

OXFAM FACT SHEET

OIL, GAS, AND MINING INDUSTRIES: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AT RISK

It's a 21st-century paradox: Countries endowed with oil, gas, and mineral resources frequently suffer in poverty—and women are disproportionately affected.



Women bear the heaviest burden of poverty, and they are often hardest hit by social and environmental problems related to large-scale projects like oil or gas pipelines, or a gold mine. Even well-intentioned development projects will affect men and women differently, so companies, governments, and communities need to ensure that they minimize problems that can increase gender inequality. How does this play out in communities affected by oil, gas, and mining projects?

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Many industrial projects will affect the environment, particularly water quality and availability. Such water issues usually have a direct impact on women and girls, who are responsible for collecting water. Contaminated water and other forms of pollution can create serious health problems and can especially affect women's

maternal health. People of all ages exposed to air- and waterborne pollution who become ill put an extra burden on women, who typically care for sick family members. Women and girls can also be vulnerable to domestic violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and trafficking for prostitution in areas experiencing economic booms and increased migration.

FOOD

Women are generally in charge of household tasks like food production and preparation; environmental problems, reduced access to water, or loss of agricultural land can have a direct and negative effect on a family's access to food. When a community suddenly becomes a center for mining or oil production, the cost of living usually goes up and food becomes more expensive, putting more stress on women in charge of feeding a family.

JOBS

Mines and oil and gas projects require a lot of capital; they are not very labor-intensive. And most positions are highly skilled jobs dominated by and reserved for men, such as heavy equipment operator and engineer jobs. Discrimination closes doors for women's employment in many of these jobs, resulting in women becoming more dependent on men for money for food and health care as costs go up.

POWER

Most of the discussions with companies and governments about hydrocarbon or mining projects do not involve women in affected communities. They are excluded from negotiations about terms of resettlement, what benefits will go to the community, and how the local government will spend revenues, for example. Excluding women from community

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// Men suffer from mining, but women suffer more because of loss of livelihoods and water bodies. So we started developing the leadership capacities of women, because if you don't have control over resources, you don't have power. //

—Hannah Owusu-Koranteng, Associate Executive Director, Wacam, Ghana



decision-making bodies makes them less influential. Failing to include their perspective on protecting water sources, on maternal and child health, on education, and on how to reinvest royalties into their communities is a lost opportunity to improve society.

EQUAL PARTNERS

Women play an essential role in any effort to promote development and eliminate poverty. They need to work with men as equal partners to make decisions in communities and to minimize the costs and share the benefits of oil, gas, and mining projects. Here's what Oxfam and our partners are doing to promote gender equity in communities affected by oil, gas, and mining projects.

Pushing communities, governments, and companies to include women in negotiations and decision-making.

Oxfam funds organizations providing training for women and men in human rights, law, and negotiation so both women and men can be involved in major community decisions together.

Advocating for company and government policies that respect women's rights and promote gender equity. Oxfam advocates for all governments and companies to respect the right to free, prior, and

informed consent from communities, including women, before starting any major oil, gas, or mining projects. We urge all parties to ensure that women are at the table during important discussions and that they can equitably benefit from projects and job opportunities.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Cambodia: Oxfam is helping government officials revise their environmental impact assessment procedures for proposed oil and mining projects to include stronger gender analysis standards.

Ghana: Oxfam is supporting two organizations that are training village women to become paralegals, who then teach others their rights under mining laws and Ghana's constitution, negotiation skills, how to analyze an environmental impact assessment, and water quality monitoring.

Guatemala: Oxfam's partners are training indigenous Maya women in communities affected by mining projects to become community leaders. With most of the world's gold coming from areas inhabited by indigenous people around the world, training indigenous women helps ensure that their specific concerns are accounted for in negotiations with companies and government.

Peru: Oxfam is helping organizations in a copper mining area to teach local people how to apply gender awareness to their work in analyzing how the government tracks and spends mining revenue.

United States: In an effort to promote transparency in oil, gas, and mining revenues, Oxfam and others in the US pushed for a section of the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to require companies to disclose payments to governments, allowing members of civil society—including women's organizations—to monitor how money is used for development.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Learn more about how communities are affected by large-scale mining, oil, and gas projects, and sign up to support our campaign at oxfamamerica.org/rights-resources/.



226 CAUSEWAY STREET, 5TH FLOOR
BOSTON, MA 02114-2206
(800) 77-OXFAM
www.oxfamamerica.org

ABOVE: Hannah Owusu-Koranteng trains women leaders in communities affected by mining in Ghana. *Jeff Deutsch / Oxfam America* **FRONT:** A Senegalese woman uses a sluice to find small specks of gold. There's a major gold mine in this area, but few women work there. *Rebecca Blackwell / Oxfam America*

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