



Women and Extractive Industries

Fact sheet

The benefits and risks of extractive industries (EI) are often measured broadly at the community level, but fail to distinguish the different impact on men and women. Evidence suggests that a gender bias exists in the distribution of risks and benefits in extractive industries projects: benefits accrue mostly to men in the form of employment and compensation, while the costs, such as family/social disruption, and environmental degradation, fall most heavily on women.



The gender distribution of costs and benefits often goes unnoticed by governments and extractive industries companies, but the World Bank's work with women stakeholders in extractive industries communities has confirmed these impacts exist and are significant. The development effectiveness and sustainability of extractive industries projects could increase significantly by taking into account how gender bias issues affect the sector and how extractive industries activities can benefit men and women more equally.

Why does gender matter in extractive industries?

The Development Case

Gender equality is a key driver in poverty reduction, economic growth, sustainable development, and human well-being. In many communities women are the basic economic drivers of the community and supporters of their families. Benefits streams to men can become a source of domestic harm and social problems such as alcoholism and violence. Benefits to women, however has been shown to have a higher 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.
- 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.

Clearly, providing women with equal access to productive resources substantially reduces poverty and fosters positive conditions for sustainable development. Without gender equity in rights and resources, the development agenda and effectiveness of extractive industries operations will be significantly hindered.

The Business Case

Gender disparities in gains from extractive industry operations have significant cost implication for the industry. Gender related initiatives, such as increasing female employment opportunities and community development programs, 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 dependent community.

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

- Increasing productivity and reducing costs because women do some jobs better than men
- Creating a more predictable external business environment with less conflict and fewer production disruptions thus avoiding cost increases and loss of income
- Freeing up management time for core business activities rather than responding to investor concerns or conflict resolution within the community.
- Producing greater payoffs from community related projects
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs due to better qualified, motivated and focused staff



What are the key risks and benefits for women in extractive industries projects?

The World Bank is working on better identifying the gender impact of the distribution of risks and benefits in order to improve the sustainability and development impact of extractive industries projects.

In a series of conferences and workshops supported by the World Bank, women stakeholders from communities identified a wide range of risks from extractive industries activities, including:



- Lack of voice and representation in the formal decision making process
- Loss of ownership or use of fertile land or gardens
- Loss of water resources and depleted fish stocks
- Limited control over productive resources
- Rise in violence and sexual abuse as a result of domestic disputes, alcoholism, drug use, or gambling
- Rise in prostitution and HIV/AIDS and other STDs
- Poor working conditions and 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.
- Loss of safety and security due to influx of construction workers

What is the World Bank doing in gender and EI?

The World Bank has reached out to women in EI communities, and is using innovative approaches to mainstream gender issues into the EI sector.

Papua New Guinea: *A series of Bank sponsored conferences with women in mining communities has led to the identification of actions to enhance the benefits of mining projects on women. These actions have formed the basis of a five-year Women and Mining National Action Plan. Progress includes some of the following programs for women: micro-finance training programs and micro-credit schemes; literacy and skills training programs; improved benefits distribution and the establishment of a gender desk; HIV/AIDS awareness campaign; and counseling for victims of abuse.*

Poland: *The Women in Mining Project has helped train 24 women leaders from local communities impacted by mining contraction who have established women's centers, which provide support to other women in mining communities on issues such as: Small Business Development, Employment Counseling, Public Relations, Legislation, Psychology, Public Speaking, and Entrepreneurship Basics.*

Practical steps to redress gender bias: Stakeholder voices

Through engagement with women stakeholders in EI communities, the following actions to improve the development impact of EI projects for women have been identified:

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
- Improved 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

Social Empowerment of Women

- Appointment of a 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 and oil production with the community

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

Safety and Security

- Community initiatives to promote women's safety and reduce domestic violence
- Counseling for both men and women to reduce domestic violence

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