

Gender mainstreaming in the extractive industries: an overview

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Defining gender

'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'.

'Women are much more rigidly constrained by gender than by sex'.

'In all cultures, gender arrangements transform biological differences and sexuality into power relations and human agency'.

'A gender approach involves a focus on both women and men rather than an exclusive focus on women'.

It is important to differentiate between sex and gender and understand the social constructedness of the latter. Similarly we must talk about not only gender but recognise that one's gender identity intersects with many other elements of identity such as location/space, class and caste/race, age..... Thus, as men and women are not the same in their interests, all women are not the same and just by talking about 'women' we cannot address all women's problems. By talking in terms of gender, we can then include both women and men's interests, and address these differences.

Gendering the extractive industries

Mining over the years has come to be perceived as a dirty industry, unsuitable for women, involving hard and risky work. However, once we put on a gender lens, we begin to see the gendered nature of mineral extraction, at present and in the past, in almost all societies in the world, attributing a certain place to women in economic organization of the mines. This place is almost always at a lower level to the needs and priorities of men. Words associated with mining are also masculine: 'labouring men', 'the miners', 'proletarian solidarity' 'marraship' or mateship among co-workers), 'a man from the picks', and above all, the 'working class'. The more mining is represented as dangerous, dirty, risky and hazardous work, characterised by a unique masculinity suitable only for heroes, the more it becomes impossible for us to claim a space for women in this industry. Carter Goodrich in his 1925 book on Appalachian mining noted: '*The miner is an isolated piece worker on a rough sort of work, who sees his boss less often than once a day*'

Gender mainstreaming starts with a reconstruction of the mine-pits as gendered places and the 'mineworker' as gendered subjects.

The consequences of such portrayal of mining as a masculine sphere of work are manifold:

- Women seen as 'miners' wives' at best: 'hewers of cake'
- Exclusion from the productive work: women are driven to informal, less secure, less paid jobs
- Invisibility of women's roles/contributions in large-scale and small-scale mining
- Glass ceiling: Poor promotion and career improvement of women working in mining companies
- Trade unions taking up only men's issues, not enough women in the industry to push their cases

- Discriminatory international and national laws in the name of ‘protection’ (such as ILO’s 1930s ban on women working underground and during nightshifts, which are followed by many countries)
- Technology often drive women away from the mines: common notion that women cannot handle technology where actually work itself becomes less burdensome due to the use of machines
- Absence of gender impact studies during mine planning stage
- Neglect of gender needs and concerns in community development affairs
- Lack of attention to gender concerns during mine closure planning

Women and men in large-scale mines

Women have been involved in mineral resource extraction since early times. Many British collieries, French collieries and those of Japan employed women till the end of First World War. What we know as ‘modern’ mining is a child of twentieth century but such large scale mining is changing with globalisation and liberalisation of economies. Mining is indeed ‘Breaking new grounds’ (as identified by MMSD in 2002) in developing countries, changing the geographical distribution of gender and other inequalities. The salient features of the change are the greater use of technology, multinational operations, strict environmental standards, international norms (eg EIR, EITR). To speak about gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the mining industry, the fulfillment of Millennium Development Goals becomes a critical issue. I will come to this point later, but let me first speak about certain other trends with regard to women and their work.

As the process of economic globalisation moves ahead, it is clear all over that a process of informalisation of women’s work is taking place. This is happening, among others, through the exclusion of women from large-scale production along with mechanisation (e.g. the Indian coal mining industry). It has been noted that poverty has ‘a woman’s face’ and more than half of the world’s poor are women.

At the same time, women are finding some new jobs with the mechanisation of extraction work, albeit at the lowest level and in few numbers (eg. large-scale multinational mining operations in Indonesia). Thus, is it a simple question: is the ‘nimble finger’ at work in the mines too? This unusual fact of women entering the large-scale mines as truck drivers encourages us to explore the question: what does this opening up of new opportunities mean, for whom, at what levels

Women and men in small-scale mines

The MMSD (2002) report on ASM noted (p.21): *‘In contrast to large-scale mining, the involvement of women in small-scale mining activities is generally high’*

The number of women participating in informal mining activities has increased over time. Hinton *et al* 2003 estimate approximately 30% of world’s small-scale miners are women, African countries providing the highest proportion, about 50%. Chakravarty in 2002 noted that about 10% of workers in small-scale mining in South Asia are women whereas my observation is no less than 40%.

Participation of poor people all over the developing world is known to be poverty driven: ILO: *‘the impact of structural adjustment programs, low commodity prices or drought on private and public sector employment, trading, farming and inflation has led many people, especially women who relied on subsistence agriculture to seek new,*

alternative or additional paid employment for better quality of life, more usually just to survive'. The tendency of feminisation of poverty, meaning the greater presence of women among the poor, has also been well-recognised. It is thus no wonder that women are found more in ASM rather than in large-scale mines.

Women and men's work in small-scale mines tend to be multifaceted; they are:

- Traditional (artisanal such as gold panning, hard-rock extraction as described by Kautilya's *Arthashastra*) as well as non-traditional (of recent occurrence, worked by migrants);
- Lower wages – often lower than men, even as part of the family labour unit;
- Higher risk and less safety – women into less-mechanised jobs;
- Less security – physical vulnerability to sexual harassment;
- Low awareness of legal rights;
- Lack of economic empowerment – less control over decision-making on how to spend \$\$ earned;
- Lack of social and political empowerment – never in workers' unions;
- Child labour: children accompanying mothers, also child heads of households;
- Poor occupational health – airborne: asthma, silicosis; and
- Poor sanitation leading to poor health of women and consequently the children.

Lessons learnt

We have by this time become aware of several issues related to women and men's work in the mines and involvement in mining developmental projects. This awareness-building did not happen in one day; it took several years of disparate works and thoughts by individuals and groups with sometimes completely different interests and views. These include conferences and workshops held by the academe and the efforts of the international donor agencies, mining industry and institutions, and various NGOs and pressure/lobby groups.

The first in a series of conferences and workshops took place in Quito, Ecuador in 1998. The conference identified that indigenous people must be included in the consultation process. In 2002, in Yaounde, Cameroon, it was noted that decreasing livelihood choices in marginal and remote areas, increasing pressure on available resources are responsible for the informalisation of women's work in the extractive industries sector. It was suggested that attention to a pro-poor policy framework will be the first step in preventing the exploitation of women. For this, the Conference suggested reforms of land rights, institutions and legislation. The academic institutions, with their research strength, have not been far behind. The Max Planck Institute, Halle, organised a conference in 2003 to discuss 'socio-cultural perspectives' but unfortunately gender was only marginally addressed in that particular conference. I organised in The Australian National University a conference in July 2004 on *Women miners in developing countries* the collected papers of which is going to bring out a wealth of information on women's past and present roles and contributions in small and large scale mining. . In Elmina, Ghana, 2003, the *African Women in Mining Network* which may have originated from its Tanzanian precursor gave its mission statement as: gender mainstreaming, socio-economic empowerment,

capacity building, improved practices, employment generation, and lastly, increased productivity.

The IIR, in South Africa, January 2004: *'The employment of women in mining conference'* was a resounding success. It called for the inclusion of women in mining as miners, with mining rights on own leases with blasting certificates. This means a role that is much more than 'either secretaries or prostitutes', but as a productive person on her own right, at par with men. South Africa's gender mainstreaming experience in mining needs to be contextualised. Fully qualified women miners are now working underground in the country.

In Madang, PNG, 2003, was held the conference *'Voices of Change'*. This meeting identified four areas: health and education, economic empowerment, social empowerment, and safety and security as prime concerns for mining companies. Then it examined how gender can be integrated in view of positive (improved capacity to meet family needs) and negative (social) impacts of mining upon women. Barriers preventing full benefits to women were noted; these were inequities in political power, access to resources (capital, information, education and training), lack of human basic rights and presence of socio-cultural constraints, and the lack of women in public office.

In Colombo, Sri Lanka, the CASM international Annual Learning Event in October 2004 paid some attention to gender mainstreaming in ASM. In my address, I mentioned the lack of recognition of ASM as an activity contributing to poverty alleviation being the hindrance in a greater attention to gender issues in ASM. In the same conference was held a workshop on women and children; but the sensitive question of child labourers in ASM tended to attract more attention than the question of gender mainstreaming.

The various international donor agencies, mining industry and institutions too have initiated a process of examining gender concerns in mining. As early as in 1999, ILO published *Social and labour issues* in the ASM sector. However, their agenda of late has been more attention on child labour, resulting in a mix-up of gender concerns with children. This disastrous fact exemplifies my point that gender must not be equated with women.

In recent years, the MMSD process has been hailed as a good example of partnership of the industry with civil society organisations. In the huge MMSD report published in 2002, gender gets a mention only under 'Livelihood and sustainable development' section. There are only two pages devoted to gender in the 67 page report. Thus, it is clear that not everything is good news and a deeper understanding of gender & related issues are still missing in the extractive industries sector. For example, I will quote from the report prepared by the Mongolian Business Development Agency in 2003. The Extractive Industries Review (EIR), Bali, 2003, raised the question of 'Small mines, big issues' and asked the question: How can artisanal small-scale mining be practiced with minimum impact to the environment and maximum impact on poverty reduction in the Asia-Pacific region? But again, gender was not noted as a key answer to this question.

Issues running through these events are livelihood and economic empowerment, which are difficult to achieve without gender equality which in turn first needs gender sensitization of both women and men.

For most developing country governments, women in the extractive industries have remained invisible and a neglected, if not a taboo, subject. This neglect has been aided by inappropriate and outdated international laws blindly followed by national governments with 'protectionist' views of women. Questions such as how do local tradition and cultural values combine with women's empowerment through participation in the extractive sector are often raised by local men with vested patriarchal interests.

The NGO sector related to mining and development too have been active in the area of building up gender understanding. The process too has a long history. It began with Minewatch, London, organised meeting which resulted in a book published in 1997 titled '*Women united and struggling for our land, our lives, our future*'. Initially the gendering process looked at women's roles - not only supportive, but also women's movements on women's issues - in struggling against the ill-effects of mining. This was followed by a meeting in Zimbabwe on *Women in Mining* in 1999 that first demanded equal opportunities in the mining sector. JATAM, the Indonesian anti-mining NGO, organised its international conference in Bali in 2002 in which it set up a *Women and Mining Group*, and demanded equal opportunities for women and men. Another NGO movement in the Asia-Pacific region has been that of mines, minerals and Peoples (mm&P), India. In 2002, they met with local-based groups and some international bodies. These culminated in an *International Network of Women and Mining*, 2004 meeting in Vishakhapatnam, India organised by Samatha. The Oxfam Community Aid Abroad organised its '*Tunnel Vision*' meeting in June 2002, and noted that there is a '*Need for more focus, research and action to address the differential and often detrimental impacts that mining has on women from local communities*'. Elsewhere in the world too, efforts in gendering the extractive industry has been apparent. CEPROMIN is the Centre for Mining Promotion, Bolivia; this NGO body works in close collaboration with RIMM, the International Women and Mining Network.

However, the trade unions, believing in the entity of a unified 'working class' where male and females have the same identity, are still ambivalent regarding gender mainstreaming. In most cases, being a part of the existing social structure, they are not sensitised enough towards gender concerns. Even if they support women as part of their organisation, they do not have the expertise to handle women's interests within their existing manifestoes.

Winds of change

Certain changes are discernible in the contemporary international mining and development scenario. These include disparate elements of phenomena such as economic globalisation on the one hand and the Millennium Development Goals on the other.

The globalised mining capital will increasingly have to take note of Millennium Development Goals, which assigns the collective responsibility for halving world poverty by 2015. In MDGs, there is explicit commitment to gender equality as an end

in itself: *'No individual must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equality rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured'*.

This call for equality poses a major challenge to the international mining and development community. Gender inequalities are more pervasive than other forms of inequalities. They cut across other forms of inequality, and more severe among the poor; and structure the relations of production and reproduction differently in societies. Consequently, gender equality has turned into a major challenge that faces the extractive industries sector. It must no longer see 'women' as only part of the community, but integrate gender concerns in its mainstream thinking.

Gender and sex

Gender refers to the social differences and relations between girls and boys, women and men. These are *learned, vary widely* within and between cultures and *change* over time. Gender thus is a social construction whereas sex is more a natural phenomenon. Sex refers to the *biological* differences between men and women that are *universal and do not change*. Gender values and norms refer to ideas that people have on what men and women of all generations *should be like*. Gender stereotypes are the ideas that people have on what boys and men, girls and women are capable of doing. Gender roles refer to the activities that both sexes *actually do*. These usually vary among sexes; boys too tend to follow their fathers at work outside of the home and girls tend to assist their mothers at household chores. However, it is most important to understand that these roles are not static; they can and indeed do, change over time depending upon the specific situation. In some societies the roles of men and women are increasingly becoming interchangeable; the man may stay at home and do the household chores whereas the woman may be the principal breadwinner.

However, one starting point in understanding is that different gender roles of women and men involve different gender needs and priorities.

Why gender in extractive industries?

To avoid focusing upon the roles of women as mothers, we need to stop seeing them only as part of the community. The participation of women is meant for her human improvement, for her empowerment, and is her human right; it is not for the family's benefit. Consequently, the extractive industries now must find ways to remove gender inequalities, to empower both women and men as persons in their own right. In this section, I raise four issues of – four reasons why – women must be considered as equal partners in the progress that the extractive industries aim to bring to an area.

First, women and men *do not have same power*, within the society, within the family and consequently within the extractive industries. Women are often the weakest and poorest among the community, have the least voice in expressing opinions, and least power in determining their futures. Consequently, they rarely participate in the decision-making processes: beginning from the planning stages of a large-scale mine, till its closure. Due to years of oppression, women too have become conditioned to feel that they should keep quiet and hide their feelings.

Second, it has been noted (see Griffiths, 2003; Lahiri-Dutt, 2000) that *mining does not affect everyone in the community evenly* or in the same way; women are often more affected by the adverse impacts of mining. They find it difficult to cope with cultural

changes brought about by mining expansion (Robinson, 1996). Resettlement and rehabilitation often means the loss of a livelihood base (Lahiri-Dutt and Ahmad, 2005).

Third, women and men have different roles in the community and family; women in poor communities are often *responsible for the survival of the families*. They are the ones who collect food, fodder and fuel for the family's subsistence, look after children and their health, send them to school or educate them in other ways.

Finally, for a woman, it is an *inherent human right* to be heard, to have an enabling and empowering development process that gives her what she chooses. Community development processes so far have neglected this right, taking it for granted that planning for men by men would automatically improve the condition of women.

The language of communication

It is indeed true that the language of communication is still somewhat technical. Often this leads to misunderstanding and lack of comprehension. For example, gender mainstreaming means 'the systematic integration of the respective situations, priorities and needs of women and men in all mainstream policies with a view to promote equality'. The concept was launched at the fourth women's conference in Beijing in 1995 and is now established with governments in over 100 countries. Yet, Carney in 2004 noted lack of comprehension leading to resistance to the concept: *'The first time when you say gender mainstreaming to someone they say "what?" they haven't a clue what it means. If you say its re-balancing that's not right. If you say its women's issues - that implies it ignores men's issues. You can see people's eyes glaze over when you talk about it I have to say that the language that is used is not very normal. Its quite jargony. You wouldn't sell it to the masses If they want to promote it they need to make it more accessible'*. Clearly, gender experts need to address the larger populace in simpler terms that are well-understood.

Gender mainstreaming in large and small-scale mines

Gender mainstreaming will have to take place in both large and small mines, and the processes are interrelated. The essential objective is to acknowledge women's right to be heard, to own and to get jobs on an equal footing in the extractive industry. This will begin first with a recognition of the important roles and contributions made by women in mining, and then lead to a removal of the many existing discriminatory legal frameworks prohibiting women's work in the mines in the pretext of protecting them. The lesson we learnt from various experiences is that large and small mines can co-exist and flourish. The large-scale extractive sector must recognise ASM as a livelihood activity capable of reducing poverty.

The most important role played in gender mainstreaming is by those involved in research and dissemination of their findings. To rethink old stuff in new ways, to identify new areas of research priority, to tell us where more support is needed, we depend on more research. As yet, there has not been a worldwide effort in bringing together in a detailed way the knowledge that exists on gender and mining. This knowledge base, if brought together in an easily accessible form, has the capacity of acting as a databank spurring on more enquiries and further research, as well as provide a resource to fall back upon by the managers and officials. More research

will also serve an important role in information dissemination on the participation of women in extractive industries.

Another major need is that of lobbying for gender mainstreaming at various sectors and at various levels. Another need is that of support the formation of women's associations within mining companies to create those vital formal and informal links and networks that men have access to conventionally.

The important barriers are conventional gender roles and relations: subordinate position and lack of access and control over resources, supported by existing legal frameworks. A lack of knowledge of Gender Analysis (roles, responsibilities and needs), and the lack of Gender Disaggregated Statistics (to allow comparative gender analyses). An inadequate Gender Perspective within the governments and mining sector lead to an over-emphasis on technical aspects rather than bringing gender out as the topmost area of concern.

Possible measures at different levels

Gender proofing: A check carried out on a policy proposal to ensure that any potential gender discriminatory effects arising from that policy have been avoided and that gender equality is promoted.

Gender assessment: Examining a policy proposal to see whether it will affect women and men differently, with a view to adapting.

Positive action starts with analyses such as the **Socio Economic and Gender Analysis** or SEAGA has appeared as a major tool. It creates structures that facilitate planning, monitoring and evaluation of the effects of policy on gender, utilise experts' techniques such as gender auditing and gender impact assessment.

To use such techniques, it is required to first fully commit on gender equality. Then the need arises to locate expertise that is currently unavailable with mainstream bureaucracy. Many gender experts are to be found in the academe, in the teaching and research community. This expertise on gender then needs to be integrated with the mainstream bureaucracy for maximum results.

In-company

Gender experts to act as communicators and facilitators

Take up in-house gender audit

Take up gender impacts of policy analysis

Employ more women at all levels

Create potential for women to rise: access to networks

In-community

Participatory needs/interests assessments to identify areas

Intervene through training

Credit schemes

For ASM

Training and outreach programs to small miners, especially women

In Resettlement and Rehabilitation

Assess gender impacts

Provide alternative occupations

Who will be the champions? Minimum requirements for GM within mining companies

It is clear that since ASM is an effervescent bunch of mining practices loosely controlled, the larger mining companies will have to set the stage in gender mainstreaming by putting up exemplary cases of best practices. To initiate a process of gender mainstreaming within the extractive industries sector, one will have to locate the key personnel willing and able to undertake the job. This requires a set of requirements; the first is gender planning which is meant to provide means to define goals and relate them to strategies and instruments (Kabeer and Subramaniam, 1996). However, the issue that comes up at this stage is that, what are the minimum requirements for gender mainstreaming within mining companies? Based on my own experience in Indonesia, I identify the processes as follows: participation-sensitisation-planning tools-expertise-accountability, meaning that gender concerns need to be integrated within mining companies through participatory measures such as focus groups which will also act as sensitisation meetings. This step is absolutely necessary because what seems to be gender neutral often is not so in short or long terms. It is only when the stakeholders are sensitised, a gender planning can be undertaken in the company. The common classification of stakeholders is into the four groups of innovators, loyals, hesitators, and hardliners. The non-expert male planners who have conventionally wielded power within the organisation are often unwilling to change and offer resistance to gender planning by a gender expert. This is the gender planner; carrying out the diagnoses, mobilising the women and implementing the new gendered policy frameworks. There is still great confusion between 'women' and gender issues, and the job of the gender expert will be to clarify them by tackling them head on.

Gender planning is the first step in mainstreaming gender within an organisation. It is meant to provide means to define general goals and relate them to specific strategies and instruments. There are indeed several organisational case study analyses of practical gender mainstreaming experiences that benefit over time (see Jahan 1995; Wallace 1998; Macdonald 1997).

One immediate need is that of a set of guiding principles, a gender mainstreaming toolkit, and a readily available set of practical examples or case studies of gender mainstreaming. In one of my forthcoming papers (Lahiri-Dutt, 2005), I have brought out some aspects of such practical example.

From WID to GAD, but in mining GAM

Gender and Development (GAD) theory is distinctive from the terms Women in Development (WID) or Women and Development (WAD), which were the precursors of it. WID/WAD are based on the underlying rationale that development processes would precede much better if women were fully incorporated into them. They are believed to have resulted into women being treated as just another category, in women being seen as a homogeneous mass without the intersectionalities that GAD stresses upon. The weakness of this approach is that it focuses on women in isolation, resulting eventually in what has been described as a highly avoidable 'add women and stir' approach. In contrast to these approaches, GAD maintains that to focus on

women in isolation is to ignore the real problem, which remains their subordinate status to men. The objective of GAD sits well with the MDGs and economic, social, political and personal empowerment of women particularly in developing countries. It is assumed that the conventional power structures and flows will be arrested and reversed when GAD is applied in every field. As more recognition to social responsibility takes place in the extractive industries, it must pay greater attention to this aspect. Kabeer (2001) defines empowerment as ‘The expansion in a person’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them’ – thus implying more power, a process or changeover, and increasing human agency and choice. The objective of gender mainstreaming is essentially to recognise women as productive members of society, empowered by their own voice and abilities. The extractive industry must now examine if that has happened or not. Wherever this is absent, the extractive industry must try and incorporate gender in all its aspects. Thus, as WID has changed over to GAD, in mining, GAD will translate to Gender and Mining (GAM).

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