. How do traditional caretakers feel when the trees are uprooted and cast aside to make room for roads and buildings? They feel that it is the beginning of the end.

## The importance of water

Bathing or swimming in waterholes is not allowed until regionally specific protocol has been performed. One such protocol involves throwing sand in the water before walking too close to springs, pools or rivers. In other areas, people roll water in their mouth, spitting it back into the pool before entering. Only after completing these activities will the keeper of the pool, the huge water snake, be appeased. However, it is only the Aboriginal people who know and obey these laws.

## Women's land

There are places where men cannot walk because women have ownership of the space. In turn, women cannot enter forbidden areas that are exclusively for men.

I was privileged to attend a meeting many miles inland in a place that belonged to women alone. Women had been meeting in that place for forty thousand years, perhaps longer. I was told that it was their place and had been their place forever.

During the meeting a group of men came to the outskirts of the area to bring a crying child to his mother. The child's father and his friends did not enter the area, approaching only as far as the main road and refusing to step off the truck. This is correct protocol. Strange men do not live by this protocol and cannot be stopped from entering women's places. What are the consequences when they breach our law? The answer is NONE.

## Grandmothers and the land

A grandmother wanted to take her grandson back to a special place, a certain riverbed, to begin his teaching. Soon he would be too old for her to do this. But she no longer had the right to take him there. The riverbed was blocked, fenced off. But it was her land. It had belonged to her father and his father and his father before him. Where could she go? What should she do? Will all her knowledge die with her? This is an example of how traditional teachings and cultural laws are slowly breaking down. The culture of teaching children which food to eat and how it can be obtained is slowly eroding. The grandmother's teaching role is disintegrating, replaced by strangers in schools that teach knowledge that may not be relevant.

## Change

Mining has brought roads, railways, huge vehicles, noisy machines and smokestacks. Great

holes have been excavated in the ground, huge rivers have been damned, and sacred sites have been desecrated. The food is diminishing, the land is changing and the people are being forced to change as a consequence. How can we live in a permanently changed land where little is available to replace the old way of life? How can we deal with drug and alcohol abuse, family violence, homelessness, and new ways of teaching and learning? How do we take back control of our lives? How do we maintain our religion our beliefs, and our culture? How do we leave a heritage or even a home for our children? How do we deal with poverty?

The introduction of mining has brought drugs and alcohol into areas that no white man would normally visit. Youth are enticed by the coldness of the drinks and the forgetfulness of mind-altering drugs. In addition to their physical health, women fear for their children's spiritual wellbeing, which is confused by limited knowledge of the new world.

In Port Hedland, approximately 5,000 jobs have been given to strangers who are flown into the town on a fortnightly basis. Few of these jobs were offered to Aboriginal women or their men. In addition, the urban Aboriginal woman and her children have limited work opportunities. The little employment that is set aside for Aborigines is hotly contested. Most jobs are given to educated people or those who have training. Some young people are successful in obtaining work but some find the competition too severe, lapsing instead into the forgetfulness of drugs that are flooding into the town. The responsibility for the influx of hard drugs cannot be laid at the feet of the mines alone. Even some Aboriginal families have started to depend on illegal income obtained from selling drugs. However, the availability of drugs has increased in particular areas in response to the advent of mining projects.

Employment is particularly nonexistent. Women sit and think, "Will my child be lucky enough to secure a job with a real wage and escape from the poverty in which we live?" It is obvious that children will continue to live in this poverty unless there is positive change. However, there are not enough jobs available to start this process. A young Aboriginal woman said to me, "My dream is to get a job with BHP. If only I could do this, I would be happy". Unfortunately for her, her dream did not come true. In many instances our youth are lost to boredom, restlessness and drugs. In addition, youth suicides are bewildering families, and there does not seem to be any respite or answer to the problem.

## Conclusion

Today, I have provided information to enable people to develop their own perspective on what is happening to Aborigines in Australia. I have tried to describe the confusion, frustration, and desperation of the Aboriginal women when land is allocated for mining ventures. I have also described some issues that impact on their belief systems, their sense of injustice, and their feelings of being 'out of control'.

Mining does not only impact on the land, our home. It also impacts on poverty, health, homelessness and the rights of Aborigines. The violence and racism in mining towns create an imbalance that has a domino effect on the community's wellbeing. This effect can only be stopped with the introduction of responsible business practices.

As I stated earlier, we are a strong, proud and intellectual people. We are survivors and we will survive. Indigenous women must be the ones to make their own decisions. Nobody can 'help'

them. They don't want handouts or pity. They want what is rightfully theirs. They need JUSTICE and their RIGHTS. We can deal with our problems if there is an open, honest, respectful process of doing business. There are no easy ways of undertaking business effectively between diverse groups. But I would like to make some suggestions. Without taking away another women's right to speak for herself, I suggest that mining corporations take time to understand people, be respectful, and work to stamp out racism in their organisations. It must be remembered that it is women who are responsible for the children and that each group must have the opportunity to control their own destiny. Most importantly, companies must ensure that appropriate strategies exist to allow indigenous women to have their rightful place at the negotiation table. As such, more steps may need to be taken in order to hear women's voices in negotiations. Although we may live in poverty, it does not mean that we are unable to make decisions.

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# Women and mining in the Cordillera and the International Women and Mining Network



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## Indigenous mining and women in the Cordillera

The Cordillera, Philippines has a long history of mining. In Benguet Province, the indigenous people of Itogon have been gold mining for at least 1,000 years. Small-scale mining is still practiced by the Ibaloy and Kankana-ey people of Benguet, as well as by other people throughout the provinces of the Cordillera. However, the practice has steadily declined through the years, marginalised by and unable to compete with the large-scale mining operations of giant corporations.

Traditionally, small-scale mining was an important part of community life in Itogon, providing the major means of livelihood for the people. It provided a stable source of income for many generations, complemented by agricultural production. The community regarded gold as a God-given resource and believed that mining should be undertaken to meet the needs of the family and the community, not for the accumulation of wealth.

Itogon's small-scale miners use rudimentary technology for gold extraction and processing. Their methods involve a great deal of manual labour, using minimal and simple equipment without the use of toxic chemicals. They have

developed their own indigenous knowledge, skills and practices in gold mining which have proven to be environment-friendly and sustainable. This indigenous knowledge has been passed on from generation to generation, undergoing little change over time.

The involvement of women is a unique aspect of traditional mining in the Cordillera. Men and women are equal partners in the whole mining process, with the proceeds from the gold equally divided among all members of the team or *kompanya*. Previously, men and women alike used to work inside the tunnels. However, in recent years, women have specialised in processing the ore. In addition, the women are given the unused tailings of the crushed ore, or *linang*, which can be refined further to extract the remaining gold. The gold that the women recover from the *linang* is theirs to sell and the proceeds are shared only among the women.

## Impact of large-scale mining on indigenous women

Large-scale operations by mining corporations came to the Cordillera as early as the 1900's during American colonial rule. The oldest mining company in the country, Benguet Corporation, was established in 1903. At this time, it made use

of American mining laws, such as the Mining Act of 1872, to acquire mining patents covering large sections of the municipality. For many decades, Benguet Corporation engaged in underground tunnel mining in Itogon, worming its way into the bowels of the earth in pursuit of gold. In 1989, when the underground mineral veins were depleted, the company shifted to open pit mining. In less than ten years, Benguet Corporation exhausted the mineral wealth of Antamok, Itogon.

Today, the abandoned open pit mine, underground tunnels, waste dump sites, mill, diversion tunnels and tailings dams still remain in Itogon. These structures stand as stark reminders of the devastating effects of large-scale mining operations. Furthermore, Benguet Corporation is now using its mining patents to exploit Itogon's land and water resources for various business ventures such as eco-tourism, mineral water production, special economic zones, housing subdivisions and other profit-making schemes.

The people's ancestral land and natural resources have been plundered, and the environment and indigenous culture eroded. For the women of Itogon, life has drastically deteriorated as the long-term effects of large-scale mining take their toll. The effects of large-scale mining on the women of Itogon include the following:

### ***Deprivation of ancestral land rights***

The process of land registration was institutionalised in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period between the 16th and the 19th century. During this time, citizens could register their land through the Public Land Act or by acquiring a Torrens Title. Such legal processes were alien to the indigenous people, who did not see the need to get a piece of paper to prove their ownership of the land. As such, during American colonisation, mining companies were able to acquire indigenous people's ancestral land using the Mining Act of 1872. This American law legalised the accumulation of unclaimed mineral lands by American individuals and corporations. As such, indigenous land ownership was not recognised. Today, the government continues to recognise Benguet Corporation's claims over the ancestral land claims of the indigenous people, endorsing the company's ownership rights over the surface land where the indigenous people live, and the sub-surface minerals.

Over the years, the community has undertaken various efforts to assert their rights and to reclaim their ancestral land from the mining

company. However, the mining company continues to hold onto its mining patents and assert its claim over the land. This is despite the fact that the company has ceased mining operations in the area and is using the land for other commercial purposes.

### ***Destruction of the environment***

Mining has caused serious environmental problems in Itogon including air and water pollution, deforestation, erosion and drought. Toxic mine wastes have destroyed dams and silted rivers and the adjacent lands. Pine forests have been destroyed in the surrounding mountains, leaving watersheds vulnerable to erosion. Dust from the abandoned open pit mine and dumped rock and soil hangs in the air. Most of the natural springs and water sources, which the people depend on for irrigation and for their daily needs, have long since dried up because of the drilling of deep mining tunnels.

### ***Loss of traditional livelihood and impairment of the productive role of women***

The destruction and depletion of resources within mining communities has seriously impaired women's productive roles. Small-scale mining sites were taken over by the mining company. Only a few tunnels or pocket mines now remain productive, and these are slowly being depleted of their mineral ore. Only low-grade ore remains, which has minimal returns for the heavy work required in small-scale mining. Without ore to process, female miners have lost their traditional livelihood.

The women's productive role in agriculture has likewise been affected. Rice fields have dried up due to lowered water tables caused by underground mining. Agriculture in mining communities has become unprofitable because of the lack of water, lowered soil fertility and the expensive agricultural inputs required. The loss of traditional livelihood opportunities has forced women, as well as men, to look for informal work outside the communities. Many women, who are tied to the home by childcare responsibilities, experience increased domesticity and economic dependence due to limited livelihood opportunities within communities. Older children are forced to enter the labour market in the city in order to help their parents make ends meet.

### ***Increased Burden of Women at Home***

Mining has dried up the natural water sources within communities. The lack of water places an extra burden on the shoulders of women since they are generally responsible for most of the





*LEFT: A woman from a community affected by an exploration project expresses her opposition to the project in a community meeting in the Philippines.*

PHOTO: Ingrid Macdonald/Oxfam CAA

household chores. They have to walk longer distances to the few remaining water sources in the community and spend long hours waiting in line to fetch water for drinking, cooking and other household needs.

Health problems are increasing due to the pollution created by mining. Respiratory illnesses, poor sanitation, and skin diseases are common, especially among children. The government's failure to provide basic social services has compounded the community's inability to improve health standards.

### **Cultural impacts on women and children**

Large-scale mining operations have affected cultural practices within indigenous communities. The sustainable and equitable practice of indigenous small-scale mining and its accompanying cultural values and rituals are vanishing. So are the indigenous practices of cooperative labour and reciprocal relations associated with rice production.

Unemployment has resulted in increased anti-social activities such as gambling and drinking. The number of out-of-school youth has also increased because parents increasingly cannot afford to send their children to school. Some parents have to leave home for extended periods of time, such as those who decide to work abroad to earn a living. Many families of overseas workers have broken down because of problems related to the absence of either the mother or father, such as infidelity or child neglect. In addition, some women's organisations have been weakened and divided by the company's establishment of pro-mining women's organisations that offer loans and livelihood projects in order to attract membership.

On the whole, the previously tight-knit indigenous communities are weakening as a direct result of large-scale mining operations.

### **The women's role in the struggle against destructive mining operations**

The women in the Cordillera have always taken an active role in the resistance against large-scale mining. In 1937 and 1962, the Ibaloy and Kankana-ey women of Itogon fought for justice, winning compensation for crops lost from the depletion of water sources. Between 1989 and 1997, the community was also successful in stopping the expansion of Benguet Corporation's open pit mining operations into the communities of Ucab, Tuding, Keystone and Virac.

Word about the effects of mining on Itogon's wet-rice agriculture spread to other parts of the Cordillera. Thus, when mining companies attempted to open mines in other areas, the indigenous communities rallied and drove them away. In many instances, it was the women who



achieved these successes, as in the case of Mainit and Besao in the Mountain Province, Cordillera. Another instance of women's protest occurred in the province of Kalinga in the 1980's. During this time, the rice-producing peasants of Tabuk and Pinukpuk, the majority of whom are women, demanded the closure of the Batong Buhay mines.

The participation of women in the struggle against mining has resulted in greater awareness and unity within their ranks. It has motivated them to organise themselves and to undertake educational activities and mass actions to protest against destructive mining operations. It has strengthened their commitment to work for the rights and welfare of women and the community, together with other organisations.

## **The international women and mining network**

The *International Women and Mining Network* was born from the need to bring out into the open the particular impacts of mining on women, and to support the efforts of women around the world to resist or mitigate mining's damaging effects.

In October 1991, Minewatch in London initiated a project on Women and Mining, aimed at developing a database of the past and present impacts of mining on women. The project covered three main areas of concern: the social impact of mining, the impact of mining on women's health, and the organised resistance of women to multinational corporate mining. In addition, the Women and Mining project aimed to link women and information from all over the world, enabling them to identify common issues, establish a united front, and form support networks and pressure groups. It was for this purpose that the First International Conference on Women and Mining was held in Baguio City, Philippines in January 1997, with the theme "Women United and Struggling for Our Land, Our Lives, Our Future." It

was a remarkable and unprecedented event. Forty five women from fifteen countries in five regions of the world came together to share experiences and discuss ways to resist the impacts of large-scale, multinational mining projects. The conference generated widespread interest on the issue of women and mining, and resulted in resolutions expressing a collective position on important matters such as land rights, labour rights, indigenous peoples' rights and the social and environmental impacts of mining. These resolutions were passed on to our governments and on to mining companies to pressure them to act on the issues raised by the conference.

The Second International Women and Mining Conference was held in Bolivia in September 2000 under the leadership of CEPROMIN (Centre for the Promotion of Mining). On this occasion, more organisations joined the network, especially organisations from South America, Africa and Canada. Statutes and guiding principles were drafted and ratified in a move to formalise the structure of the network. Organisations were identified to act as regional coordinating centres for each of the regions of the world. Central coordination of the network remained with CEPROMIN at La Paz, Bolivia. India was chosen as the site of the next conference of the network to be held in the 2004.

The International Network on Women and Mining, now also known as Red Internacional de Mujeres y Minería (RIMM), is an expression of the worldwide solidarity of women, bound together by a common commitment to uphold the rights of women affected by large-scale, multinational corporate mining. The need to unite with other groups is imperative in the context of globalisation and the worldwide liberalisation of the mining industry. It is a challenge for all of us to find the most effective tactics in dealing with multinational mining companies, governments, trade organisations and financial institutions, in order to bring the people's resistance to multinational corporate mining to a resounding victory.

# The status of women affected by mining in India



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*mines, minerals & PEOPLE,  
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## Background

India has a predominantly agrarian population that is dependent on the land and forests for its sustenance and social, cultural and economic livelihood. Rural and tribal women are primarily responsible for nurturing the family, collecting forest products, and agricultural and livestock management. These women have a very intimate and symbiotic relationship with the ecology, as they are untenably linked to the natural resources. This link must be recognised by governments and societies when they are conceptualising development objectives and projects. Women are frequently alienated from development paradigms and their close association with the ecology receives even less recognition.

## Mining in India

In India, as in most Asia-Pacific countries, exploitation of land for mineral resources has a long history involving abuse and plunder. India's Five Year Plans have focused on mining to achieve 'development', demanding the forfeiture of people's lands for 'national prosperity'. Most mineral and mining operations are found in forest regions, which are also the habitat for tribal (indigenous) communities. India is a vast country and as such the history and status of mining

varies between regions. Mining projects vary from rat hole mining, small-scale legal and illegal mining, to large-scale mining - most of which has been historically managed by the public sector. Since the introduction of private sector participation in the 1990's, a number of mining related community conflicts have arisen with far reaching consequences.

## The status of women in India

Gender based discrimination and exploitation including female infanticide, dowry deaths, unequal wages, high levels of female illiteracy and mortality, caste-based discrimination and other social evils, are widespread in India. A look at the literacy figures should drive home this point - while the literacy rate for the total Indian population is about 52.75% for male and 32.17% for female, the literacy levels among Scheduled Caste women is a mere 19%, and for Scheduled Tribe women is 14.50%. Female literacy is particularly poor in the mineral rich states - 3.46%, 6.88%, 8.29% and 11.75% for Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Jharkhand respectively.

## The impact of mining on women

At a broad level, there are three stages of mining - proposed mining projects in untouched areas

(Greenfields), existing mines, and closed/abandoned mines. This paper specifically focuses on the experiences of women displaced and affected by existing mining projects, and the problems experienced as a result of abandoned/closed mines.

In India, it is estimated that 50 million people have been displaced by various development projects and of these, approximately 10 million have been displaced by mining projects. 75% of people displaced have not yet received any form of compensation or rehabilitation.

## Land and forests

In India, women have no legal rights over land or natural resources. The Land Acquisition Act is draconian and obsolete, providing over-riding powers to the state to encroach onto people's lands for any 'public purpose', including mining. To this day, the country does not have any relief and rehabilitation policy as a constitutional safeguard for its people. Local communities are not consulted about the acquisition of their land for projects and women are especially marginalized in the negotiation process. They are the last people to be informed about land acquisitions and their opinions and objections are rarely taken into account during decision-making.

Testimonies from women living in the coalmining areas of Orissa (Talcher) show that displacement and loss of land are the most serious problems affecting their lives as their livelihood, economic and social status, and health and security all depend on land and forests. Mining has resulted in the total destruction of traditional forms of livelihood and of women's roles within subsistence communities. Women displaced by mining lose the right to cultivate traditional crops and due to forest destruction, are unable to collect forest produce for sale or consumption. As a result, they are forced into menial and marginalised forms of labour as maids, servants, construction labourers or prostitutes - positions that are highly unorganised and socially humiliating.

Abundant medicinal plants are lost due to forest destruction, leaving women without a natural health support system. Often they are too poor to purchase medical services and medicines (if available). Furthermore, as the mining companies do not pay for their miner's medical expenses, employed men spend a large proportion of their wages on medicine, falling into a vicious cycle of indebtedness that drags the whole family into bonded labour.

## Economic dependence

Historically, men have been the only recipients of rehabilitation programs that provide either cash or employment to communities affected by mining. As a result, women have become completely 'idle' in the economic sphere. Often, when men gain employment, women are forced to manage agricultural activities on their own. In such situations, women's drudgery increases, and this results in share cropping and to the gradual mortgaging of land. In many situations, the seasonal migration of labour leads to work insecurity, the break down of family relations and it exposes them to various social hazards.

Women from land-owning communities have been forced into wage labour, which is considered to be a socially and economically humiliating shift. In addition, women are often forced into petty trades that expose them to further exploitation due to their illiteracy, lack of skills and the social taboos of participating within these sectors.

Displaced tribal communities that are not provided with compensation or rehabilitation, migrate to bordering states in search of land and forests. They cut down vast stretches of forest for survival and face the harassment of the Forestry Department who accuse them of practicing 'unsustainable' agriculture. Often women, both old and young, are forced to keep moving with their children due to multiple displacements.

## Women as mine labour

Displaced women are mostly absorbed into the small private or unorganised sector of mining related activities, where women are the first to be retrenched, have no work safety measures, are susceptible to serious health hazards, and are exposed to sexual exploitation. The large scale mines, which are increasingly technology dependant, have no scope for women's participation as they are often illiterate, lack technical skills and face cultural prejudices. Although women once formed 30-40% of the workforce in the mining sector, they now constitute less than 12%, and represent only 5% of the coal mining workforce.

Whilst large-scale mining has limited scope for women's employment, the small-scale sector absorbs women as contract or bonded labour under highly exploitative conditions. Women's wages are always less than that of men, safety standards are non-existent, paid holidays are not allowed even during pregnancy or childbirth, work equipment is not provided, and there are no toilets or facilities available. Unemployed

women living in mining communities eke out their livelihood by scavenging on the tailings and waste dumps, often illegally, and suffer from the constant harassment of company guards, local Mafia and the police. They are exposed to the physical and sexual exploitation of the mine-owners, contractors and miners and are at the mercy of local traders when selling their ores. In addition, women work with toxic, hazardous substances and suffer from several occupational illnesses including respiratory and reproductive problems, silicosis, tuberculosis, leukemia, and arthritis.

Most women working in mines have to leave their children at home, unattended, for the entire working day. If they manage to take their children to the mine-site, they expose them to high levels of dust and noise pollution. In addition, the children are at risk of falling into the mine pits while playing and are susceptible to accidents from mine blasting.

### **The social and cultural impacts of resettlement**

The living conditions of women displaced by mining have serious negative impacts on women. The resettled tribal peoples of the bauxite, coal and iron-ore mines in Jharkhand, Orissa, Chattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh, are now crammed into badly constructed houses. These quarters are of poor quality and have no water, toilets, electricity or open spaces for recreation or socialising. Conditions within these resettled communities provide an ugly contrast to standards within traditional settlements.

Tribal women's loss of economic status and the increase in the non-tribal population in mining communities has resulted in degrading social customs. The traditional practice of bride price has shifted to the Hindu system of dowries and extravagant marriage ceremonies. Social evils like wife battering, alcoholism, indebtedness, physical and sexual harassment, prostitution, polygamy and desertion have emerged in many places. Human rights violations on female miners or women affected by mining have increased and are actively encouraged by state and corporate powers.

### **The status and experiences of women in closed/abandoned mines**

The lives of the women living in the gold mines of Kolar, Karnataka, provide stark evidence of the

exhaustible 'sustainability' of mining. The government has declared the mine bankrupt and exhausted, and is currently engaged in a legal battle with the union to ensure closure. As the laid-off men remain idle, women are forced out of their homes to eke out a living for their families. The whole mining town sees women and young girls leaving their homes at four in the morning to travel 100-150 kms for work as maids and factory labour, returning late at night. In a span of one year since closure, there have been at least 35 deaths in this small town due to stress and trauma. The government and the company have deliberately washed their hands off any responsibility towards the future of the miners except for offering a small compensation payment. The land is unfit for any use other than mining, and women and communities have been left in despair.

### **Negotiations with the government, industry and financial institutions**

In India, communities displaced or affected by mining have mainly dealt with the public sector to redress grievances or negotiate a resettlement. The fact that 75% of displaced people are still not rehabilitated, is clear evidence of the government and industry's lack of motivation to implement rehabilitation programs. Large multinational mining companies have only recently entered the industry and communities have not yet had experience dealing with such macro players. However, these companies have exhibited considerable influence when lobbying for changes in mining policies and legislation in the very short time since their entry into the market.

### **A few cases studies**

#### ***Coalmining in Hazaribagh***

The World Bank coalmine in Hazaribagh provides further evidence of mining based social injustice and ecological destruction. In addition to having to use water contaminated by coal washeries, women are often harassed and assaulted when collecting wood, working, or when visiting neighbouring villages. The women are too afraid of the 'Coal Mafia' to give testimonies of these incidents in public hearings or meetings. The local NGO, which is helping the women who were victims of these atrocities, is facing police harassment and false criminal charges. Although the Inspection Panel of the World Bank has been approached regarding



these grievances, women are yet to experience justice.

### ***The struggle in Kasipur:***

Having seen the fate of women affected by mining in other parts of their own state of Orissa, the tribal women in Kasipur have been fighting since 1992 to oppose the proposed Alumina plant. The local organisation, PSSP, has faced state repression and corporate abuse whilst fighting the mining company, which is a joint venture between Alcan (Canada), Norsk Hydro (Norway - this company has recently withdrawn) and Indal (India). This joint venture has enlisted non-tribal Mafia, political goons, and attempted to create alliances with development agencies like BPD (Business Partners for Development) to achieve their aims. However, these tactics have only created tensions and rivalries between the tribal communities who stand to lose their lands and the non-tribal communities, who entertain hopes of employment. Women have refused to allow access to their villages or relent to pressure exerted by the company, even after the fatal shooting of one tribal woman and the injury of many others.

### ***The case of Rio Tinto in India:***

The abuse of communities by multinational corporations is growing dangerously. Rio Tinto has entered into a joint venture for an iron-ore mining project in Keonjhar (Orissa), an area protected by the Indian Constitution under the Fifth Scheduled Law. The Samatha Judgement of the Supreme Court of India (1997) reinforced the validity of this law and declared that all private mining in the area is null and void. Yet, Rio Tinto has been issued with a lease in Keonjhar, which implies that multinational corporations are influencing our weak governments to violate their own laws at the cost of social responsibility. These drastic changes in law pose an imminent threat of large-scale displacement of tribal women in the future.

## **The collective voices of local struggles**

Local struggles against exploitation from mining projects are gaining strength, as the reality of mining based 'development' is becoming increasingly visible. India's government has not taken any serious action towards reducing the educational, vocational, social, economic, and



*ABOVE: Community members at a meeting present their complaints about a mine operation.*

*PHOTO: Ingrid Macdonald/Oxfam CAA*

gender based disparities in this highly populous country. As such, the entry of large multinational mining conglomerates only enhances women's vulnerability to macro policy changes that negatively affect their lives. It is difficult to expect that tripartite agreements between communities (particularly women), governments and industries can create a level negotiation platform considering the rates of female illiteracy, the limited dispersion of information and the lack of transparency from government and industries.

## **Women and mining networks in India**

In India, a national alliance called mines, minerals & PEOPLE, has been established to bring together communities that are fighting the negative impacts of mining projects. An important focus of the alliance is the gender-related problems of mining. A network of women is emerging to confront mining from a gender perspective. The participation of women in local movements is growing evidence of their

determination to prevent further marginalisation.

The national alliance has three important mandates with regard to women and mining:

- Demand for a moratorium on mining in all Greenfield areas
- Demand for gender justice and protection of the rights of women mine workers in existing mines
- Demand for the corporate accountability of all the losses faced by women, both in existing and finished mining projects

## Conclusions

In traditional societies, nature is not offered for sale or negotiation. Neither are women 'negotiable' commodities. Traditional economics are based on balancing men's (and women's) needs with ecological sustainability, which is the primary principle of extracting natural resources. Current economic models, enlisted by the mining industry and governments, grossly violate this traditional principle. The over extraction of one

mineral resource at the cost of other resources, prioritises the sustainability of the industry and not the communities. It assumes that development requires compromising on social justice, especially with regard to women.

From a gender perspective, what does mining have to offer to women - atrocities, violence, degradation of social and economic status, deprivation of a decent livelihood, and powerlessness? The MMSD report of International Institute for Environment and Development (2002) acknowledges the widespread negative impacts of mining on women and it urges women to participate in community programs created by the mining companies. However, for women from the communities in India, a few bags of seeds, a few packets of medicine, a training program on micro-credit or an awareness camp on health, are no compensation for what they have lost to mining or what future mining has to offer to them. Therefore, they have an important challenge to pose - can governments and the mining industry carry out gender audits in mining regions and prove the sustainability of mining to women?

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# Papua New Guinea



## Women and mining projects in Papua New Guinea: problems of consultation, representation and women's rights as citizens.



### Martha Macintyre

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Critical discourse surrounding mining in developing countries usually oversimplifies the political complexities of the projects by failing to recognise the agency of local community members and governments. Multinational mining companies are regularly portrayed as ruthless foreign boards of directors, responsible for deliberately defrauding 'backward' villagers in order to plunder their country and destroy the environment. In Papua New Guinea, this patronising and neo-colonialist perception of indigenous communities is undermined by the political reality of the mining projects established over the last twenty years.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an independent nation state with a democratically elected government and the political and institutional means to regulate mining. PNG's Mining Act requires consultation and contractual agreement between mining companies, local communities, and government on the nature of mining operations, compensation, royalties and relocation arrangements for all new projects. Furthermore, it places legal constraints on mining companies and specifies sanctions for breaches of stated conditions. Papua New Guinean men are represented in all of these stakeholder organisations and have the opportunity and capabilities to influence the nature of the mining

arrangements. Despite women's legal right to participate in this process, their voices are rarely heard and they exert very little influence on the miners, politicians and government officers who make the decisions about mining projects. I believe that the social, economic, environmental and political problems that proliferate around mining projects would be dramatically reduced if women's voices were heard in this negotiation process.

I would like to demonstrate, with reference to two mines, that the rhetoric of blame directed at multinational mining companies is an oversimplification of the negotiation process and the political structure of mining projects.

### The case of Misima

In 1985-6 I worked as an independent consultant for the governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea to prepare a social and economic impact assessment for the proposed goldmine on Misima, an island in Milne Bay Province. This assessment highlighted the likely negative social and environmental impacts of the mine, and strongly recommended that women be given equal opportunity in employment, that women be represented on relevant negotiating committees, and that their traditional rights over land be

recognised. In addition, the mining company flew a group of village leaders to Kidston in North Queensland to see a similar size pit and the associated environmental damage. It was hoped that by providing a clear understanding of the likely impacts of the mine, community members would negotiate an agreement with the mining company that protected the community's interests, their economic security and their children's future.

The Misiman people were no strangers to mining; the proposed mine was to be the seventeenth foreign mining project on their island in just over 100 years. Before the commencement of mining in 1986, Misiman women vocalised concerns regarding food security, declining soil fertility, increased land clearance and limited job opportunities. Yet at that time, emphasis was placed on building businesses, gaining compensation and pressuring the mining company to provide more benefits. The voices of the women who foresaw the problems of sustainability were drowned in the wave of enthusiasm for a role in the cash economy. People were so enthusiastic about the idea that development would improve their overall standard of living that they ignored the lengthy consultations and information disseminated during negotiations. Was it simply a matter of timing? Or did this lack of engagement result from unrealistic expectations about the long-term effects of fourteen years of industrial development?

## **The case of Lihir**

Lihir goldmine is located on Niolam, an island in the Lihir Group, in New Ireland Province in Papua New Guinea. Negotiation between the Lihir community and the US mining company Kennecott began in the 1980's and continued over a ten-year period, during which time regular meetings were held between village leaders and Kennecott's public relations consultants. Before the negotiations began, opportunities to earn money within Lihir's subsistence based economy were limited and the majority of people had relatively little contact outside the island group. In addition, the people of Lihir had no experience of mining and were initially wary of the proposed development. As a result, the community leaders pressed for benefits that they considered crucial to the island's economic advancement.

Social Impact Studies of the proposed mining project were undertaken in 1986, 1989 and 1994. In 1988 a group of landowners were taken to Bougainville to see the environmental impact of

the mine there and speak with Bougainvilleans, including Francis Ona, about the social impact of the mine. In addition, during the long negotiation period a great deal of information about the likely environmental and social impact of the mine was provided to the community. The Mining Company provided monetary sponsorship for the creation of the *Society Reform Movement*, which is an independent community group working to minimise and manage the socio-cultural impacts of the mine. The Company also supported the creation of a women's organization, *Petztorne* (Work Together), through the provision of two staff members and agricultural advice and assistance. The community's main response to the risk of future social and environmental damage was to pursue claims for increased monetary compensation.

The Special Mine Lease and Integrated Benefits Package negotiations involved representatives of the national government, the New Ireland provincial government administration, local government representatives, clan leaders and representatives from the affected villages. The Mining Liaison Officer, a government employee, observed all negotiations to ensure that they complied with the laws that were designed to protect local interests. This participatory process, which appears just by international standards, proved to be inequitable as women were excluded from the formal negotiation process. Although they were occasionally consulted by the company's community relations department, women were not represented on the relevant committees and were forced to rely on men to represent their interests.

## **Why were there no women involved in formal negotiations?**

### ***Cultural stereotypes***

Lihirian men have very strong beliefs about the role of women in their society. The exclusion of women from all-important decision-making in the early phases of these mining projects is almost exclusively due to the weight given to Papua New Guinean men's views on 'tradition' and the customary role of women. In 1995, 1996 and 1997, I wrote detailed proposals for the mining company, the Papua New Guinea government, the Australian government corporation, and EFIC (Export, Finance and Investment Corporation) about the inclusion of women on committees and as beneficiaries for compensation payments made to landowners (Gerritsen, R and Macintyre, M: 1995; Macintyre, M. 1996, 1997). The landowner organisation, LMALA and the Lihirian

representative on the Board of Directors rejected the proposal, claiming that it was utterly contrary to Lihirian custom and that men were adequate representatives of women's interests. Lihirian women's reticence in public forums has reinforced the belief that men are more confident in presenting demands, and are thus better representatives. Furthermore, Papua New Guineans are very sensitive to issues of tradition, and they resent outsiders whom they see as making criticisms of their culture, and as a result quickly dismiss outside recommendations for the inclusion of women into committees.

### ***The political context of women's exclusion***

PNG has been an independent nation with a democratically elected government since 1975. Women have the right to vote and constitutionally have equal rights to men in all aspects of life. Yet the traditions of male leadership are strong and women are only allowed informal influence through husbands and brothers. It is only recently that women have started attending meetings to voice their disagreements with men.

In traditional Lihirian society women were and remain the breadwinners, responsible for producing food for their families. The men continue to expect women to perform this role, even when they are employed. The Mining Company and its contractors on Lihir tend to employ women in positions that are low-paid and unskilled, with only a few women accessing highly paid professional and administrative positions. While the mining company does not advertise positions in ways that exclude women, few women apply for non-traditional jobs or for the scholarship and apprenticeship schemes. Many men have opposed female employment at the mine, objecting on the grounds that it is 'against custom' and that it will lead to immorality. In fact, many men believe that they are entitled to employment before women and that they should decide how to spend the money that they earn.

Although most men give small amounts of money to women for food purchases, the majority of men's wages is spent on beer. Throughout Papua New Guinea beer drinking by men has become a major social problem. On Lihir, men regularly go on binges for two or three days and spend very large amounts of money. Although women can petition the liquor licensing board and insist on various sales restrictions and even total bans, they rarely exercise these powers. Women are reluctant to publicly censure the men for undertaking what is seen exclusively as 'men's business'. Few women report violence from drunken men to the police and often suffer in silence.

### ***Where can women speak?***

Traditionally, women have kept clear of political confrontation in PNG society. As a result, all forms of interaction with the mining company have tended to be mediated by men. But on Lihir, as elsewhere, women are becoming increasingly politicised and they will no doubt find ways of voicing their discontents. The best opportunity for women to get around the bargaining table is during the initial negotiation phase, when mining companies are most susceptible to local demands. However, traditional cultural beliefs act as an important obstacle to women's involvement. Mining companies are reluctant to champion women and risk offending 'custom', as they are already perceived as culturally insensitive and need to maintain a positive public image during the bargaining process.

### **Project phases and the continuing problem of women's representation**

It is rare that a community has unified interests and is able to speak with one voice. More problematic is that a community is transformed by the mining project; the population size and ethnic make-up changes, lines of authority are challenged, infrastructure, transport and communication systems develop - all of which alter people's perception of 'community'. Some people greatly benefit from the mine, and others do not - society becomes stratified into 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Old ties that united people are broken, new ones are made. These changes occur with astonishing speed and at no point can you freeze the situation and ask "What does the community want?" You can only ask "What does the community want now?"

Gradually, as economic inequalities have increased, sharp divisions have arisen between those who regularly receive royalty cheques and the people whose lives have not improved. The select few that receive large sums of money rarely distribute it within the community, forcing people with few benefits to turn to the company for assistance. Women are particularly vulnerable to developing this 'project dependency'. Company funds that have gone to developing infrastructure and paying landowners have not ended up in everyone's pockets. In addition, the wages associated directly or indirectly with the mine fall well short of amounts 'landowners' gain for 'doing nothing'. Some Lihirian men are particularly resentful that the wealth has not filtered through the community and have responded by placing increasing demands on the mining company, most of which focus on environmental issues.

There are several reasons why claims about environmental impact escalate. The obvious one - that environmental damage occurs - is rarely the driving force. More often it is a way of protesting about increasing social stratification and disparities of wealth. Whereas people initially saw the favouring of relocatees as just, they realised later that they too are affected, but they have no legitimate claim in law except that relating to unpredicted impacts on the environment. However, it is not only the land they inhabit that has been transformed, but also their values, their systems of authority and their lives.

The changes in community structure over the life of the project raise much more complex problems than simply canvassing consent at the beginning of a project. For women who have very little political authority at the outset, gaining the ground from which to influence the changes that will occur over the life of the mining project is

crucial. Should a mining company be required to impose a system of political representation (that insists on female participation in decision-making) that is alien and 'against custom'? In my view, mining companies should not be allowed to take on the role of the State by setting out the rights and responsibilities of citizens in decision-making processes. As providers of hospitals, roads, education facilities and other services, mining companies already have a great deal of control over the lives of people in the areas where they operate. But mining projects come and go. Placing pressure on governments to protect the rights of its citizens and not to abdicate control over service provision to multinational companies will ensure that women benefit equally and for a much longer period than the life of a mine. This is the goal towards which political energies should be directed in order to ensure that development actually improves women's lives.

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## One day rich; community perceptions of the impact of the Placer Dome Gold Mine, Misima Island, Papua New Guinea.



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This case study is derived from the report "One Day Rich" (Byford, 2000), which details a farming community's perceptions of the social, environmental and economic impact of large scale gold mining within their society. It highlights the importance of undertaking a gender analysis within a community to determine the roles, knowledge, expectations and responsibilities of the men and women. By undertaking this process, a project team can ensure a more equitable response to the changing social environment by removing barriers to equal participation in the planning and implementation of projects.

Misima Island is situated in the Louisiade Archipelago in Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea, and is host to a subsistence farming community of approximately 14,000 people. Misiman society is divided into clans, and membership of these clans is matrilineal. Women traditionally inherit and own land, although senior men retain authority over some areas. Prior to mining, women held a relatively high status in Misiman communities due to their central role in land ownership and food production for both the living and offerings for the dead. Misiman women had a relatively prominent role in public life,

church and community affairs, with active women's groups existing in every village.

Historically, Misiman women have held a complementary role to men in subsistence farming, Misima's major source of food production. Men were responsible for the clearing of land for gardens, which were then developed and managed by women. This role gave women control over yam production and its distribution, which is a prestigious exchange enabling women to assert their status independently of men. The introduction of gold mining by Misima Mining Limited (operated by Placer Dome) in 1989 fundamentally altered women's relationship with the land, undermining their status, independence and role within the community. In addition, social values have rapidly changed since 1989, facilitating the breakdown of traditional social structures and the growth of a prominent generation gap, both of which negatively impact on women.

One may ask how it is possible for mining to have such a large impact upon the lives and wellbeing of women? In this situation, the introduction of mining into Misima involved the purchase of vast tracks of land and resettlement of communities previously living on this land. The mining

company engaged men in the resettlement negotiation process, excluding the traditional landowners - the women. As such, royalties and compensation payments were invariably paid to the men involved in the negotiations. The defacto landowner association, Emel Ltd, has only one female member on the Board of Directors. Not surprisingly, this board has been unable to provide any redress for women's loss of land ownership. Women have been reluctant to approach any public government office or to push for inclusion into groups, even though the decisions of these groups may affect them. As a result, women's concerns about family and community stability have been lost amongst the more dominant concerns of men; namely power, prestige, and economic gain.

Money obtained through royalties and compensation payments has not, in many instances, been distributed to women within households. Instead, recipients have spent the money on personal items or given it to their own children - a process that would have been impossible when land was the major item of wealth. Misiman women have found their traditional power base supplanted by the power of cash, which can be acquired and disposed of without their involvement.

The quantum increase in the amount of cash in the community as a result of royalties, compensation and cash based employment, has had major impacts on women, undermining their relationship with the land, increasing their workload, and simultaneously decreasing the perceived value of this work. Mining has directly and indirectly provided employment opportunities for a large majority of the Misiman men living on the eastern tip of the island and a number of 'expatriate' Misimans. Many women whose husbands are wage earners no longer create large gardens because the men are unavailable to assist in garden activities, especially the clearing of land, and also because they can buy food with the money earned by the men. However women, especially those not engaged in the cash economy, are placed under increasing pressure to maintain these gardens due to the reduced availability of food trees as a result of extensive land clearance. Difficulties in managing gardens are compounded by the poor soil fertility and the plague of African snails, both of which are largely perceived by the community to be a result of the mining activity.

In mortuary feasts, women's contribution of locally grown food, particularly yams, has been overshadowed by the use of money to buy trade-

store food. The increasing use of money in mortuary feasting has had a significant impact on women's status. While yams remain the essential and preferred presentation, the use of bags of rice as prestige gifts means that, as wage-earners, men now have access to a sphere of exchange that was formerly exclusively female. The increase in the cash economy has also created divisions between women. Some wives of wage earners employ other women to tend to their gardens, which results in the distribution of cash within the community, but at the same time diminishes the status of these women in the eyes of other Misiman women.

Social problems including excessive alcohol consumption have arisen due to the increased availability of cash. As is the case in most places of the world, it is women and children who bear the brunt of the impact of alcohol abuse. Repeated reports of wife bashing and rape indicate an overall increase in violence against women. In addition, Misima has experienced an increase in divorce rates and the numbers of abandoned wives and children. However, importantly, women are increasingly reporting acts of physical abuse to police and community members, and are therefore moving beyond the customary sense of shame attached to such activities.

The introduction of mining into Misima has provided opportunities for women to manage their own businesses. When the mine opened, there was an initial leap in interest to start small businesses, a chance not previously available to women. Misima Mining Limited (MML) contributed significantly to providing infrastructure and start-up support for businesses, and provided training in small business management. Other basic business, management and financial support was provided by the local government. Unfortunately, Misiman women did not receive substantial benefits from this program, although some food preparation and clothing businesses arose as a result. The ability of the local women to utilise this opportunity was limited by the lack of capital and support from their community elders. In addition, the training provided by MML was undertaken in English and had limited applicability to small businesses which necessarily use the local dialect. Furthermore, women were considerably confused about the level of assistance and funding that MML was willing to provide for various activities and small business ventures.

Women's organisations faced difficulties in getting assistance for projects, be it from MML,

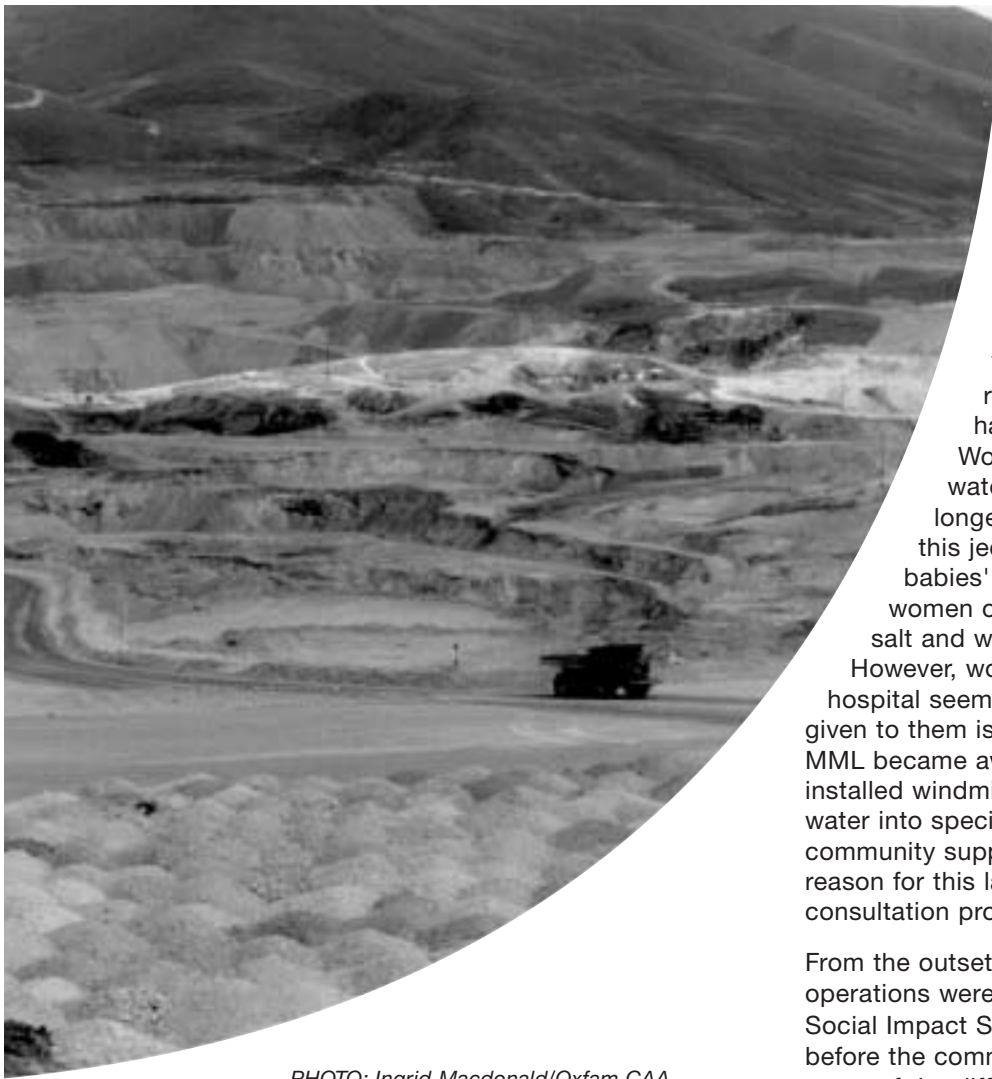


PHOTO: Ingrid Macdonald/Oxfam CAA

government agencies or NGOs. Understanding how to work with these various agencies was part of the problem. The required approach involved writing a business letter to the organisation with a request for assistance. This seemingly simple requirement resulted in the marginalisation of community groups without business letter writing skills. Women were reluctant to write these letters due to their inexperience, lack of confidence, and also the difficulty in understanding such an unfamiliar method of communication.

Mining has also had a direct impact on customary practice. The movement away from traditional values is evident in the increase in young unmarried mothers, prostitution, and less conservative dress codes. Environmental damage has also resulted in the alteration of customary practice. The Island's environment is widely perceived to be polluted. Residents complain about the taste and health of fish and the decreasing water levels of the rivers. Some women are disinclined to go to the rivers to bathe, wash clothes or prepare food because of low water levels and the discolouration of the water after rain, which they perceive to be evidence of pollution.

Clean seawater is culturally important to Misiman women who bathe in it and drink it after giving

birth, believing it can purify a mother's system and promote lactation and the baby's health. The degradation of seawater as a result of the mine's operation has had ramifications for this practice. Women report that the quality of the water is so poor that they can no longer drink it. Some women feel that this jeopardises their own and their babies' long term health. As such, women often make up their own mixture of salt and water to use as a substitute. However, women who give birth at the hospital seem satisfied that the medication given to them is a substitute for seawater. After MML became aware of this problem, they installed windmills designed to pump deep, clean water into special bathhouses, but there was little community support for using the facilities. One reason for this lack of support is that the consultation process was inadequate.

From the outset, MML was aware that its operations were going to impact on women. A Social Impact Study (SIS) undertaken by MML before the commencement of operations outlined some of the difficulties women would face as a result of the mine. However, these findings did not result in sustained efforts to engage in continued discourse with women, or to resolve their concerns. In addition, women's presence on the Social Impact Monitoring Committee had little influence on the project management. This may be partly due to the fact that the committee was run by MML's own community affairs staff, who failed to facilitate two-way dialogue, instead using the forum to showcase MML's achievements.

The company's initial response to issues raised in the SIS was to employ a limited number of women for secretarial, administrative, clerical and cleaning work. The company also responded by supporting local women's groups and businesses, and ensuring that women were represented on committees such as village liaison groups and the SIS Status Review Committee. However, some of these mechanisms were not conducive to women's participation beyond their attendance at meetings. Having a position on a committee does not automatically mean that you feel able to speak, to be heard, or to affect outcomes. Participation does not automatically include those who were previously left out of such processes and is only as inclusive as those who are driving the process choose it to be, or as those involved demand it to be.

Women's access to business opportunities improved in 2000 with the relocation of the MML Business Development Office to the Bwagaoia Township, and by the appointment of a Women's Officer. There is no doubt that the appointment of a Women's Officer was a positive step by MML, resulting in part from an acknowledgment of the inadequacies of their previous efforts. However, many women think the appointment is "too little, too late". Until the appointment of the Women's Officer, doing business with the mine meant doing business with the men of the mine, and women found it difficult to approach the men, particularly those that were non-Misiman.

MML's expenditure on infrastructure has indirectly aided women in negotiating a new role within the community, with roads and transport providing accessibility to new markets to sell produce and trade. In addition, government initiated improvements to the maternity services provided by the hospital were also identified by local women as a positive impact of the mining project. Women also widely adopted MML's employee incentive program to build or improve their houses. In addition to these benefits, MML has responded to women's most recent request to obtain an AusAID community development grant. This grant will provide assistance to the LWA [Louisiade Women's Association] to develop its 2000-2005 plan of activities and support for some of the projects associated with these activities. In the area of health, MML's focus will be placed on nutrition and HIV/AIDS.

Regardless of MML's response to women's concerns and the benefits derived by women, this mining venture has had considerable negative impacts upon their livelihood. The

injection of large amounts of cash and the rapid social change associated with mine development, has widened the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' and has led to a decline in women's economic and social status relative to that of men. MML's failure to protect the interests of all identified landowners meant that they effectively endorsed the corruption of a distribution process that was meant to be equitable. Male dominance within the government, and amongst Misima's community representatives, also contributed to effectively denying women their rights. The government is also perceived to be partially to blame for the outcomes of the project, as it failed to build village awareness, reinvest profits into village infrastructure, support programs, and it generally delegated all responsibility for community development to MML.

The mine will cease operations in 2005, 3 years from now. The closure will pose unprecedented problems for the Misima people. Business closure, loss of employment, decrease in transport alternatives, inaccessibility of shop food, loss of electricity and the degradation of buildings and infrastructure are just some factors that the community may face. On the flip side, it has been suggested that the closure of the mine, and subsequent reduction in access to cash will result in a reduction in alcohol consumption, and as a result a reduction in violence against women. However, the extent to which the Misima will be able to return to their traditional practices has been negated by intergenerational disputes and loss of traditional values. The fundamental shift in the status of women and their unique relationship to the land is unlikely to be regained after the closure of the mine, with repercussions for generations to come.

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# Indonesia





# The polarisation of the people and the state on the interests of the political economy and women's struggle to defend their existence; a critique of mining policy in Indonesia.



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***We give birth to children, we cannot give birth to land.***

***If our fathers continue relinquishing the land, where will our children go?***

## A general overview

**T**he Indonesian nation is an archipelago of more than 17,508 islands extending over 5,193,252 km, including 1,904,569 km of land and 3,288,683 km of sea. The coastal landscape extends 81,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Many of Indonesia's islands are small islands. Only 5700 of Indonesia's islands have names. Both the Indonesian land and the sea have a great diversity of natural resources that have enormous potential for economic development. (Department of Transmigration and Forest Clearing Settlements, 1995).

Of the natural wealth dispersed in the Indonesia landmass, 35% is subject to extractive industry, including the mining, logging (HPH), plantation (HTI) and the palm oil businesses. Indonesian forest at the moment is in a state of critical destruction and is being degraded as a result of human activities. JATAM (Indonesia's Mining Advocacy Network) data indicates that in 2001,

local governments distributed 3,246 permits for Class C mining activities such as sand, stones, and marbles. Mining areas overlap with conservation areas regulated by state and local traditional law.

Mines, by their very nature, cannot be separated from the land. Mining companies are dependent on resources from under and on the land's surface, and the geological processes that produce these resources. Likewise, in agrarian societies, land is essential, providing the medium on which the livelihood of the community is founded. Although the land has provided a guarantee of life over centuries for these communities, it can also cause systematic structural disaster. Communities face the risk of losing their surface land property rights if mining resources are discovered in the area. This insecurity arises from the differing and often conflicting priorities and interests of communities, the state and mining companies.

Mining in Indonesia involves mainly open-pit mining. Large-scale mining sites in Indonesia are often located on community lands, natural support areas, and traditional conservation areas protected under traditional indigenous law and state law. This overlap between mining and conservation areas

has resulted in a significant reduction in the quality of Indonesia's environment. The cases of PT Freeport Indonesia, and PT Kelian Equatorial Mining (KEM) are examples.

## Government involvement in mining

The Indonesian Government has made systematic efforts to maintain the existence of mining in Indonesia. As such, it has boldly pawned the fate of generations to come, ensuring the destruction of the living environment, the suffering of traditional communities, a decreased quality of life amongst the local populations, increased violence against women, and the destruction of the islands' ecology.

The State has asserted its right to unconditionally control Indonesia's earth, water and atmosphere through the State Authority Right (HMN) found in Agrarian Act No. 5/1960. The government has used this ruling to justify their control of the state's mineral resources and of the process of land rights determination.

Several specific cases indicate that the introduction of mining into traditional communities has resulted in the loss or marginalisation of traditional culture of such communities, such as the Dayak Siang community in Central Kalimantan. In addition, the Government does not respect community rights, using the defence and security forces to repress communities that oppose the presence of mining on their lands. Not surprisingly, Indonesia has developed a reputation for human rights violations in the mining industry. PT Freeport Indonesia, PT Indo Muro Kencana (IMK), and PT KEM provide examples of mining activities linked to human rights abuses.

Indonesia's mining policies are the root of the problem, as they are entrenched in an archaic legal framework and discriminatory practices. As such, a fundamental and paradigmatic change is required in Indonesia's mining orientation and policy. Indonesia's flawed mining orientation has its beginnings in the Mining Act No. 1/1967, which outlined foreign capital investment policy. This decree was followed by the creation of the Contract of Work (KK) Generation I between the Indonesian government and Freeport McMoran. In 1967, the initial decree was supplemented by Act No. 11, which detailed basic provisions for mining. Since that time, Indonesia has enlisted mining policies that are exploitative and are orientated to favour the interests of investors.

The Indonesian government subscribes to economic development ideology in order to

defend the country's performance to the world. This ideology permits the development of state policy that promotes economic growth rather than community prosperity. The implications of this policy focus are listed below.

1. The centralisation of national policy and regional revenue (PAD) results in the creation of natural resource policies that accommodate government and investment interests on the grounds of 'development'. This includes restrictions on traditional communities' access to and control over natural resources.
2. The destruction of community political, economic and socio-cultural systems through land parcelling, annexation, and the expropriation of community rights over resources.
3. A clash between the values of traditional society and economic policy.
4. Traditional communities are faced with violence and forced change that is initiated and supported by the state.

## The impacts of mining companies on communities and women

Careless mining activities have caused the destruction of the ecology, social stability and the economy.

### *Ecological destruction*

Although almost all of Indonesia's mining corporations contribute to the destruction of the environment and its ecosystems, none have undertaken the rehabilitation of former mine sites. This neglect occurs because the Indonesian legal framework does not encourage corporate responsibility. There is no doubt that mining operations change the quality of the environment. The main ecological impacts of mining result from changes to the geomorphology, and from the dumping of tailings into the sea. The destruction of natural ecosystems damages the foundations of community life, as communities are dependant on the forest, water, and plant-growth (forest, agricultural and plantation-based) for their dietary needs, the economy, their health and culture.

### *Economic impacts of mining*

In natural resource dependent communities, ecological change impacts the productivity of the community and village women. This impact often begins with the violation of a society's land and economic rights. The following examples

demonstrate how the expropriation of land results in the loss of economic resources for society.

- Before PT IMK (owned by the Australian company Aurora Gold) began mining in her area, Satar and her family had a promising future. Satar and her husband, Ataklidi, were traditional goldminers in Serujan, a mine discovered by the Dayak people. At that period, they earned Rp 5,000 to Rp 30,000 per day, or approximately 400,000 to 700,000 per month depending on conditions. In 1984, this family was able to buy a chainsaw, a motor and made improvements to their home. Satar's children were in elementary school and they also had enough savings to school her sister. Similarly, the Kutai Dayak traditional community has also experienced similar impacts to the community's economy. Kutai's traditional Dayak gold miners were able to support themselves and improve their lives until PT. KEM began mining operations in the area in 1985. Prior to the arrival of PT. KEM, the community collected between 5-10 grams of gold daily, or 200-300 grams a week, receiving an income of at least Rp.100,000 per person, per week. When PT KEM entered the area, the community was violently evicted from their land and consequently lost their income. When threatened with closure in 2003, PT KEM was prepared to provide the equivalent of 3 grams per person, per day, as compensation whilst their mining operations continued. This figure has still not been finalised (National Commission on Human Rights Indonesia, 2000a).
- Newmont Nusa Tenggara's mining activities in Sumbawa have stopped the production of palm sugar, an economic activity normally undertaken by women. As a result, women have lost an income of approximately Rp. 20,000 per day.
- Coal mining in South Kalimantan has prevented women from earning income from rubber plantations. This loss of income is equivalent to 2 kg of rubber or Rp. 4,000 per day.
- Women in Buyat Bay have been impacted by the submarine tailings disposal operation of Newmont's Minahasa Raya's gold mine. Populations of young milkfish, a major source of their income, have declined with the submarine tailings disposal operation.

### ***Changes in the fulfilment of family living needs***

Ecological change influences the availability of natural resources for the fulfilment of daily living needs. Communities that usually obtain vegetables, fish and other protein sources, including carbohydrates, from garden produce or natural resources, are forced to outlay money to fulfil their living requirements. As such, continued ecological destruction results in an increased need for cash within the community. This can be demonstrated with reference to a Dayak Siang Bakumpai woman, whose daily food requirements were obtained from her garden, rice fields and the river. Following is a brief description of the effect that PT IMK had on this woman's life.

Mrs Satar had a field as large as 10 to 15 hectares on the community's traditional land. Upon this land, she could harvest enough produce for one year, in fact sometimes more. With the introduction of the mining into her community, she lost all but one hectare of her land to the mining company. Consequently, she had to buy approximately 3 sacks of rice per month at a cost of Rp. 39,000 per sack (price at January 1998). In addition, the mining company's operations polluted the river, which could no longer be used to meet household needs, and no longer produced fish. Previously, Satar had cooked fresh fish each day for her family. Now, as a result of the pollution, she has to buy salted fish. If there is enough money, she purchases 2 kilos of salted fish a month at Rp. 15,000 per kilo. To obtain bathing and drinking water, Satar must walk a long way to a water source that is not affected by the company's tailings. Satar's livelihood is further threatened by the loss of her two water buffalos, found dead at the edge of the contaminated river.

### ***Social impacts of mining***

The presence of a large-scale mining industry in Indonesia has the potential to create social conflict and serious human rights violations. This conflict arises firstly as a result of the exploitation of natural resources, which impacts upon the economic and socio-cultural rights of communities. Secondly, pressure to maintain investment security, political stability and company security can result in the oppression of human rights and can subsequently result in social conflict (Dianto Bachriadi, 1998). For example, economic pressure undermined the

compensation negotiation process with PT. KEM, which began in 1998 in East Kalimantan, creating horizontal conflict between communities and resulting in the emergence of competing factions (the Pure Team vs. LKTML).<sup>1</sup> Likewise, social conflict arose during the occupation of the PT IMK, with the formation of Team 60 in February 2000 in Central Kalimantan.<sup>2</sup>

In Timika, social dynamics resulted in the marginalisation of women during compensation negotiations with PT Freeport. During these negotiations it was determined that compensation payments in the form of the 1% fund would be distributed to men, as it was believed that they fairly represented women's interests. As such, the women of Timika have suffered a double blow at the hands of the mining company. Firstly, mining companies have evicted them: their livelihood resources have been taken and destroyed. Secondly, the women do not have the right to receive or manage compensation payments. In addition, men's sole receipt of compensation payments has resulted in increased alcohol consumption, more bars and sex workers, increased violence against women, and increased violence in households. An issue raised at a Mimika Amungme Women's Forum (1999), was the use of the 1% fund, which has become a serious social problem. Paradoxically, several of the indigenous communities in this area regard land as their mother in their traditional philosophy.

### ***Impacts on the community and women***

A number of traditional miners have been forcibly evicted from their economic activity by state funds and power. This eviction has been carried out using the government's claim that the community members are "illegal miners" (PETI). This is a violation of the citizen's economic and socio-cultural rights. Allegations of human rights violations have been levelled at PT KEM together with the state apparatus (National Commission on Human Rights Indonesia 2000b). Similarly, the Dayak Siang and Bakumpai communities in Central Kalimantan have accused PT IMK of human rights abuses.

When mining companies enter communities, the residents are faced with two choices. They can enter work in the service and public sectors to supplement their lost income, or they can choose to work for the mining company. Work within mining companies generally involves manual and low-skill labour. In East Kalimantan, women who choose to work as mine workers with PT KEM are forced to endure sexual

discrimination. In addition, "female" job seekers are often forced to fulfil the sexual needs of higher ranked employees (National Commission on Human Rights Indonesia, 2000b). Consequently, as a result of the working conditions being forced upon them by mining companies, women's reproduction rights have been subject to abuse.

### ***Changes to physical health and modes of maintaining health***

Women are compelled by human necessity to carry out their daily activities in environmental conditions that differ greatly from those existing prior to the presence of mining companies. As a result, new types of illnesses have emerged within the community and it is women and children that are most susceptible to these illnesses.

At PT Newmont Minahasa Raya mine's submarine tailings disposal site in Buyat Bay, Minahasa District North Sulawesi, results from laboratory investigations of citizen's blood and nails show traces of arsenic in the bodies of women. In addition, there are many people in the community that suffer from skin diseases, and experience reoccurring headaches. The mine waste contamination is suspected to be one of the causes of the many health issues in the community. Undoubtedly women's reproductive organs have also been damaged by this pollution. Komoro women in the Timika district have also begun to relate their health problems with the consumption of polluted drinking water.

Before the introduction of large-scale mining, communities consumed traditional medicines to restore poor health. However, when the mining companies began exploiting natural resources, the communities lost many plants that were necessary for the formulation of these traditional medicines. Consequently, community members have had to purchase medicines to treat their illnesses, which results in an increased demand for cash.

### ***An unbalanced struggle***

The change in function of natural resources, modes of production and the power structure dictating access and control of these resources, has encouraged women to join with men in the struggle against mining. A woman impacted by marble mining in North Molo in the West Timor region stated:

We struggle to defend the cultural location, sacred sites, indigenous rites,



places where before our ancestors lived and did rites that asked for rain and the heat, protected plants, protected us from sicknesses or other dangers that would impact the community. These natural signs have been able to be read by the community. We do not want our children only to hear empty stories. So if these rocks are taken, then the children we gave birth to will never see a historical rock because it has already been taken by investors and we will no longer be able to view Timor from the top of the rocks. (Irian Jaya Indigenous People's Institute for Study and Empowerment, 1997).

If communities reach a successful compensation negotiation with the mining companies, the payments are generally claimed by and distributed to men. As such, compensation payments are inclined to benefit men and reduce the roles of women within the community. This disadvantage is compounded by women's nervousness about the resources available for the following generations.

## Conclusion

It can be clearly seen that mining companies contribute substantially to ecological, social and economic instability within communities. Women experience particular detrimental impacts including sexual discrimination and violations of their basic rights. Mining destroys women's traditional existence, their productive functions, their reproductive health, and causes the spread of discrepancies in women's socio-political rights. Workers' organisations, which are dominated by men, have never fought for or are not brave enough to raise cases of human rights violations against women. The orientation of discussions between these organisations and mining companies is directed towards economic issues, such as wage increases, subsidies and so on.

The paper calls for efforts to support a moratorium on mining in Indonesia, as well as the cessation of new permission provisions for mining expansion.

*Article translated by Laurinda Bailey.*

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## Notes

1 LKMTL (Lembaga Kesejahteraan Masyarakat Tambang dan Lingkungan -The Community Welfare Institute of Mining and Environment) is a community organisation initiated by the affected community. This organisation has been fighting to erect community rights for years against PT. KEM odious operation. Since 1998, LKMTL succeeded to negotiate with PT. KEM to represent all affected communities. In 2000, PT. KEM put new strategy to break down LKMTL power by forming the Pure Team that consists of some paid community members. With this strategy, PT. KEM relinquished all of the agreement with LKMTL and started to negotiate with the Pure Team.

2 In the same year with the crisis in Kelian in East Kalimantan, PT. IMK also applied the same strategy with PT. KEM to crush the community struggle. In Puruk Cahu, PT. IMK formed and paid Team 60 to fight against the local affected community.

Department of Transmigration and Forest Clearing Settlements (1995) Review of Phase 1 Results, Maluku and Nusa Tenggara, Regional Physical Planning Program for Transmigration (RePPROT).

Dianto Bachriadi, Misery in the midst of abundance. ELSHAM, 1998

National Commission on Human Rights Indonesia (2000a), Human Rights Problems around the area of PT KEM, West Kutai, East Kalimantan, Jakarta 22 February 2000.

National Commission on Human Rights Indonesia (2000b), TPF Report: Around the PT KEM mine region, West Kutai District, East Kalimantan, Feb 2000

National Congress of Indigenous Peoples (1998) Paper presented at the Mining and Traditional Society Discussion, Jakarta, 19 March 1998.

Mimika Amungsa Women's Cooperation Forum (FKPAM), Statement of an Amungme woman at the Women's Health and Human Right's workshop in Timika, 13-16 January 1999.

Irian Jaya Indigenous People's Institute for Study and Empowerment, Arso Traditional Society Institute (1997) Statement of a



## Labour, love and loss: mining and the displacement of women's labour



### Kathryn Robinson

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The Soroako nickel project in South Sulawesi, Indonesia came into operation in the late 1970s, and was the first of the mining projects implemented by the 'New Order' regime of President Suharto. The difficult terrain and fragile tropical soils of the region had supported small communities of semi-subsistence farmers, but most of these had dispersed as refugees before 1965 due to the hostilities between Darul Islam rebels and government troops. By the time I began research in the community in 1977, the rhythms of everyday life in Soroako were dominated by the demands of the mining company. Young men almost universally worked for the mine or one of the contractors. Older men and women had been displaced to the dry-rice farming areas behind the strip-mined hills due to the government facilitated forced purchase of the community's prime agricultural land on the shores of Lake Matano. The distribution of power between men and women and definitions of masculinity and femininity had been transformed both by the new labour arrangements associated with the mine's domination of the local economy, and the traditional ideals of gender roles imposed by the Suharto regime<sup>1</sup>.

The villagers of Soroako continued to cultivate rice in the hills behind the mine site, which were

reached by rising at dawn and walking through the company golf course (built on the site of the former wet rice fields) and following the dusty gravel roads which led to the mine site and beyond. People would sit around in the field huts and gossip about daily life. On the distant hills, fallow fields were visible as grassy patches among the jungle growth and I heard people muse on a number of occasions that those distant fields never seemed long way off 'before' but now they did. Framing this as cultural question, I speculated about the impact of motorised transport on perceptions of distance in people used to walking on jungle paths, or crossing Lake Matano in small canoes. However after analysing survey data on household labour another explanation of the apparent perceptual change emerged: the perception of distance was an artefact of the mining company's targeting of young men (aged 16-36) as labourers. Farming as a principal occupation had previously been almost universal in the community, but it had become the province of women and old men. However, at times of greatest labour requirements and when trees were felled to open a new field, farming households required the labour of the young men who worked in the mine. They were only free to offer their labour on their one day off (Sunday) and so labour intensive activities, especially planting, but also harvesting, had to be

scheduled on Sundays. As a consequence, agriculture became viable only in fields within 2-3 hours distance by foot or motorised boat, so young men could make the round trip on their non-working day. Thus the fields they had previously cultivated in more remote mountain areas seemed 'too far away'.

My host told me in shock one day that a woman had just died of '*beri-beri*'. Her manner indicated this news was a shock to her moral sensibilities. A few hours later, a group of people came to the house to tell us that she was not dead: while preparing the body for Muslim burial, they discovered that she was in a near-dead state and her respiration was very low. They wanted help in having her admitted to the company hospital (the only medical facility in the locality, aside from a government First Aid post which was usually closed). The woman was admitted to hospital and diagnosed as undernourished and suffering from TB (endemic in the region). People clearly found it shocking that one of their fellow villagers and kinswomen could come to such a state and they struggled to understand how it had happened.

The incident seemed to force members of the local community to try and understand how a woman could starve to death in their midst, in a situation where many Soroakans were experiencing increasing purchasing power from their cash wages, and where expatriate employees lived in luxury in nearby suburbs. The sick woman was a landless widow with two children. People explained, however, that before the development of the mine, she had assisted other people in their fields in exchange for a proportion of rice harvested. Hence, they said, she could have a full rice barn, even though she was landless. The changed economy, with no more wet rice fields, made it difficult for her to make a living in this way. Instead she had only casual work, for example hand stitching newly woven silk sarongs into a wearable tube, to earn the cash that was now fundamental to survival. Her teenage son provided the bulk of the family income through the arduous task of collecting rattan in the jungle. After contracting TB, she was unable to perform even simple jobs, and her situation worsened. Her story illustrates the impact of the monetisation of the economy.

In the past, a household's wealth was substantially represented by a store of rice, whereas following the development of the mine wealth was measured in the form of cash. A request for assistance from a rice barn was readily met - after all, for a family with a lot of land, there would always be more next year, and anyway, rice was for eating. Money is a

different matter - generosity to a neighbour or kinsman can be felt as deprivation, especially in an economy where most household needs were met through purchased commodities, and even most households with wage earners carried debts for basic living over from one month to the next. Money was also needed on a regular basis for school fees, to support older children studying outside the town, and to make the monthly repayments on consumer goods (eg. chairs, TVs, motorbikes).

The reworking of models of femininity by the New Order state emphasised women's domesticity, and that women's citizenship was grounded in performance of wifely and maternal duties. Official women's organisations explicitly promoted this style of 'emphasised femininity' (in Connell's terms), and in Soroako, elite wives replicated this process by organising the wives of company employees into a Family Association with the same agenda. Furthermore, this ideology was reinforced by the relegation of women to the domestic sphere, as men now had almost exclusive access to wage labour, whereas both men and women had previously been cultivators of rice.

In the early 1980s, Soroako had the highest contraceptive prevalence rates in Indonesia. Contraceptives were efficiently distributed in the community through the mining company's health services program. Company employees, like civil servants, had certain employment benefits limited to the first three children. The company fieldworkers visited people in their homes, and 'motivated' people to use contraception. In discussing reasons for contraceptive use, women would link their need to space and limit births to their desire to not be '*repot*' (harassed) with too many children. In the contemporary scene, when men all leave the village early in the day to work and return late, often 6 days a week, childcare has become a much more individualised activity and hence is felt to be more onerous. Increasing levels of school attendance has reduced the availability of sibling caretakers and has made child care a much more individualised task for mothers. Also, women spend more time working independently in the domestic sphere (and in modernised homes with concrete floors and internal bathrooms which require more maintenance), although some of the collective and social attributes of farm work, for example doing the laundry in designated public spaces on the shores of the lake, are still undertaken. But also very importantly, the ideal of responsible parenthood, providing children with *bekal* (provisions) for the future, can no longer be achieved by ensuring that children acquired the



ABOVE:  
Traditional  
small scale  
miners return to their  
village after a day's work  
panning for gold in the local river,  
Central Kalimantan, Indonesia.

PHOTO: Courtesy of JATAM

necessary knowledge for farming, animal husbandry and collecting jungle products for sale. Instead, under the changed economic conditions of the mining town, providing children with formal education (for which money was needed) was perceived as the ideal preparation for future success.

Prior to the mining development, levels of education were generally low, but lowest for women and girls who typically completed only three years primary education, compared with an average of six years for boys and men. Currently, large numbers of young indigenous Soroakans have post-secondary education. Their parents make considerable sacrifices to send them on to high school, often in another town or province, and then to some kind of tertiary study. It is only quite recently that indigenous children of non-employees have been allowed to enrol in company schools. In addition, a privately funded high school has been opened in the village. By the time of my fieldwork, as a consequence of the government's compulsory primary school education policy, all children (male or female) completed 6 years of schooling. Furthermore, whilst making the decision to fund post-primary education, which in most cases involved out of town travel, Soroakan parents did not appear to discriminate between male and female children. 'How do you know which one has brains?' was the reply of a man I asked about whether he

would privilege the education of sons or daughters.

In the mid-90s, very few Soroakans had permanent work with company. Some had casual work with contractors, to whom the company had offloaded its 'non-core' activities. Several of the young women I had known since their primary school years had post-secondary training in professions such as accounting. While many had found employment in the provincial capital, Makassar, once they returned to Soroako it was very difficult for them to obtain work. In a new spirit of partnership with locals, the company had invited a friend of mine to take up a catering contract in the company mess. She recruited several of the tertiary educated young women to work in food preparation and as waitresses. They were excited and delighted at the prospect of paid work. The changed economic conditions brought about by the mine created new opportunities for them, and they were often able to live and study away from the watchful eyes of their family and kin. Thus they were able to grow and develop outside of the kinship-based forms of power that had previously structured their lives and had limited their personal movement outside the home. As young unmarried women, they were the bearers of family honour and were obliged to live modest protected lives until the arrangement of their marriage by their parents. Education did not guarantee personal freedom or economic independence, but did coalesce with other factors in bringing profound changes in the gender order.

In 1983, a woman stabbed her husband in his sleep, an unprecedented event. She then reported her act the village authorities that went to her house and, as one put it, found 'not one grain of rice' in the house. The man had taken to drinking at the bars that had opened up to cater for foreign and other migrant workers, and had begun spending all his wages on drink. When drunk, he had raped his teenage daughter. The distraught mother reported his actions to the village officials, who were also her kinsmen, and they counselled her to stay with her husband, respecting the sanctity of her marriage. She had no other source of income, and there was no one willing to assist her in protecting her daughter. On the next occasion that he raped their daughter while drunk, she waited until he fell asleep and stabbed him. Somewhat to my surprise, this sad tale did not evoke the kind of shock that promotes collective reflection and feelings of guilt, like the near-death of the woman reported above. Nevertheless, emerging definitions of

masculinity and femininity that were taking root in the mining town compounded her economic vulnerability.

The economic strategy of the New Order courted foreign investment and opened up the Indonesian economy, bringing new forms of capitalist production and global cultural flows. The cultural flows occurred in the form of mass media (music, TV, films) and also through the complex cultural interactions experienced due to the increased mobility and flows of people in and out of the country.

In Soroako, marriages were traditionally arranged between parents. The cultural flows that have accompanied the opening up of the Indonesian economy brought with them new desires for self-realisation through romantic attachments. Such perceptions of the 'modern individual', were widely circulated in the mass media, and became realisable in towns where there were large number of migrants, freed from the kinship ties that regulated their lives in their home communities. The ultimate expression of this ideal, a free choice marriage, involved a major shift in power from the old to the young, and reflected the fact that the old were no longer able to enforce their will by controlling the resources necessary for the payment of bride-wealth and the all-important payment for the wedding feast. Arranged marriage remained the concern of all who had been involved in realising them, and so in most cases the family of the bride would feel a responsibility to intervene if a marriage turned bad. Two decades ago, when the pattern of marriage was beginning to change, younger married women who had arranged marriages saw free-choice marriage as a great risk. They expressed the view that if you followed your parents' will and the spouse turned out to be 'no good', they felt bound to support you. If you followed your own will you could not expect such support. New ideals of self-realisation through expression of sexuality was not limited to the unmarried, of course, and the community began to experience marriage breakdowns as married men abandoned their family obligations to seek romance with migrant women.

Gender relations have been profoundly reworked in contemporary Indonesia, through the development agenda of the New Order, and these changes are very evident in the transformed economy of the mining town. Both the company

and the state have explicit agendas with regard to gender relations; the company preferentially recruiting men and the state promoting a national idealised model of domesticated femininity. The promotion of particular models of femininity is linked to the exercise of state power, through the naturalising of the patriarchal authority of the family. Gender relations are influenced not just by these explicit gender agendas however, but also by the impact of policies that on the surface appear to have no direct link to gender, such as the economic policies promoting foreign investment. These lead to the new forms of employment that selectively recruit men, in the case of mining, or women, in the case of factory work. The disciplinary regimes of the state include the distribution of contraception and strong inducements for women to limit their fertility. This is accompanied by state propaganda idealising the domestic role of women and promoting stable monogamous unions (with two well-spaced children) as the ideal. However, global cultural flows also promote new ideals of self-development through the realisation of new sexual/gender identities, promoted, for example through pop songs, TV and advertising. (Most Indonesian ads on TV use middle class urban dwellers whose way of life bears little relation to the lives of the majority of Indonesians).

Women's everyday lives have been influenced by the economic impacts of development projects and by the social and cultural impacts of new models of femininity (and masculinity). The changes for women have not been altogether negative. Women have experienced more freedom through increased access to education, and the associated chance to travel outside of the village to pursue their studies. Education, however, provides no guarantees of economic autonomy. The emergence of a discourse of romantic love, and the opportunity for self-realisation through romantic attachment, would seem to signify liberation from kinship-based forms of power. However, it also leaves women vulnerable to deception, betrayal and violence, especially given their increased economic dependence. The changes in the construction of femininity have to be seen against the models of masculinity promoted under the New Order. In particular, the hegemonic masculinity associated with a violent and authoritarian state, where male domination of women within a circumscribed nuclear family, provided a model for the exercise of state power.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> I have based the interpretive framework for the analysis of gender on R.W Connell's book *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (1987).



# Mining, HIV/AIDS and women – Timika, Papua Province, Indonesia



## Nurlan Silitonga, A. Ruddick, Wignall FS

*After graduating from Jakarta's Christian University, Nurlan Silitonga studied epidemiology HIV/AIDS at Brown University. From 1996-2001 she worked as a physician in a primary health centre in Timika, Papua. She set up the PT Freeport HIV/AIDS prevention program and has provided consultancy services for STD and HIV/AIDS programs to several other mining companies in Indonesia. Nurlan is currently a Masters student working on STDs and HIV/AIDS at Sydney University.*

## Background

Mining is a unique industry. Despite its potential benefits to economic development, the mining industry can also have significant adverse effects on the environment and community. The effects can mitigate the economic benefits of mining operations (World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2002). For example, evidence from mining communities in Africa show that the spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) has become a major health problem that threatens both the community and the industry.

In Indonesia the mining industry plays an important role in raising export revenues. There are at least nine large-scale mines currently operating in Indonesia. In the mining communities prostitution, alcoholism, drug abuse and violence are common (McMahon et al, 2002). These types of social problems are well known to be potential factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS.

This paper is a case study of Timika, one of the mining towns in Indonesia. The topics covered are a) the spread of HIV/AIDS in this community, b) the efforts made to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission in this population and the challenges faced, and c) how the local women fight against this disease.

## Timika

Timika is a mining town in the Papua Province of Indonesia. It is located near the southern, coastal area of Papua Island where the large goldmining company, PT Freeport Indonesia (PTFI), has operated since 1972. Timika is the administrative city of the Mimika District and it includes five sub-districts with a total population of 108,000. Two thirds of the population resides in the Timika area, including the 12,000 male employees of PTFI.

As a mining town, Timika attracts people from other places who migrate in the hope of a better life. In 10 years Timika has developed rapidly to become one of the busiest cities in Papua Province. There are daily commercial flights from Timika to other cities in Papua and Indonesia and passenger ships frequent the town. Timika has two private modern hospitals. One is located on the mining site and mainly provides services for PTFI employees and their families, and subcontractors. The other hospital was recently built to cater for the city's population. Both hospitals provide free medical services for the Papuan, who are the local ethnic group of the Mimika District. Various recreational and entertainment facilities are available in Timika, such as hotels, motels, sports facilities, and night entertainment. People believe that along with these facilities, the mining industry provides employment opportunities and the chance to be paid well. In addition, the recent



economic crisis and the social problems evident in other areas of Indonesia have encouraged people to leave their home towns to find work. For the local Papuan the commitment of PTFI to improve their quality of life through free medical care, education, housing, and other supports has encouraged them to leave their villages in the highlands and lowlands to come to Timika City.

The sex industry is prominent in Timika's community. Compared to other areas, there are more opportunities for sex workers (SWs) to gain clients and higher wages. Approximately 600 SWs live in Timika. In the last few years there has been an increase in the number of local Papuan girls selling sex for money, gifts and other material support, including alcohol. The majority of their clients are mine workers. There has also been an increase in the number of Papuan men having recreational sex with SWs or having more than one sexual partner.

The spread of HIV/AIDS is a major concern in the Timika population. This concern arose in 1997, two years after four SWs were found to have HIV/AIDS. There are several factors that make the Timika community vulnerable to a high rate of HIV/AIDS transmission. Papua Province has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in Indonesia, and interaction with cities exhibiting a high prevalence of infection, such as Merauke, Sorong, and Jayapura, puts the Timika population at risk. In addition, the existence of wide spread prostitution - with its high STD rate and high-risk behavior practices such as limited condom use (Ruddick et al 1997) - along with a lack of STD diagnosis and treatment services, further spreads the virus. As of December 2001 there were 718 cases of HIV/AIDS in Papua Province, 164 of which were reported in Mimika District. This means that Mimika District has the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS in Papua (Subdin, 2002).

## **HIV/AIDS program**

A comprehensive STD and HIV/AIDS prevention program was established in 1997 by the local department of health and PTFI. The aims of the program are a) to improve community knowledge and awareness about the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission, b) to reduce high-risk behaviour practices among the high-risk groups, and c) to provide adequate services in the diagnosis and treatment of STDs.

PTFI has implemented a workplace based HIV/AIDS prevention program. Employees receive HIV/AIDS talks during their initial safety orientation and during subsequent annual

orientations. Books, brochures and posters have been developed and distributed to employees through AIDS program activities. Company branded condoms were also designed and provided free to high-risk groups and the community in general in an effort to promote condom use. Two drop-in centres were set up in the largest male barracks at the mine site so that employees could easily gain further information or counselling about HIV/AIDS.

Clinics for the screening and treatment of STDs were established at the government primary health care centre and at the brothel complex, providing all services free of charge. Routine STD screening and treatment was performed for the SWs and training on STD case management was provided for health workers in the Mimika District.

The program has been successful in improving awareness about HIV/AIDS in the community (Chivers, 2001). Around 35,000 employees and community members have attended AIDS talks and 130 people have been educated as AIDS trainers. A higher percentage of employees and SWs are using condoms, the STD rate among SWs has fallen, and an increased number of people are utilising STD clinics for treatment and testing of STDs and HIV (Reproductive Health Clinic, 2002).

Despite efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS within the Timika community, the number of infections continues to increase. To date there are 164 HIV/AIDS cases identified, of which 73% are local Papuan and 60% of these are Papuan women. It is a concern that infection rates have continued to rise sharply among the local Papuan. The major challenges to reducing HIV transmission include: high migration and mobility, insufficient implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention programs in many areas and communication difficulties caused by high rates of illiteracy and multiple languages.

## **Papuan women**

There are a number of reasons why HIV/AIDS cases amongst Papuan women are continuing to rise to problematic levels. The prevalence of unsafe sexual practices, STD infections, and HIV/AIDS cases amongst Papuan men is likely to affect the level of infections amongst Papuan women (Reproductive Health Clinic, 2002). In addition, we found that many Papuan women who visit the STD clinic for infertility problems have a poor knowledge of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. The Papuan women who had been infected with HIV/AIDS believed it to be a normal, curable condition. Furthermore, the healthy appearance of the infected husband,

partner or themselves meant that women continued unsafe sexual practices without realising that they could receive or transmit HIV/AIDS.

In general, the dissemination of information about STD risks rarely occurs at primary health centres. One reason is that a large number of health workers have limited knowledge of STDs and HIV/AIDS and are thus discouraged to discuss the issue. In addition, many health workers believe that married women do not need information about STDs or that by asking questions they may offend patients. Sexual health is a sensitive issue that isn't openly discussed; people feel that discussions related to this topic are inappropriate. A high illiteracy rate and also multiple languages have restricted Papuan women from getting information about STDs and HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, the unequal power balance between women and men in Papuan society acts as a powerful obstacle to women protecting themselves from STDs and HIV/AIDS. Papuan women commonly bear the burden of household chores and managing the children and the family, leaving them with no time for themselves. There is a perception that Papuan women are responsible for bearing children to their husband, and women are often blamed for the failure to do so, providing men with a reason to find another woman. Currently Papuan women have the additional responsibility of providing the household's livelihood whilst their husbands search for work in the city for months at a time without providing any support. They also have to face the fear that their men may leave them for other women, which is becoming more common. Physical abuse against Papuan women from their husband/partner is commonplace and is considered as a normal practice. Often Papuan women are forced to have sex with their husband/partner even though they are unwilling, sick, or their husband is drunk.

These conditions combined with the societal ideal of monogamy reduce Papuan women's ability to discuss fidelity with their partner, ask their partner to use a condom or for these women to leave a risky relationship.

So far the HIV/AIDS program for Papuan women only incorporates the STD clinic in Timika. There are many Papuan women who have not been reached by this service and are facing the threat of HIV/AIDS infection. Their ignorance and/or fear mean that they do nothing to protect themselves. Programs are urgently needed to assist Papuan women to avoid and manage this devastating threat. These programs must actively target Papuan women, whilst incorporating Papuan men. It is important that men are aware of the problem and realise that they have an important role in saving or tearing down their women's lives. Women's issues should be included in every AIDS program and activity. It is also important that the government, private sector, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), community leaders and every individual in the community promotes and provides a supportive and reinforcing environment for Papuan women.

## Conclusion

The situation in Timika shows that the mining industry is conducive to HIV/AIDS transmission. Many mining companies operate in Indonesia, thus the condition in Timika may occur in other mining areas as well. A commitment from mining companies to support the HIV/AIDS prevention program is important to curbing HIV/AIDS transmission. However, prevention programs are a collaborative effort of the government, private sector, NGOs, community leaders and every individual in society. As such, they should be comprehensive, continual, and culturally sensitive to address the dynamic challenges of HIV/AIDS.

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# Glossary<sup>1</sup>



**Gender** – describes the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men - what males and females do, what they are responsible for, and how they are expected to behave. These roles, responsibilities and expectations vary according to cultural, religious, historical and economic factors. Therefore, gender roles are changeable between and within cultures.

**Gender awareness** – requires gender sensitive attitudes, a commitment to placing both women's and men's needs and priorities at the centre of development work, analysing the impact of projects on women and men, and designing projects that involve both women and men. It requires knowledge about the impact that development activities will have on both women and men, which must involve an understanding of women's and men's social and economic relations and experiences.

**Gender equality** – refers to equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men, recognising their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources.

**Gender sensitivity** – means taking both women and men seriously in development planning and programming. It involves seeing what women and men actually do, rather than relying on assumptions; hearing both women's and men's needs, priorities and perspectives; counting the value of both women's and men's work; respecting both women's and men's views and human rights; and caring about how women and men are affected by development programs.

**Gender analysis** – is the process of considering the impact that a development project or program may have on women and men, and on the economic and social relationships between them.

It should be carried out through the whole project and program cycle, from planning and design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

**Practical gender needs** – are the immediate and practical needs women have for survival. Women's practical gender needs are usually determined by the gendered division of labour prescribed in a society and women's access and control of resources. Meeting practical gender needs does not necessarily challenge existing gender norms.

**Strategic gender interests** – involve bringing about equality between men and women. They transform gender relations by challenging women's disadvantaged position or lower status. Meeting strategic gender interests involves working with men as well as women to change assumptions about women's role and place in society. If these were met, the existing relationship of unequal power between women and men would be transformed.

**Empowerment** – is both a process and objective. Empowerment involves realising the skills and confidence to set one's own agendas, make one's own choices and speak out on one's own behalf. It entails a process of becoming conscious, and thus denaturalizing, assumptions about gender based roles and responsibilities.

**Gender mainstreaming** – is defined as making a gender perspective central to policy formulation, planning, program design, monitoring and evaluation, human resource management and budgeting. Gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that women and men have equitable access to, and control over resources, opportunities and benefits and participate equally in decision making process.<sup>2</sup>

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## Footnotes

1 Adapted from Juliet Hunt 2001 "Gender and Development Concepts"

2 OCAA 2002 "OCAA Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2002-2005"



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