



Gender Bias in Extractive Industries

Fact Sheet

Improving the Impact of Extractive Industries Projects on Women

Extractive industries (EI) are significant drivers of economic recovery and growth. However, the benefits and risks of EI are often measured broadly at the community level, and fail to distinguish the different impacts they have on men and women. Evidence suggests that a gender bias exists in the distribution of risks and benefits from EI activities: the risks, such as environmental damage and social harm, fall more heavily on women, while the benefits, which are employment and compensation, accrue mostly to men.¹

The distribution of costs and benefits often goes unnoticed by governments and EI companies, but our work with community women in Papua New Guinea and Poland has confirmed these impacts exist and are significant. Thus, it should come as no surprise that many women in developing countries and women's organizations are strongly opposed to EI activities because of the often unrecognized harm that befalls them and their communities. In a series of conferences and workshops supported by the Bank, women stake-holders from EI communities identified the following risks and benefits:

A. Examples of Key Risks of EI Projects for Women

- Loss of ownership or use of fertile land or gardens
- Loss of title to dwellings or assets
- Rise in violence and sexual abuse as a result of domestic disputes, alcoholism, drug use, or gambling
- Rise in prostitution and HIV and other STDs
- Poor working conditions and

higher incidences of sexual abuse for women in the project workforce

- Environmental damage such as loss of forest and water sources and/or airborne or noise pollution which impacts women's lives and livelihood.

- Lack of representation in negotiations between the community and the EI project developer on project development, operation and closure.
- Loss of sacred places, cultural and traditional degradation

B. Examples of Key Benefits of EI Projects for Women

- Direct EI project employment opportunities
- Employment opportunities in spin-off business and services that supply the EI industry
- Employment through SME development and new business activities not related to the EI sector
- Improved access to micro-credits and markets for goods and products
- Increase access to education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels
- Increase in literacy for community women
- Employment and business skills training
- Improved health services
- Improved energy supplies to reduce risks and burden of fuel wood
- Improved water supply
- Improved dwellings and housing
- Improved transportation and infrastructure
- Improved social community services

C. Why Gender Matters in EI: The Development Case

Gender equality is a key driver in poverty alleviation and economic growth. In many communities women are the basic economic drivers of the community and supporters of their families. Benefits streams to men often contribute to domestic harm and social problems such as alcoholism and violence. Benefits to women, however has been shown to have a high development impact because:

- Women use available income for food, shelter, health, education, and savings for their families, whereas men are prone to use income for personal consumption.

The benefits and risks of extractive industries are often measured broadly at the community level, but fail to distinguish the impact on men and women. Evidence suggests that a gender bias exists in the distribution of risks and benefits in EI projects.

The risks fall more heavily on women, while men tend to accrue more of the benefits. The development effectiveness and sustainability of EI projects could increase significantly by taking into account how gender bias issues affect the sector and how EI activities can benefit men and women more equally.

- Women have a better track record of starting successful business and repaying micro-credit loans, and show a greater willingness to respect safety and environmental safeguards.



- Women make-up half of the productive labor force and discrimination against women in the labor market is an impediment to private sector development and economic growth.

D. Why Gender Matters in EI: The Business Case

Gender related initiatives help reduce costs, improve efficiency and free up management time to address the core business at hand. A community where women's needs and concerns are properly addressed will be a stronger and less dependant community.

Addressing women's issues can directly improve a company's bottom line by:

- Increasing productivity and reduce costs because women do some jobs better than men
- A more predictable external business environment with fewer production disruptions thus avoiding cost increases and loss of income
- More management time for core business activities and less time on responding to investor concerns or conflict resolution with the community.
- Greater payoffs from community related expenditure and actions
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs due to better qualified, motivated and focused staff

E. Practical Steps to Redress Gender Bias: Stakeholder Voices

Through engagement with women-stakeholders in EI communities, actions to address gender bias issues in the EI sector have been identified. They include:

1. Economic Empowerment of Women

- Improved access to employment opportunities and Spin-off jobs aimed at women
- Skills training programs in the EI workforce and in the community for women
- Improve access to micro-credits for women's business/cottage industries
- Distribution of a share of EI benefits by government to support community-based sustainable development programs including women's projects

2. Social Empowerment of Women

- Appointment of gender desk in EI companies addressing women's issues both in the workforce and in the interface with the community
- Increased representation of women among community leaders and committees that deal with all stages of EI project life (exploration to closure).
- Liaising with local government on issues of concern to women

- Establishment of gender desks in Departments of Oil and Mining and at the local government level to address women's issues especially in the interface of the mine with the community.

3. Health and Education

- Improved access to higher quality health care.
- Initiatives to ensure equal education opportunities for boys and girls
- Information campaigns to provide increased awareness on HIV/AIDS and other high risk diseases.

- Surveys by Government on women's access to social and community services
- Government enforcement of mine compliance with environmental regulations.

4. Safety and Security

- Community initiatives to promote women's safety and reduce domestic violence
- Counseling for both men and women to reduce domestic violence, and counseling for women victims of violence and sexual crimes.

¹ Evidence includes a series of conferences and workshops with women stakeholders in mining communities in the Philippines, Bolivia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Ghana, India, and Poland, as well as websites and publications by women's groups from EI communities around the world.

Lahiri Dutt and Mcyntyre, "Women Miners in Developing Countries" 2006

"Tunnel Vision: Women, Mining and Communities" Oxfam, 2002

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