

THE BOTTOM LINE

The development of mining and of oil and gas resources generates significant income and employment opportunities. Ensuring that women receive equal benefits and are protected from negative impacts requires careful planning and, importantly, consultation with women themselves.

Closing the Gender Gap in Extractives: What Has Been Done and What Have We Learned?

Why is this issue important?

Women are not receiving equal benefits of the global development of oil, gas, and mineral resources, even as they shoulder a greater burden of the negative impacts

Global experience shows that the impact of extractive industries is gendered.¹ Quite simply, men benefit more from the development of oil, gas, and mineral resources than do women, despite recent efforts to close the gap. This is mainly because men capture more of the direct, employment-related benefits of resource extraction while women bear a disproportionate share of the negative impacts—loss of land, displacement and resulting community fragmentation, and environmental pollution (Eftimie, Heller, and Strongman 2009a). Further, qualitative evidence suggests that gender-based violence may be particularly serious in communities where extractive industries are active, amid an extra influx of disposable income, the arrival of migrant labor, and other social disruptions (Eftimie 2011).

There are many dimensions to the challenge of making the development of extractive industries more beneficial to affected communities in general and women in particular. Experience shows that, to meet this challenge, steps need to be taken at the very beginning, when companies and governments are exploring potential projects. Who is consulted at the planning stage (and how) informs the efforts made to reduce the risks posed by project development.

One priority question to ask is how community members access and use the land to be occupied for resource development. Here, women's economic interests are more readily displaced than men's. Indeed, amid plans to develop extractive projects, women often find their economic contributions to their households and communities either ignored altogether or misunderstood (Sweetman and Ezpeleta 2017). The consequences can have a direct bearing on household well-being.

Not only are men consulted more than women in the project-planning process, but their access to subsequent economic benefits is much greater. Over the life cycle of an oil, gas, or mining operation, the various categories of jobs created (i.e., during exploration, construction, development, and production) are often gender segregated (men in construction and machine operations; women in administration, cleaning, or catering). Opening more and better jobs to women would involve many dimensions. For one, there is a gender gap in earnings that is in part attributable to differences in education levels and specializations. For instance, women make up roughly 10 percent of the skilled labor force in the mining sector globally (Eftimie, Heller, and Strongman, 2009). Women's underrepresentation in these and other professional positions requiring higher education is closely linked to their low levels of representation among students of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This difference, in turn, points back to cultural norms. And even if women were to qualify for high-paying jobs, lack of gendered workplace policies (e.g., for childcare, maternity leave, flexible rotation and work schedules, and protection against sexual harassment) might further curtail their participation.



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¹ Extractive industries refers to oil, gas, and minerals. For more information visit: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/extractiveindustries>.