Chapter 2
The Gendered Dimensions of Mining

ABSTRACT

The costs and benefits of large mines to local communities and the relationship between mining multinational corporations (MNCs), government, and communities are subjects that have become important in developing and developed countries alike. To date, there has been a dearth of comprehensive study on roles and responsibilities of mining MNCs with respect to women and gender equality. Given that the relationship between mining MNCs and communities is changing rapidly—albeit unevenly and unsystematically—the need to develop understanding to better assess the gender impact of different approaches on this relationship and on the ability to maximise sustainable benefits from mining has become paramount. This chapter identifies the linkages between, on the one hand, work and labour-relations issues (e.g., long hours), reform of gender diversity policies and initiatives in mining, as well as the cultural lag between policy and practise; and, on the other hand, the impact of mining on women in mining towns/communities, a gendered impact assessment tool, and the relationship between mining and socioeconomic wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

Women experience direct and indirect consequences of mining operations in different and more pronounced ways than men. Gender inequality drives poverty and denies women their fundamental rights. (Oxfam Australia, 2009)

Various factors can explain the complex relationship between the mining industry and the local community in the host country. Power inequity, ownership of natural resources, political and business relationships, labour welfare, and environmental problems seem to constitute the common lens for most people. In fact, gender inequality has become a popular topic among scholars in social studies. In recent years, various stakeholders associated with the mining industry have conveyed concerns about issues surrounding women and mining, despite a greater sensitivity to gender equity and sustainability issues. A pioneering article in the *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* journal in 2010 identifies this tension in regard to women and mining development:

Although companies governing resource extraction are sensitive and responsive to sustainable resource management, certain policies and programmes during the operation of mines, and processes within communities, may lead to unintended consequences at the micro level that promote and sustain gender inequality within the domains of family and community, negatively effecting the wellbeing of women (Sharma & Kiran, 2012).

The history of mining is related to the military (Mercier & Gier, 2007) and that could explain the relationship among gender constructions of work in mining, family and militancy, and masculinity of the mining industry. Women's engagement in mining is eclectic and beyond working in the field. The review and survey of existing literature takes its point of departure from this contemporary contention outlined by Sharma and Kiran (2012). The literature on women's engagement in mining, particularly barriers and factors that shape women's engagement, and the impact of mining on women, highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the topic. The relationship of women to mining can be understood as interdisciplinary. It is examined at the intersections of the sociology of health and well-being; the sociology of work and labour studies; gender studies; gender research in geography and anthropology; rural studies; and international business, corporate social

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