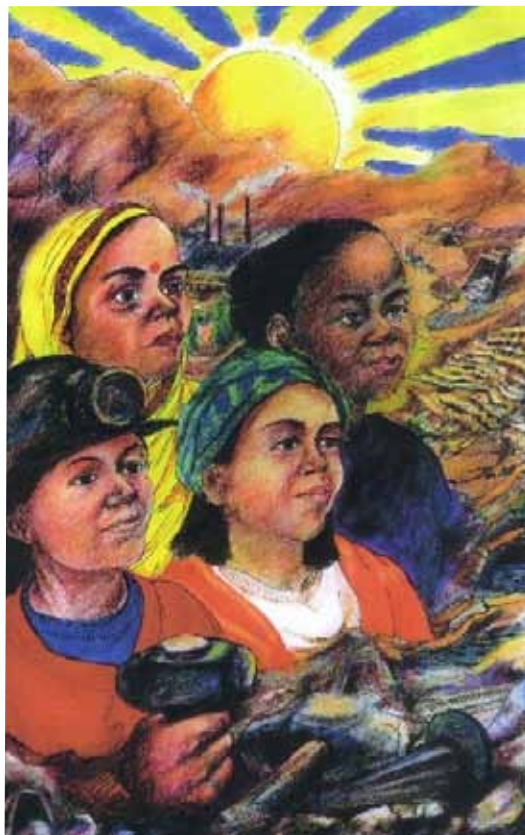


Women from Mining Affected Communities Speak Out Defending Land, Life & Dignity



**WOMEN FROM
MINING AFFECTED COMMUNITIES SPEAK OUT:**

Defending Land, Life & Dignity



International Women and Mining Network/

Red Internacional Mujeres y Minería (RIMM)

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- Defending Land, Life & Dignity

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With sincere thanks,

**International Women and Mining Network Secretariat,
India**

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International Women and Mining Network / Red Internacional Mujeres y Minería (RIMM)



About the Network

RIMM is the first unique platform that has brought together women from different continents to collaborate on raising the crucial need for gender justice-alongside social, economic and environmental justice-in mining affected communities. What started in 1997 as an initiative by various organizations to explore the gender concerns in mining communities, took the role of a global platform for women who have been exploited by mining projects as members of displaced communities or as workers. Today, **RIMM** membership spans over 28 countries across Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Pacific.

The activities of **RIMM** include campaign support to local struggles, organizing fact finding missions, research and information exchange, dialogue with governments, trade unions, civil society, human rights organizations, bringing member groups together for, perspective building, training and solidarity.

This book is part of the initiative of the network to bring the different voices of women campaigning for their rights in the context of mining companies and mining

projects in their lands, to the focus of political and economic debate at an international level. Although this book largely brings out the anguished and angry stories of women, behind these stories lie very strategic global politics that are weakening democracies and worsening military dictatorships through either constitutional amendments, market driven policies or by sheer force of the armies and police. Hence, we hope that these stories provide a guide to national governments and international human rights bodies, will develop inclusive growth models that are based on gender equality and sensitivity. When **RIMM** started engaging with civil society and governments, the most frequent opinions expressed with respect to women's problems in mining, indicated the lack of understanding and even a thought to an issue that so hugely affects women-that mining has several seriously negative impacts on women, their livelihoods, social life and security. This led us to the realization for compiling first hand stories and documentation from women across the world fighting specific campaigns in order to give concrete evidence of the problems and perspectives of women.

The network initially formed around the following objectives:

- To make visible the serious problems women in mining affected communities face across countries, governments, non-governmental organizations, human rights groups, trade unions, mining struggle groups and communities and all other concerned groups.
- To stand as a strong global platform to fight for women's rights *vis-à-vis* mining.
- To provide an opportunity to bring together women across the world to share their experiences as mine workers, women suffering and affected by mining and women concerned with mining.
- To represent the voices, complaints and violations of women affected by mining at global forums, trade unions, national and local governments, civil societies and international human rights organizations.

IN/SIGHT AND ON-SITE: Women from Mining Affected Communities Mobilize

As the number of mineral extraction projects worldwide surges, common concerns are emerging within mining affected communities spanning from the southern tips of Patagonia and Australia to the Arctic regions. Women from diverse regions—including the Andean plains and Amazonian forests, the coastal regions of Indonesia and the Philippines, the mountaintops of North-Eastern Thailand, Indigenous territories of Turtle Island, and the Guatemalan highlands, as well as villages in the Niger Delta, western Ghana, and South Africa—are challenging the agendas of corporations seeking to unearth local mineral wealth. While these women may be responsible for cooking, cleaning, household water acquisition, caring for the young and old, and maintaining subsistence level economic activities, they are also outspoken community organizers. Many are drawing connections between the building of large-scale mines and the corresponding deterioration of social, cultural, economic, and physical well-being of local populations. As mine workers, women are also demanding safer working conditions and a dignified wage. Yet, when women do attempt to make their voices heard as community and worker advocates, many assert that their recommendations are not taken seriously by those in positions of power. Instead, they face death threats, arrest, incarceration, physical attacks, and harassment at the hands of mining interests and security forces, paramilitary operations, the police, or male colleagues and family members.

From household kitchenware to state military equipment, dependence on metallic goods has become virtually inescapable. In the past, the search for increasing quantities of minerals—in particular, gold and oil—was a key motivation behind imperial journeys and the colonization and subjugation of entire populations. However, mining has also been practised for thousands of years, typically on a small-scale and subsistence level, by both men and women. Over the course of history, women have assumed responsibilities within, and in opposition to, mining activities. Yet, it is rare that women's thoughts, perceptions and concerns about the extractive industries, particularly in relation to the health of their families and communities, are heard in historical and contemporary accounts. The following publication of testimonies is one way women from mining affected regions are raising awareness about the issues with which they are confronted on a daily basis, as well as their aspirations for change.

In recent decades, a relatively small number of multinational conglomerate mining and oil corporations have consolidated

their power, seeking to influence state policy in the global North and South, and pressuring governments to forgo the development of environmental, labour and fiscal regulations. Taking advantage of civil conflicts, weak governments, corrupt regimes, paramilitary and private security forces, repressive national security and anti-terrorism measures, and already existing social inequities, corporate operations commonly facilitate militarization of the regions near mining concessions, extinguish traditional ways of life, and undermine local assertions of the right to self-determination. As an industry that produces immense volumes of greenhouse gases while simultaneously destroying rich ecological biodiversity, mineral extraction projects are also a significant contributor to the global climate crisis. As the testimonials in this publication suggest, the expansion of the extractive industries have not only been facilitated by multilateral institutions—including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund—but also imposed as requirements for international development loans and support.

From Ecuador to Australia, areas considered 'protected' as national parks or world heritage sites have become the sites of resource-based struggles. Increasingly, communities and allied academics as well as activists are becoming aware that such collectively valued land has been sought and bought by mining companies. Many of the affected populations, including the Shoshone, Shuar, Mayan, Adivasi, and Kokatha Mula Indigenous Peoples, refuse to be silent as mining companies seek to extract minerals from areas understood as significant cultural and religious sites or ancestral burial grounds. In particular, grandmothers and mothers express their desire to ensure that future generations have the opportunity to see and know these unique sites. When large-scale mining companies purchase land once used by entire communities as a site for artisanal mineral digging and panning, many women also see their sources of livelihood extinguished.

Women whose voices are reflected in the following chapters express priorities to ensure the availability of clean water for their families, adequate food for members of their household, resources to care for their children, the elderly and the sick, a secure and safe home, and a basic subsistence level income. From Nigeria to India, women also commonly speak of their lack of property ownership rights, and of coping with harassment by men within workplaces, labour unions, social movement organizations, public spaces and their own homes. In smaller-scale operations, such as the tin and iron mines of Bolivia and

India respectively, companies hire women as contract labour under conditions that offer inadequate wages, no job security, no training or suitable equipment for basic occupational health and safety, and no protection from discrimination or harassment.

Large-scale mining projects by corporations listed on international stock exchanges also negatively impact women's lives. From affected communities in South Africa, Ghana, the Philippines and Guatemala, women have witnessed a downward spiral in their quality of life: homes are demolished or damaged during 'removal' operations and mine blasting; water sources are polluted by mine tailings; agricultural fields and household gardens become infertile due to contamination by toxic mine dust; illness and hunger becomes widespread; incidences of deformed babies and unhealthy children increase; trust between and within families dissolves; communities become militarized and permeated by fear; and employment opportunities remain an illusion within a male-dominated industry. Younger generations of women also may decide to migrate to urban centres—or even abroad—in search of work. As articulated by women in communities from Costa Rica to Tanzania and Australia, the influx of male workers has torn apart the social fabrics of both the communities in which the mines are located, and in which the families of migrants remain. Consequences include increasing incidences of gender based violence, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, as well as intensified food and housing insecurities.

Confronting the circumstances of the economic recession of 2008-09, many companies opted to 'mothball' mine sites around the world without considering plans for ecological rehabilitation or community-oriented recovery strategies. The

fate of impacted regions are similar: contaminated wastelands, poisoned groundwater, dilapidated housing, unemployment, poor quality or non-existent infrastructure, ruptured families, and a lack of compensation for lost land as well as mine-related illnesses and deaths.

Corporations' technical vocabulary that espouses 'social responsibility' but in reality fails to uphold the right of communities to grant or withhold permission for new mining developments, or to comply with standards enshrined in the United Nations as well as the International Labour Organization, is not enough to solve such disastrous legacies of large-scale mineral extraction. As many of the women featured in this publication suggest, meaningful changes to the current state of affairs will require alternative approaches.

This publication is one step towards building an awareness of the challenges and struggles experienced by women in particular places where companies are extracting wealth from the depths of the earth. The perspectives of these outspoken women on mining are rarely heard in international media, court rooms, parliamentary legislatures, or international policy development forums. In the following pages, women provide first-hand accounts of the destructive impacts of the extractive industries on their health and livelihoods—and on that of their communities. They also call for a bold re-visioning of the current unsustainable industrial practices exhausting the earth's finite natural resources. Women from around the world are putting the extractive industries on notice. They demand respect for human and environmental rights, a dignified basis of survival, and their communities' right to determine when oil and minerals would be better left beneath the soil.



Canada/Turtle Island

- Vale Inco's refineries, Port Colborne
- Uranium exploration, Anishinaabek Territory

USA/Turtle Island

- Barrick Gold's mine sites on Shoshone Territory

Guatemala

- GoldCorp's Marlin mine on Mayan lands

Panama

- Inmet and Teck Cominco's Petaquilla site

Costa Rica

- B2 Gold's Bellavista site on the Gulf of Nicoya
- InfinitoGold's concessions on the San Juan River

Ecuador

- Corriente Resources, IAMGold and International Minerals sites

Nigeria

- Shell, ExxonMobil, Chevron, Total and Agip's oil extraction in the Niger Delta

Ghana

- AngloGold Ashanti's Teberebie operations in Tarkwa

Bolivia

- Tin mining in Oruro

OUR COMMUNITIES:

Mongolia

- Mongol Gazar's gold mine, Buuruljyyt River basin

India

- Iron ore mining and processing in Karnataka
- Proposed bauxite mining on Adivasi land, Andra Pradesh

Cambodia

- Australian and South Korean owned mining concessions in Rattanakiri

Philippines

- Kalayaan Copper Gold Resources' concessions in Mindanao
- Anglo-American and OceanaGold's concessions in Apayao
- OceanaGold's concessions in Nueva Vizcaya
- Marcopper Mining Corporation site in Marinduque

Thailand

- Tungkam's mine sites on Isaan land

Tanzania

- Barrick Gold's Bulyanhulu mine in Kakola

Indonesia

- Vale Inco's nickel mine on Karonsi'e Dongi land in Sulawesi

Papua New Guinea

- OTML and Inmet's Ok Tedi site, Fly River

Australia

- Barrick Gold's Lake Cowal mine on Wiradjuri Territory
- Heathgate's uranium mine on Adnyamathanha Territory
- Iluka's zircon mine and BHP-Billiton's Olympic Dam uranium mine on Kokatha Mula Territory

South Africa

- AngloPlatinum's PPL sites in Limpopo
- Uranium One's Dominion Reefs site in the Witwatersand Basin
- Proposed titanium mine, Wild Coast, Pondoland

SITES OF CONTENTION

africa

OPERATING IN TEBEREBIE: AngloGold's Legacy of Shattered Bones and Poisoned Communities in Western Ghana

South African based AngloGold Ashanti is one of the world's largest gold companies, with operations in Ghana, Namibia, Tanzania, Mali, South Africa, the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, and Australia. Exploratory drilling is occurring in the Philippines, Colombia, the Congo, China and Russia. In Ghana, AngloGold Ashanti operates the Iduapriem mine in Tarkwa, which is located in the Wassa West District of the western region of the country. The World Bank's International Finance Corporation also owns a percentage of the mine, and has provided significant support to the gold mining industry in Ghana, a sector notorious for devastating environmental degradation and human rights violations. In Tarkwa alone, where over two-thirds of the land has been sold to multinational companies, open-cast gold mining has displaced tens of thousands of people, contaminated rivers and streams with heavy metals, destroyed farms and forests, led to violence against community members by private security forces, and resulted in epidemics of illnesses amongst villagers. For example, incidences of malaria, tuberculosis, silicosis, acute conjunctivitis, and skin diseases are now commonly reported by local residents. Since cyanide is used to extract the gold from the ground, spills and leakages from haphazard chemical handling have poisoned local farmers' crops and stocks of fresh water fish.

Teberebie is a farming community in Tarkwa displaced in 1991 to make room for the establishment of a mine on land granted to Goldfields Limited, later acquired by AngloGold Ashanti. The concession, now known as the "Iduapriem Mine", produces over 300,000 ounces of gold per year, and is expected to be functional until 2018. The entire vicinity has become the dumping grounds of AngloGold, with piles of rock waste surrounding the village of Teberebie and blocking local waterways. Deprived of fertile ancestral homelands, where they once grew crops of cassava, yams, pineapples and various vegetables, villagers must walk a distance of between six to nine kilometers to reach land that is suitable for farming. As a result, the possibilities for growing food and accessing potable water are highly limited. The population of over nine hundred people now draws water from only two boreholes, both of which sometimes run dry. Open-air dumping and heavy blasting by AngloGold have caused houses to crack and the air to be thick with toxic dust. Now, it is even common for the younger generation living in Teberebie to have severe lung diseases.



Women have been at the forefront of organizing protests against AngloGold Ashanti's mining operations. PHOTO: WACAM.

Over the past year, AngloGold representatives have been compelled to admit to discharging raw wastewater from the Iduapriem mine workers' housing, and spilling cyanide solution into streams that not only flow through farmers' fields, but are also used as a drinking water source by villagers. Acid drainage from the piles of waste rock also has poisonous impacts on the quality of surface and ground water. The Ghanaian Water Research Institute, a reputable national body, has concluded that the water near the mine is unsuitable for irrigation and cooking, let alone drinking, due to heavy contamination with bacteria and metallic particulate matter. Villagers of Teberebie are also constantly coping with intimidation from the armed private security guards hired by AngloGold. Under these circumstances, they are unable to secure healthy crop yields from their fields or gather non-timber products from the forests. Their rights to food, water, health, as well as to life and livelihood—all of which are guaranteed under national and international law—are blatantly violated.

When threatened by AngloGold Ashanti's security forces, community activists with the Concerned Farmers' Association of Teberebie, such as Emelia Amoateng, sometimes seek external support from allies such as the Accra-based advocacy group WACAM. The Concerned Farmers' Association of Teberebie consists of thirty-five local farmers. They have now received training from WACAM about their rights under Ghana's constitution and the Minerals and Mining Act.

ghana

In Ghana, where there are few women visibly leading political struggles, men are normally perceived as the voices of the community. Nevertheless, Emelia has become a strong community advocate, struggling to demand AngloGold Ashanti respect the rights of local residents. Emelia has been at the forefront of the coordination of the Concerned Farmers' Association's legal case against the AngloGold Ashanti Iduapriem Mine to demand compensation for the destruction of their properties. In addition, Emelia has led a community initiative to hold the company accountable for the pollution of local watersheds, and had successfully traced sources of chemical seepage into their streams from the tailings produced by the Iduapriem Mine. She has led people from her community in a march through the district capital of Tarkwa to present a petition about the problems of her community to the District Chief Executive and has also spoken extensively to media outlets about the impacts of AngloGold's mine on her community.

Emelia, now thirty-one years old and the mother of two young children, explains her dedication to the people of her community:



Because of the sensitization from WACAM, I now know where to go and who to contact in case of any problem in the community...The 1992 Constitution and the 'Minerals and Mining Act' are my closest friends now. I don't want the mining company to cheat my community. And I know my rights as a citizen living in a mining community....[I] feel very powerful in the sight of both the mining company, and the men in my community.

Aspiring to become a lawyer and an advocate for women and children, Emelia is presently undertaking studies to prepare for admission into high school.

Organizing A Community to Hold AngloGold Ashanti Accountable for Destruction

In February 2006, a forty-seven year old resident of Teberebie, Anthony Baidoo, was shot by AngloGold's private security forces. He had been walking away from a confrontation between farmers and an armed security force. Tired of using the nine kilometer pathway to their farms (approximately 18 kilometers round trip), the entire population of Teberebie had decided to protest AngloGold's rock waste dumping. Unknown to Anthony Baidoo and other farmers in the community who collectively decided to take a shortcut around the rock waste, AngloGold had hired armed security personnel to 'protect' the company's property, including the vicinity of the rock waste dump. The armed guards confronted the farmers for trespassing, and then shot Baidoo. Emelia immediately contacted WACAM and the media and explained, "This should not happen to us. What have we done wrong?" After AngloGold Ashanti officials had been pressured by local activists, Baidoo got the medical care he needed to survive. However, he has never fully recovered and remains unable to undertake farming activities.

TOP: Rock waste dumping at AngloGold Ashanti's Iduapriem mine in Teberebie.

BOTTOM: Children in Teberebie suffer from lung diseases due to the blasting and toxic dust at AngloGold Ashanti's mine. PHOTOS: WACAM.



nigeria

THE OIL INDUSTRY'S IMPACTS ON THE DAILY LIVES OF WOMEN IN THE NIGER DELTA: Featuring the Voices of Women from the Imiringi and Ikarama Communities



Onward march: Women of the Niger Delta mobilize for justice.
PHOTO: Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth
Nigeria.

When oil was found in Nigeria in 1956, there was excitement across Africa's most densely populated country, and in particular, at the site of the discovery, the coastal state of Bayelsa in the Niger Delta. The assumption was that the discovery of crude oil, colloquially known as 'black gold', would transform the state into an economic and infrastructural giant, bringing wealth and development to ordinary people.

More than fifty years later, the story is very different. Today, the state of Bayelsa represents the picture of environmental degradation, dehumanization, and all that is wrong when transnational companies prioritize profits over people. The land and mineral resources beneath the earth have been claimed by oil companies without the consent—and often the knowledge—of the local people. Environmental impact assessments are either not conducted, or done without the knowledge of residents of affected areas. Instead, agreements are made between the government and the multinationals behind closed doors. Community residents become observers as multinational companies move in with their heavy equipment, supported by heavily armed mobile policemen. In some cases, community leaders are bribed by the company in an attempt to facilitate the establishment of oil extraction facilities.

Oil exploration and extraction in the Niger Delta has become known as the 'Curse of the Black Gold'. Drilling projects alter the communities' waterways and pollute rivers, depriving people of their sources of water. Occasionally, the multinational oil companies 'donate' water boreholes to some of the communities. However, community members often

consider the water from the corporate-sponsored boreholes to be useless because the water sources are highly polluted with crude oil particles and other dangerous chemicals. In addition, houses constantly vibrate due to the operations of the heavy machinery causing further disruption to people's daily lives.

The reality is that women, who predominantly work as farmers and are often the bread winners of their families, bear a disproportionate burden of the unmitigated suffering currently ongoing in the communities of the Niger Delta. In general, farmland in this region belongs to men, since women are not entitled to own property. Death of a husband or divorce can spell the end of a woman's rights to till the soil. When environmental disasters occur, the precarious position of women means they experience additional hardships as they struggle without sufficient land on which to sustain their families. As the people who provide their families with water, cook, tend to the sick and the elderly, irrigate their farms, and fish for subsistence, women's lives and livelihoods are devastated by the ecological contamination caused by multinational oil companies.

In particular, gas flaring and oil spills are seen by women as major sources of environmental and livelihood devastation. Women also speak of the serious hazards posed by the oil pipelines that crisscross homes and farm lands without regard for the host communities' welfare. Many whose homes are beside the pipelines consider that they live 'on tinderboxes'. Rusty pipelines burst on a regular basis in this area, resulting in heavily contaminated farmlands, forests, streams, and rivers. Usually, the government fails to intervene. Instead, the multinational company, government officials, and communities blame each other for the problems. When government ministers do react, their efforts are either too late or appear merely half-hearted. Ending the destructive activities of irresponsible oil extraction is the only way to avoid similar events in the future.

All of the pollution caused by the oil industry has dire health consequences. Many of the women in the communities surrounding the Niger Delta report skin diseases, and various respiratory illnesses. In addition to unidentified sicknesses, community members have reported cases of cancer, infertility, deformed babies, and many other health problems. In the words of one local activist, Ester Money, they "are simply dying from the [gas] flares".



A woman working close to a gas flare site in the Niger Delta. PHOTO: Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria.

Gas Flaring

Gas flaring is conducted at more than 100 sites in the Niger Delta to remove the excess gas from the crude oil. Gas flaring is the cheapest method of processing, but also the most hazardous. Noxious gases in the flares—including sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and carcinogenic substances such as benzopyrene, dioxin, benzene and toluene—have severe social, health and environmental consequences. Health impacts include leukemia, bronchitis, asthma, cancers and other debilitating diseases. Meanwhile, this toxic chemical combination has also been identified as a cause of the acid rain that pollutes creeks and streams, damages vegetation, and corrodes people's housing structures. An estimated 168 billion cubic meters of natural gas is flared yearly worldwide. Of this amount, about 13% originates from Nigeria (or approximately 23 billion cubic meters per year).

As of December 31st 2008, gas flares were declared illegal by the federal government of Nigeria. However, gas flares continue to be operated by a number of powerful multinational oil corporations, such as the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), ExxonMobil and Chevron, as well as Total and Agip.

The prevailing cultural norms in the Niger Delta present men as the 'all-knowing father of the house'. Consequently, women's voices are often silenced by their male brothers. Their efforts to develop alternative livelihood options have also been blocked. Though there is a women's resistance movement—known as the "Ogbos"—male activists constantly attempt to stifle the women who take a stand against injustice. The Ogbos remain a nucleus for rapid mobilization and sensitization in the area, but have not been prominent forces of change due to widespread patriarchal sentiments. Women are usually excluded from 'elder's meetings', and also from meetings with government officials, or representatives of the multinational corporations. Yet, crucial decisions are taken at these

times. Women continue to be frustrated at the lack of respect and the ongoing marginalization they face. As a result, they have become ever more determined to seek channels through which to be heard. The struggles and hopes of women in two communities in Bayelsa State, Imiringi and Ikarama, are highlighted in the following testimonials.

Women's Voices

Esther Money, farmer from Imiringi

☞ We are experiencing several health-related problems, such as severe chest pains, coughs, skin rashes, and other respiratory difficulties that I can't really explain... We don't even have a medical facility in the community. Sometimes before we have time to rush our children and other sick relations to where they can receive medical attention, they die on the way. This has been the case mainly with children... In most of our family and communal discussions, we have been attributing some of these strange health complications to the negative impacts of the gas flares around us. We arrived at that conclusion because some of the illnesses we suffer from are very strange to us. ☞

Imiringi is an Ogbia speaking Ijaw village along the Kolo Creek and mostly populated by fisherfolk and farmers.

Oil exploration and exploitation activities started at Imiringi in the late 1960s, and gas has been flared since then. Although the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) is the main corporation operating in the community, some work is contracted to oil servicing companies, including Italy's SAIPEM, and South Korea's Daewoo Corporation. The SPDC Kolo Creek Logistic Base, which is the only operational office of Shell in Bayelsa State, is situated in Imiringi. The community is also host to the main public gas turbine station.

Margaret Amos, farmer from Imiringi

☞ Since 1972 when Shell came and situated their facilities here and invaded us, our crop yields started depreciating. Of truth, in those days, we experienced higher crop yields than these days. Yes, as one who has been in farming from childhood... I know what I am talking about. Then, as a young girl, I noticed that our crops—cocoyam, cassava, plantain, and more—grew more luxuriantly. When we harvested them, we got bountiful yields. But all that is now history. What we get these days could be likened to... [a] skeleton of those days... We are really convinced that this gas flare is responsible for the decline in crop yield, because it was never so poor before the gas flare. I am approaching sixty years and I mean what I am saying... ☞

Biobebe Ademe, farmer and fisherwoman from Imiringi

☞ Fishing, which is a major aspect of our livelihood, has been badly affected by the presence of the oil industry in this community. In those days before Shell came to our land—when our parents bailed their ponds—we used to get several buckets of fish. But the story is different these days, due to the slick of oil and other chemicals from the gas flare that have continued to pollute the ponds, swamps and creek. Worst of all, even the few fish we manage to catch these days often smell [like] crude oil. In most cases, you will observe varying degrees of oil slick or related shining matter on the surface of these ponds, burrow pits and even our creek...

[A]part from the chemical effects on the water resources around us, we often notice that the oil companies sometimes allow their waste petroleum products—and even crude oil—that escape from the pipelines to flow freely into our creek. Also, due to the several construction works these companies embark upon, the routes through which the fish access or flow into our ponds are often blocked with heavy heaps of mud.

Now, we are denied an income. Instead, we spend our hard earned money to buy imported [frozen] fish...**Apart from denying us our fishing rights, we cannot drink the water from the creek...**We do have a Shell-provided borehole in our community but that water from the borehole is not fit for human consumption. When you fetch water from it, you will notice a thin silver-like colour over the surface and, some sort of rusty sediments in the bucket...We consider the river a natural resource that should be left clean. ☺☺

Stella Ogbel, farmer from Imiringi

☞ When we were young, we used to be happy whenever it was raining, or about to rain... We enjoyed drinking rain water not only because it has the natural qualities of pure water—it was also colourless. We don't have that these days. **We are denied the God-given rainwater by the oil companies. If we collect the rainwater, the whole [water] surface would be covered with soot by the gas flare in our community.** ☺☺

Ikarama is an Ijaw speaking community of subsistence farmers and fisherfolk. The town is host to operations owned by both the Nigeria Agip Oil Company [NAOC] and the SPDC. Shell has major facilities here, including pipelines linking the Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States, as well as the "Okordia Manifold" facilities. Ikarama has the notoriety of being the location of the highest frequency of oil spills in the state of Bayelsa. One such spill occurred in December 2008, when rivers, streams, creeks, and other sources of water became a black ocean of crude oil.



Ayibakuro R. Warder from Ikarama discussing local environmental disasters and the impacts on women.



Gas pipelines run directly across agricultural fields, gardens and communal property.



Egberi-wari villagers, whose livelihoods once depended on Oya Lake, wade through the watershed now devastated by an oil spill.



Women of the Delta work in close proximity to the gas flares.
PHOTOS: Environmental Rights Action/FoE-Nigeria.

Ayibakuro Warder, trader, seamstress and leader of women's group from Ikarama

☞☞ The incessant oil spills in this community and the impacts remain our greatest problem with the oil exploration activities of Shell in our community. When these oil spills occur, we are impacted in many ways as women. Let me mention just a few:

One: Our farming and arable lands are polluted and rendered unproductive.

Two: When the crude oil flows into the creek, the slick pollutes the water, damaging our cassava. This is a huge waste.

Three: When the creek is polluted, it denies us the right to do those things we ordinarily do in the creek like fetching drinking water, taking our bath or even just swimming there.

Four: Our children—and even we—often fall sick after drinking any water from the creek because it is so polluted... In looking for a cure, we spend our hard earned money.

Five: When spill sites are not cleaned, as is the case here—it gives us respiratory and skin problems. In most cases, it is we, the women, who run around to ensure that our children or our families are alright—cooking, washing and taking care of sick family members...

Six: The same thing happens when the...oil spill area is burnt instead of actually cleaning it. Here, Shell contractors always send their agents to the community to set fire on the oil spill. Apart from the foul smoke we inhale, it later returns in the acid rain on our crops, and roof-tops. This, we believe, causes the rapid corrosion of our homes.

Seven: When oil spills occur, it affects our ponds, swamps and lakes, and it kills all the aquatic life... Those of us who depend on such [water and fish] sources to make ends meet are really frustrated as losses incurred are never compensated; neither are the polluted ponds, lakes and swamps cleaned or remediated. While women from other communities would be carrying the fish to the market every market day and smiling [on the way] home, we, the victims of an unjust oil system, have no fish to sell. What a loss of economic livelihood!

Eight: As our lands are made barren by these oil spills, we are made even poorer.

Nine: When the oil slick also is on the creek and we can no longer drink from it, we are forced to go far in search of drinking water. Sometimes, we buy a sachet of water to satisfy that need. But how many women can afford that [water]—for themselves, and for their children—particularly the widows amongst us?

As to whether the women are given opportunity to take part in communal issues—especially in discussions concerning

oil companies and the community—that is zero. We are not recognized at all...[W]hen there was a spill which flowed into the Taylor Creek in 2007, it damaged our cassava. The loss was so much then that the women of the community rose up and decided to go to Shell to protest the matter. Instead of our men supporting us, some of them were discouraging us from going. Some even went as far as saying that if they had their way, they would ask Shell not to listen to us. Unfortunately, they meant it. By the time we had arrived at Shell's Kolo Creek Logistic Base at Imiringi, some of these... [men] had spoken on the phone with their contacts in Shell to tell them not to attend to us... We were there with our bags of contaminated cassava, but they told us that the right person to see us was not around. We went back with a protest letter the following day and, the letter was received. However, up until this moment, nothing has come out of that effort. ☞☞

After Word

In June 2009, women from Ikarama gathered at a meeting facilitated by Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth-Nigeria to discuss their situation and strategize for future campaigns. The women hope to increase awareness about their plight in the international media. Meanwhile, they are planning a major mobilization to draw attention to their call for the implicated multinational corporations to take responsibility for a complete ecological clean-up of their communities, and to provide a dignified level of compensation for the environmental, social and economic injustices suffered.



Environmental Rights Action Gender and Community Mobilization team.

PHOTO: Environmental Rights Action/FoE-Nigeria.

Struggles for Recognition, Justice and Land to Call Our Own in Bulyanhulu, Tanzania

Located in north-west Tanzania, the Bulyanhulu Gold Mine is currently owned by Canada's Barrick Gold Corporation. It is one of sub-Saharan Africa's largest underground gold mines with estimates of over twelve million ounces of gold reserves available. Millions of liters of water are pumped to the mine every hour without consideration for the provision of clean water to the local communities. However, this gold mine is not just devastating the ecology of this region with waste rock piles, mine tailings that emit heavy metals into the surroundings, and the depletion of precious water resources. The rocky terrain on which Bulyanhulu has been built is now a site synonymous with deception, displacement, and death at the hands of Canadian multinational corporations. The quest to expose the bloodstained realities buried in the rich veins of golden ore extracted by Barrick Gold—and for justice—has been ongoing since 1996, implicating not only multinational mining companies, but also a range of other institutions, including the Canadian and Tanzanian Governments, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

Following the discovery of gold by nomadic herders in Bulyanhulu in 1975, families from the northern region of Tanzania began to migrate to the area, seeking a more prosperous means of survival. Mine shafts were dug on a small scale, and artisanal mining was carried out by the residents of the new settlement which became known as "Kakola". When the miners were granted permission to sell directly to the Tanzanian Central Bank in 1990, a massive influx of people arrived. From a small collection of settled families, Kakola became home to an estimated population of up to 400,000 residents. In 1994, the Small Scale Miners' Association submitted an official request to the government to gain a community title to the hundreds of mine shafts they had painstakingly constructed in Bulyanhulu. However, around the same time, Canada's Sutton Resources, supported by the Canadian Embassy, submitted a proposal for a mining licence at Bulyanhulu, under their local subsidiary, Kahama Mining. At the time, the Tanzanian Government was under intense pressure by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to implement a Structural Adjustment Programme in order to fulfill the conditionalities imposed on the loans they had withdrawn. One of the main requirements of this development plan was to promote private foreign investment in the mining industry, and to eventually do away with all public ownership of the mineral extraction industries. Kahama Mining was soon granted permission to begin their

operations, and empowered to claim that the small-scale miners of the area were 'illegal' intruders who should be evicted from the land. Although the company continued to conduct extensive prospecting in the area, Kakola residents were determined to continue their livelihood activities of artisanal mining underground, and tilling the soil on garden plots. At the end of July 1996, Kahama's bulldozers rolled into the settlements of the Bulyanhulu area to forcefully evict residents. With reinforcement from the Tanzanian "Field Force Unit" riot police (also known as the "FFU"), homes were flattened and settlers' properties were confiscated. With little notice, the entire population was forced to flee. Having fought to keep their land from being claimed by Kahama Mining, a number of people continued to work in the mine shafts, unaware of any impending threat to their lives. Soon, the company officials ordered that additional bulldozers be designated for filling the mine shafts with gravel in order to clear people out the mines as quickly as possible. Although most of those who had been underground had the chance to flee before rubble was dumped into the shafts, some did not. The exact numbers of people who perished in the mine shafts remains unknown, but from the accounts of families and eyewitnesses, over seventy people were buried alive. The police did arrive at the site days later, but told the people who reported lost family members and friends that it was too costly to exhume the bodies. Company representatives and government officials of the time denied that people's lives were recklessly lost, and to this day, assert that any claim of death in the mine shafts is a fabrication. Despite there being multiple calls for an independent, comprehensive investigation of the evictions—backed by international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International—to date, all efforts to this end have been prevented by Tanzanian officials.

By 1999, Barrick Gold bought Sutton Resources and became the operator at Bulyanhulu Gold Mine, under an arrangement that was made possible with financial backing from the World Bank and the Canadian Government's Export Development Corporation. With this acquisition, Barrick inherits the responsibility to support the provision of compensation to the displaced residents of Kakola—on whose lands the corporation now profits.

In December 2008, a national parliamentary committee recommended that the government of Tanzania revise current mining laws by developing provisions to grant



Gudila Method discussing her experience and concerns about Barrick Gold's Bulyanhulu mine. PHOTO: Evans Rubara.

appropriate compensation for displaced communities. The women, men and children who lost their homes and livelihoods at Bulyanhulu await the day when they can hold the mining company and government officials accountable for their suffering, regain a sense of dignity, and obtain the compensation they deserve.

Amongst those from the Kakola community tirelessly speaking out to seek justice for the agonies they and their families have suffered are a number of courageous Tanzanian women. They are determined to expose the tragic trail of destruction paved by the Bulyanhulu Gold Mine—despite intense intimidation by police and other authorities. In March 2009, two of these women described their experiences and concerns to the International Women and Mining Network. Their testimonies are below.

Gudila Method

Mother, former food vendor and mine shaft owner in Kakola

Before the multinational mining company came, I worked as a food vendor selling meals to miners in the Bulyanhulu mining site in Kakola, and also was involved in the artisanal mining. My day was like any other normal day, preparing food and making sure that those who were going into the mining

shaft were taken care of...Before the multinational mining company came into our area to take over our shafts, we were living normal lives. As a mother, I never lacked anything—money to buy salt, or money to buy [enough] food—because we were getting good money. I was able to sell food to miners and I also had my own mining shaft...So in general, life was okay because we were managing the mining in our own community, amongst ourselves...

[In 1994] the artisanal miners were called into a meeting. In that meeting, we were told a multinational mining company was coming into the same area, and would bring equipment to make artisanal mining better. We continued with the artisanal mining activities for some time, even after that meeting was convened...Later, there was another meeting when we were asked directly to move [in order] to pave the way for multinational miners. When we heard this, we complained and said, "Where will we go when you chase us from here?"

The meeting was called by the Regional Commissioner, Tumanieli Kiwelu. He told us: "You can go wherever you want to go, but you have to leave."

We were given an ultimatum to leave around one o'clock that afternoon. We were told we should move because already the Field Force Unit riot police had been



TOP: Toxic waste at the Bulyanhulu tailings dam.
 BOTTOM: Broken tailings dam at Bulyanhulu.
 PHOTOS: Evans Rubara.

commissioned to make sure that we were not in the area. We were told that they did not want to see human beings moving around in that area.

After the ultimatum, we were surrounded by the riot police. A number of people had to flee from the artisanal mining area. In fleeing, families were broken up. Some ran to one side of the river, others ran to the other side... [Then] the multinational company started to return the soil into the shafts that were used by the artisanal miners....Some of the artisanal miners were still in the mining shafts. Others who were not in the shafts tried to go into the shafts to tell their fellow miners that the shafts were being filled up...**We tried to tell the mining company management to stop filling the shafts, so that the people in the shafts would come out. We were told: 'If you want to go down there, it's up to you. But we are filling it up!'**

Now [that Barrick's mine is operating], access to water has become more difficult for women in the Kakola area in Bulyanhulu. Women are suffering a lot to get water—we do not know what to do...Water has become scarce. And more expensive than before [Sutton/Barrick set up operations]...I believe that the water we use is contaminated because the company is using chemicals in the mining. Normally these

chemicals spread into the water. The general health of the community is getting worse...Sicknesses are spreading... We do not have public social services or medical health dispensaries [in the places where we have now settled], and we must pay for these services ...This is expensive for us.

Particularly the women in Bulyanhulu have been affected greatly. We have our children to take care of, but now [after the Canadian multinational companies came], we cannot take care of these children...[T]hink of us, take our plight seriously, [and] support our demands for the human rights violations that we have suffered to be addressed.))

Melania Baesi

Mother and former owner of a mine shaft in Kakola

)) Before the multinational company came to the Bulyanhulu area, life was comparatively better. Now we live miserable lives—lives which we have never experienced before... We are just peasants and we do not have any education. The life we knew was going into the mining shafts to get the gold, beating it in the traditional manner, and purifying it... Then we could get money to feed our families. But now, we can't go into the mining shafts. We have no way to earn this money any more.

What happened in 1996 when the company bulldozers came was inhuman. We were chased away like dogs, not as human beings. Some of us lost our children, as they were killed, buried alive in the shafts. Since the disaster in 1996, no action [for redress of our grievances] has been taken by either the multinational company or the government. The government has left us hanging. For those of us who lost our children or lost family members, we are still in mourning. Still today, these issues [of our loss of life, land and livelihood] need to be addressed.

I would like the government and the multinational companies to offer us compensation. When we were doing artisanal mining, we had enough money to live on, we had jobs in the mining shafts, we had houses with enough space that we could rent so that miners could live there [and] we had land to cultivate...But when the multinational mining company came, all of these things were taken away from us. We have never been compensated for this loss... We need to be compensated for the property we lost during that time. I lost two of my children when the [mine] shafts were filled in by the multinational company's bulldozers. I would like to see that justice has been done for the death of my two children who were buried alive...When a person dies, you cannot replace them. I would love to see my sons back again...

My older son, Jonathan, was the one involved in the mining activities. He would have been about twenty-five in 1996. Before he joined artisanal mining activities, he had trained as a mason. So, when he came back home from the technical institute, he came to look for a job in Bulyanhulu. The first job that was ready was in the artisanal mining in the shafts I operated...Jonathan was not an artisanal miner going into the shaft. He was a manager and only went into

the mining shaft to take stock of how much gold ore was found [at the end of the day]. Ernest was my younger son... He had just completed his primary seven education and I did not have enough money to pay for him to go to secondary school. Now I wanted to see if I could enroll him in a training programme.

This [incident] happened in 1996, and why after all these years from then until now have we never been compensated? This demand represents the demand from the whole community that was affected by this activity. All should be compensated--for lost lives and for lost livelihoods....

My fight is also with those who were in leadership at that time. To the former President, Benjamin Mkapa, I ask: Why is it that he kept so quiet? Benjamin Mkapa... should be taken to court together with the Regional Commissioner, Tumanieli Kiwelu, who saw the operations of Kahama's bulldozers going on, and helped the company [with the evictions]. We would like to see them arraigned before the court to answer questions relating to the 1996 incident in Bulyanhulu, which took the lives of our children and relatives, but also left thousands homeless and destitute. I hope that we see these men arraigned before the court; that we receive proper compensation; and that we will be provided with alternative

land where we can once again live as a community...These are the demands we have, but I do not know how it will come about, as I do have my doubts about the judiciary system in Tanzania.

I am appealing to all of you to help push [the government authorities] with us so that we will receive that kind of compensation. I truly believe in international mobilization and advocacy...I am not afraid and...would rather die than keep quiet. I have been harassed by the police many times... and I am still speaking out (even right now), because I want justice to be accorded to us...[J]oin us in taking our plight ahead so that we will get compensated, and also so that the issues of human rights abuses at Bulyanhulu will be addressed.))

BELOW: Depleted and contaminated water sources and lower garden crop yields due to Barrick's gold mining operations have led to particular hardships for women, including Melania Baesi.

INSET: Despite the losses, devastation and severe intimidation experienced by her community at the hands of multinational mining interests, Melania remains determined to speak out for justice. PHOTOS: Evans Rubara.



south africa

LAND & LIVELIHOODS ARE NOT FOR SALE

AmamPondo Refuse To Be Silenced

*Digging deep in pits for glory
Man did not see the brilliant light of
life...
For it was the metals that he craved...
And where ever man's footprint flew
like a cancer every footprint
unravelling yet another thread of web
and in its place no longer did the dew
form life
But dried so that the raindrops cried
the dirge of the dying and the dead.
And no longer washed away the dirt
but spread instead the dust of death
And where once verdant pastures
grew and forests tall*

*I saw a desert spread
I watched the web of life was
breaking
And everywhere it broke it left
Nought but a footprint of the man...
But digging deep in pits for glory
Man did not, would not hear...
So the creatures of the isle all fled
For life was nil and of the metals and
stone they could not eat
Except those small few content to
carrion
the crumbs of man cast out.
And as I watched man broke the web.*

*He tore the fragile thread.
And the life of life began to fade
And all vitality turned to dust....
And when the light began to fade
Only then did man look up....
And in the cold dark sightless void
Where once the raindrops cried, the
lifeless orb now drifted.
For the web of life was too far
broken
and nothing could be saved.
There was nothing to be saved.
-Val Payn, Pondoland
community activist
(Excerpted from "The Web of Life")*

Along twenty-two kilometers of shoreline in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, a proposed titanium mining development is being pursued by an Australian mining company, Mineral Commodities (MRC) through its South African subsidiary, TransWorld Energy and Minerals Resources (TEM) in collaboration with the South African Xolobeni Community Empowerment Company (Xolco). This expanse of coastline is projected to yield 346 million tonnes of minerals over the course of approximately twenty years. The proposed developments include a large-scale dry mine, a tailings dam, a water separation plant for the heavy mineral extraction, a mineral separation plant, a smelter and iron plant, and a harbour loading area for the slag. MRC gained leasing rights to the land in 2001, and a prospecting permit was granted the following year to TEM. However, legally, the land is communally held by the local AmamPondo People, who rely upon the vast fields for subsistence agriculture and the local watersheds for abundant fish stocks.

Already in 2007, the South African Human Rights Commission concluded that the processes of prior consultation with—and approval from—the affected communities had been completely bypassed. Furthermore, the dune mining directly contradicted recommendations adopted by local, provincial and national government authorities based on the "Strategic Environmental Assessment and Wild Coast Regional Spatial Development Framework" that had been developed by a multi-stakeholder forum. Not only will the coastal operations and the resulting dust, water depletion and contamination cause a complete disruption to the lives of local people, it will also potentially cause the extinction of hundreds of endemic plant species and wildlife.

The once thriving community-based ecotourism ventures

will no longer be sustainable. According to a recent submission to the South African Government Ministry of Mines and Minerals by the South African-based Legal Resources Centre:

"The intended mining will adversely affect the traditional way of life of the Xolobeni community, some of whom have occupied the land for centuries, and will irreparably damage the coastline." (October 2009)

Considerable opposition to the mining proposal has been voiced by the AmamPondo People and their traditional leadership structures. They are frustrated at the implicated company's unwillingness to consult and negotiate with them. Popular marches along the coastline have been organized to demonstrate opposition to the proposal, while official documentation about the villagers' concerns has been submitted to not only the traditional royal leadership



Women of Pondoland vow to never let titanium mining begin on their homeland. PHOTO: Julia Sestier



Zanele and Nonhle, two community activists spearheading the campaign to stop mining developments on the Wild Coast. PHOTO: Julia Sestier



Women stand at the forefront of protest marches to voice their opposition to mining. PHOTO: Julia Sestier

of Pondoland, but also to government officials and the media. Meanwhile, efforts by villagers to find out more about the mining development, to voice their concerns, and to engage with media have been met with threats and physical attacks.

In November 2008, a delegation from the International Women and Mining Network (RIMM) met with community activists from the AmamPondo community, as well as allied advocates from the surrounding region. Nonhle, a young woman community organizer who is spearheading the opposition campaign, spoke at length to RIMM.

According to Nonhle, the land that will be destroyed by the mining is a sacred place of burial for the ancestors of the AmamPondo people, and the basis of her community's subsistence. "The mining companies came to our village and met with certain individuals... They didn't get community consent and our population has been totally marginalized." She explained that the current isolated state of the communities, where there is no running water or electricity, has meant that some individuals have become convinced that the merits in the promises of 'modernity' and a few hundred jobs would outweigh the long term concerns about the environmental damage and displacement of communities. However, overall, Nonhle asserted that, "The people of Pondoland are strong against the mining because they know the importance of the land to them... We grow everything except those plants which won't grow here".

Highly concerned about the ecological stability of the region, Nonhle explained that the abundant wetlands, waterfalls and streams could never be 'rehabilitated' after the mining operations, and the unique animal and plant species, such as the crown crane, will be destroyed along with the land:

"The mine will use a lot of water, but where will it come from? If we let them use the water here, I'm sure we will never see it again... After the rocks are exposed to toxic chemicals and poisons, and our lands have been destroyed, it cannot be used for agricultural purposes. How can such a huge piece of land be rehabilitated?"

Nonhle testified to speaking out at a public consultation meeting that was only publicized amongst pro-mining interests, and subsequently being threatened at gunpoint for expressing her opposition. Yet, her experiences have

solidified her determination, as she affirmed, "I won't give up. I will keep pushing and pushing. My life is not for sale!"

Due to connections between corporate executives and government officials, government ministers continue to support the proposed dune mining operation, and in some instances, are openly collaborating with corporate partners to make the proposed project operational. With such high level interests involved, Nonhle recounted a number of incidences of violence against those who continue to be outspoken against the titanium mining. While one community elder has been assassinated, another traditional leader has died under suspicious circumstances. In September 2008, members of the South African Police Service beat and tear gassed school children who refused to sing during a pro-mining event. In this case, court proceedings continue with children and their families still awaiting justice. Yet, Nonhle and other community advocates refuse to be silenced: "As a community, we must keep fighting". Collectively, the people of Pondoland continue to mobilize to voice their opposition to the mining proposal.

A version of this article appeared in the RIMM Newsletter Issue 6, Feb. 2009. http://rimmrightrights.org/Newsletters/RIMM%20Newsletter_Issue%206.pdf

The RIMM fact-finding mission in Xolobeni included: Bhanumathi Kalluri, Seema Mundoli, Onge Ofacken Nufuk and Tanya Roberts-Davis.

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south africa

CRUMBLLED LIVES AND DREAMS

AngloPlatinum's PPL Mine In Limpopo



Mokopane, Limpopo, AngloPlatinum mining site
PHOTO: Tanya Roberts-Davis

Entering into the Mapela district of the northern South African province of Limpopo, the air has a distinct metallic taste and the dry sandy soil is cracked. Known as the Bushveld Mineral Complex, this region is estimated to contain almost ninety percent of the world's platinum and palladium reserves within an area of 67,000 square kilometers. From a distance, the towering barren mounds surrounding the rural villages could be mistaken for rocky hills. However, these are not natural land formations, but are toxic piles of platinum mine tailings. For generations, local communities have collectively cultivated this land and grown diverse crops sufficient for subsistence, including pumpkin, tomatoes, carrots, spinach, maize, sorghum, beans, sunflower, peanuts, and watermelon. Since 2001, the local Setswana and Sipedi speaking people have become impoverished, malnourished, and sick, dispossessed of their farmlands, and without access to clean local water sources. The land has been occupied by AngloPlatinum's perpetually expanding open-pit platinum mine, Potgieters Platinum Ltd. (PPL). Here, PPL generates over two billion South African Rand annually (\$207.5 million US). Meanwhile, the company has 'donated' approximately \$30 million US to socio-economic and housing projects in Mapela.

Emerging from the anti-apartheid struggles in 1994, millions of South Africans were convinced that the broad socio-economic rights enshrined in the new Constitutional Bill of Rights would soon be respected. However, for the villagers of Mapela, these hopes were quickly shattered when their ancestral lands were claimed by AngloPlatinum's Potgietersus

Platinum Ltd. for mineral extraction.

Communities Disrespected, Divided and Displaced

"PPL is unable to prove the achievement of free, prior and informed consent (in line with international best practice) beyond the provision of one-on-one agreements between the Project and individual community members..."

—South African Human Rights Commission (2008: 85)

"[T]he Special Rapporteur received testimonies from community members who were displaced to other lands in order to proceed with the extracting activity [at the PPL mine]. All the testimonies stated that the relocation was done without appropriate consultation or timing information, nor following adequate procedures of relocation. A majority spoke of the use of violence when police broke into the house during the night to carry out the eviction."

—UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing (2007: 5)

According to PPL's procedures, 'community consent' was acquired when a small number of local people, registered as an enterprise associated with—and paid by—Anglo, officially signed relocation agreements for their communities, without the knowledge of other residents. Thousands of Mapela residents allege that they were forcefully displaced, and are indignant that Anglo is conducting mineral extraction activities without prior consent or consultation.

While some communities are in the midst of legal action against AngloPlatinum, families who have refused relocation have been forced into a marginal existence. Water and electricity services have been cut. Yet, both the municipality and company claim they are not responsible. The fields once used for subsistence farming have been fenced off for mine blasting, while water from local sources is cloudy with a foul odour and sickening taste. Those who have moved into company-built houses have experienced deteriorating living conditions. The new homes are cracking and collapsing due to a combination of inadequate foundations, inappropriate construction materials and constant mine blasting in the vicinity. Having been displaced from their original homes, and lacking proper shelter in the resettlement zones, some residents have resorted to housing their families in tents.

Loss of Land, Water and Life

"Independent water sampling analysis commissioned by ActionAid confirms... the water to be unfit for human consumption, containing high concentrations of total dissolved salts, sulphur and nitrate. The report found it could safely be deduced that the cause of contamination was mining activities."

—ActionAid International (2008: 18)



Livestock graze beside tailings piles containing toxic levels of heavy metal. PHOTO: Tanya Roberts-Davis.

On a daily basis, millions of liters of water are piped through the PPL mine. In contrast, the boreholes that villagers previously used are contaminated or located in areas fenced off by the mine, piped water has stopped flowing, and bulk water shipments from the municipal authorities are unreliable. Families in both the residual and resettled communities are using an inadequate system of outdoor “Enviroloos”, which are often overflowing and malfunctioning, and serve to exacerbate the unhealthy living conditions. The severe water contamination in the communities surrounding the PPL mine has already had disastrous health effects, including causing stomach disorders, diarrhoea, cancers, and blood disorders.

The consequences of the loss of food sovereignty and access to water have been indisputably negative for the thousands of villagers, leaving many wondering how they will survive. As the ones responsible for cooking, cleaning, nourishing children, and tending to garden plots, women are experiencing particular distress.

According to Elizabeth, a respected elder:

“We get upset when our children say ‘I want something to eat—I’m hungry.’ As women, we have always ploughed the land, but now we cannot. The mining company is taking the land we used to plough because they want to build a slimes [tailings] dam here.”

Another local woman elaborated this point by explaining that:

“Because of the mine, fields are fenced in, and we never get the opportunity to go and plough the land. If we try to use the land, we are confronted by security.”

Burial Grounds Desecrated

Establishing their operations on ancestral burial grounds, Anglo has unilaterally excavated graves sites with tractor-loader machinery. Haphazard processes for grave removal and reburial have caused bones and headstones to become mixed up. Local populations have felt their traditions, cultural norms, and sense of dignity have all been disregarded and disrespected. Expressing the perspective of many in the affected village of Sekuruwe, one resident asserted:

“Traditionally and culturally, I believe graves should be respected. There are different ways of exhuming graves to preserve everything and be respectful.”

Workplace Grievances

From underground, workers express frustration about the lack of benefits brought by the mine, the unfulfilled promises of the company, as well as health and safety risks. During a meeting in the worker settlement of Skimming in November 2008, many workers shared testimonies of becoming ill with respiratory diseases, stomach problems, chronic dizziness and constant headaches, and of concerns about the startling numbers of workplace injuries and fatalities at Anglo’s South African platinum mines.

Naga ke ya rona! [“The Land is Ours!”]

Faced by a company that has refused to consult—let alone agree to negotiate—with communities, and government officials aligned with the mining industry, residents of Mapela felt they had no choice but to launch a public campaign to defend their rights and demand compensation for their losses. Despite death threats, mass arrests, police shootings and heavy surveillance, women have come forward as leaders of these community campaigns against PPL. Many perceive this struggle as a fight for life; a stance for the rights of future generations. Principled statements of resistance emanate from sites where families continue to live on their original homesteads, after refusing Anglo’s removal orders. While some have organized road blockades, others have attempted to return to ploughing by reclaiming their ancestral lands and disregarding AngloPlatinum’s fences. Coordinated actions have taken place to stop Anglo’s bulldozers from entering grave sites. Girls as young as eleven years old have been arrested on trumped up charges of “malicious damage to property”, while women of all ages have been wounded by rubber bullets shot by police during non-violent marches and vigils.

Consciousness raising activities have taken place in Johannesburg, as well as in London (U.K.) during AngloPlatinum’s annual shareholder meetings. Solidarity campaigns have been launched in Europe to pressure car companies to refuse sourcing platinum from South Africa until AngloPlatinum and the government of South Africa address human and environmental rights violations associated with PPL. For the women of Mapela, this struggle continues for “one and for all”.



Women from Sekuruwe hold AngloPlatinum accountable for the destruction of their land, the ill-health of their families, and the reckless exhumation of their ancestors' graves. INSET: Women from Sekuruwe who have been arrested and shot by police when protesting against AngloPlatinum. PHOTOS: Tanya Roberts-Davis.

Women from Mokopane Speak Out: Two Testimonials

Angelina, grandmother and former tailor

☞ This land is our forefathers' homeland. We believe families here were forcefully removed. That is unlawful; there is no reason for us to move. We were not consulted properly and are not going anywhere until our rights have been restored. The company denies it was a forceful act, but then why did they cut off our electricity and water? I used to make money from my tailoring but now with no electricity, I can't use my sewing machine. I had eleven acres of communal land and grew fifty bags of maize a year, as well as beans and vegetables, but now I have absolutely no way to cultivate. I was always busy farming or doing my tailoring. Now I am idle.

The municipality keeps on promising us water services, but still today, we don't have water. The boreholes we used are situated near the mine pit and we can't access them [because the company erected fencing there]. We used to have schools and churches, but now we have neither.

So many people are sick now. Even my granddaughter has problems breathing. **Anglo doesn't care about our rights, or our lives. They will do anything to get their platinum from here. The mining company has taken the little we had away. They have taken our food away, our health and our lives. We want the company to give us something in return for these losses. This will be a fight until the bitter end! The whole world needs to know our story.** ☞☞

Magdalene, mother and former farmer

☞ Ever since Anglo came here and tried to take over our land, our water services have been cut off. The streams are now polluted. When the sampling of the water was conducted,

there was evidence of sulphite and nitrate contamination. This isn't healthy and it is unfit for drinking. It doesn't even taste like water—it is too salty...Some people are getting sick with stomach cancer, babies have blue faces, [and] children have upset stomachs and the runs...**Discharge from the tailings dams is the reason the streams are polluted... Anglo recognized the water is contaminated, as they ship water supplies to the primary school. But of course the children live in the community! The contaminated dust from the mine also makes us all sick.**

Like our water, our electricity was also cut off...It's as if the company has said they will try to punish these people so they will leave the land...And cooking isn't easy [without electricity] because if we want to collect firewood or use cow dung [for fuel] it's almost impossible. The fields are now fenced in for the mine. This also means we have no way to go and plough the land. If we do try to grow food or collect firewood, we are told we are trespassing and confronted by a [security] convoy. We have no food, water, or electricity, we can't cook, and our houses are cracked. The thing we must do is call for the mining to stop until the issues around our land are resolved, for one and for all! ☞☞

The RIMM fact-finding mission in Mokopane included: Seema Mundoli, Onge Ofacken Nufuk and Tanya Roberts-Davis.

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south africa

ONE DEADLY LEGACY:

Uranium Mining in Klerksdorp



Within one kilometer of uranium mining operations, residents live without adequate housing on land now purchased by Uranium One. PHOTO: Tanya Roberts-Davis

Within one of the world's richest gold and uranium mining basins, approximately 150 kilometers south-west of the South African city of Johannesburg, the destructive legacy of mining is indisputable. Mine tailings dams, toxic pits, sinkholes and contaminated watersheds span the entire Witwatersrand basin (350km by 200km). In the immediate vicinity are an estimated 5.4 billion tonnes of radioactive uranium tailings. According to a report on a South African newswire published in November 2008, 250,000 liters of acid mine water escapes into surface water sources every day in this region. In addition, it is estimated that there are fifty tonnes of uranium discharged into the surface and ground water per year.

The majority of people live in informal settlements, drawing water from underground shafts for drinking, cooking and washing. Currently, elevated levels of arsenic, cadmium, copper, cobalt, uranium and zinc have been detected in local ground and surface water supplies. Already, credible evidence has arisen in the area documenting cancer clusters, children with chronic health problems, drinking water laced with radioactive levels of uranium and other heavy metals, highly contaminated garden vegetables, deformed human and animal fetuses, and decreasing wildlife populations.

One particular uranium mine, Dominion Reefs, operated and owned by the Canadian company Uranium One since 2004, has recently received substantial publicity due to ongoing allegations of workers' rights violations and neglect of environmental laws. Occupying an area of approximately 140 square kilometers in the Witwatersrand Basin, this site includes a shallow underground mine, a uranium processing operation and open pits where exploratory blasting is taking place. As of mid-2009, Dominion Reefs may be decommissioned due to an evaluation of its status as economically unviable.

Health and Safety Matters:

Concerns of the Local Community and Workers

Grave concerns about the negative impacts of Uranium One's Dominion Reefs Operation are expressed by community members in surrounding settlements of Klerksdorp, Jouberton and Dominionville, as well as the mine workers, themselves. Since 2004, workers have consistently raised their grievances with Uranium One's management, including:

- Poor working conditions (e.g. violations of health and safety regulations such as unprotected exposure to radiation, hazardous air quality, unbolted boulders, lack of respect and low wages);
- Lack of health facilities and access to health examination;
- A lack of compensation for work-related health problems and no medical aid;
- No registration under the Unemployment Insurance Fund (in violation of South African laws);
- No pension/provident fund provisions and no severance packages;
- Exclusion of migrant workers from employment opportunities and health benefits.

Many employees report being diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis, silicosis, cancer and asthma, and have chronic headaches, nausea, tingling limbs and dizziness spells. Workers claim that they are frequently ill but are denied proper treatment at an on-site clinic. The national Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has reported that at least eighteen workers have died of work related causes over the past four years, and four women employees reported miscarriages in the past year. These concerns were further verified in 2007 when government inspectors called on Uranium One "to halt all mining operations" until minimum legal health and safety precautions could be met.

Allegations of racism have been common at Dominion Reefs, where the workforce is made up of a minority of white staff working in higher-level positions, and a majority of black South Africans working as mine operators alongside underpaid temporary migrant labourers. With the management able to threaten to replace South Africans with a cheaper and more compliant migrant labour pool, racialized divisions between the underground workers have been exacerbated. As a minority population in the mine, women also report being harassed and ridiculed by the management and colleagues.



With heavy rains, these uranium mining pits become flooded with highly contaminated water. This particular site is where the 10 year old boy from Dominionville died (November 2008). INSET TOP: Children playing in Dominionville, unknowingly exposed to radioactive debris and heavy metals present in the sand beneath their feet. INSET BOTTOM: Women from Dominionville are determined in their efforts to win justice for their community. PHOTOS: Tanya Roberts-Davis

As members of the townships surrounding the mine, workers are also highly aware of the impacts of the mine on their families and neighbours. Workers claim they are barely able to survive on the low salary, and cannot afford to pay for their children to go to school, or for medication for themselves or for ill relatives.

Lives of All Generations At Risk

Within and adjacent to Uranium One's property, families live in makeshift homes in shanty towns beside open mine shafts, sinkholes, mine tailings and mounds of rotting garbage. For local women, who generally have responsibilities to care for their children and elder family members, this situation is particularly distressing. They report being specifically concerned about the impact of the suffocating mine dust, the water pollution and the dangers of open mine pits left by Uranium One's exploration operations. There are no services for running water or electricity, and few options for transport in and out of the settlement. The trickle of water from the one functioning tap in the community has a distinct yellow tinge and sickening odour. Furthermore, evidence of elevated concentrations of heavy metals has been detected in local farm produce.

Eye irritations, chronic nausea and severe cases of asthma are common amongst children and adults, and many have festering rashes discolouring their entire bodies.

Despite the fact that sinkholes and open shafts pose

a specific danger to children, only a small number of warning signs have been posted. Recently, a ten year old boy accidentally slipped into a sinkhole and drowned in contaminated water, underlining the severity of this situation. His parents are requesting compensation, but have not received an acknowledgement—let alone an apology—from Uranium One. Now an outspoken critic of the mine, this boy's mother declared, "For the sake of our children and the future, they [Uranium One] must close up all the pits in the area, cover up the places where dangerous materials are, and clean up the entire area so that it is a proper living place for a community."

Local Campaigns: Bridges Between Workers and Communities

In 2004, workers from Dominion Reefs organized a committee to advocate for their rights and advance their demands for improved working conditions. Designated spokespeople were democratically elected by a majority of the miners. Internally, committee members began initiating consciousness-raising activities in order to build a sense of solidarity between migrants and South Africans, and between men and women in the mines. They also sought to educate themselves about their rights as well as the lasting effects of radiation on people and the environment. Despite being ignored by Uranium One, the committee is perceived as a legitimate representative body by broader local and national

civil society networks.

Uranium One failed to respond to the multiple public actions organized to draw attention to the plight of workers and local communities until mid-2008. In August 2008, committee representatives who had organized a public march in July were declared “medically unfit” by company management and dismissed. Following months of failed negotiations, the Dominion Reefs miners made the collective decision in October 2008 to strike until their dismissed colleagues had been reinstated, and working conditions had been improved. Within three days, 1400 employees had been fired without notice or severance packages. Although the company claimed they would either sell or close the mine property, putting it under a state of “care and maintenance”, mining activities on land leased by Uranium One was continuing at the time of writing. Migrant labourers have apparently been employed as a temporary replacement workforce to keep the mine operational. Workers are in the process of bringing several cases before the South African Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration. Arbitration awards are pending.

Meanwhile, families living in the midst of Uranium One’s mine and exploratory blasting are collectively raising their voices, organizing themselves into a local “Justice and Peace Network”. They are demanding the company provide compensation, and support their resettlement to an area uncontaminated by radioactive tailings. Residents are also standing in solidarity with workers in their calls for decent severance packages and/or reinstatement with improved working conditions.



Community organizer, Tahlita (right), stands with family of deceased boy who died after falling into an open mine shaft. PHOTO: Tanya Roberts-Davis.

Tahlita, community organizer and mother from Dominionville

“I am really concerned about the safety of our children and the problems from the water that is poisoned with radiation. The dust coming from the mine affects us all, as our eyes are pink or red, we are coughing all the time and have asthma. Since so many children are sick, few of them go to school regularly. When the rain comes, it makes our children even sicker. People are suffering from black rashes all over their bodies. The local water [from a

borehole] is not alright—it is contaminated and the colour of it is yellow. Our community doesn’t know what radiation is and the dangers it can cause to our lives. Meanwhile, the company says that radiation is not there. But we know this isn’t true.

Our community is so dangerous, it is a disgrace. The open shafts and mine pits are not covered, and they get filled with toxic water. The mining company must cover that area and put up danger signs. Otherwise we will have more deaths in our community... We don’t have electricity or water services, our houses are very cracked, and there are no jobs. We want to work, but we want our health also.

The thing is, we are now living in poverty. After Uranium One has come here, the safety of our children, of our family, and of our community is all more at risk. In the past, we had land for our children. But now the mine has taken our land, and we don’t have anything. We are suffering and need a proper place to live that does not have radiation like here. The mining company must compensate us by building housing on land away from the mine, a school for our children, and providing for our health care costs. Then we can restart our lives, and there can be some justice. ☺☺

Dineo, underground mine operator and mother from Jouberton

“There is no safety at this mine. The equipment is not for handling radiation, and so most people are getting sick and dying. As a mine operator underground, the work is heavy and dangerous, but the masks we have do not provide the relevant protection, and our eyes are always in pain. When we [women] arrive at work, some people do try to take advantage of us. They say women are not supposed to work here because it is too difficult for us. But, I’m too stubborn, and have no time to bother with such questions from these men.

We are underpaid, and the company has unfair labour practices. If you are sick, the boss says you are abusing the sick leave. The company nurse gives the same medication to everyone, and tells us to keep working... I’m seen as a troublemaker, and am a target because I speak the truth. For three years, I have seen no progress in my life. All I see is the company taking away my health and my life.

I need to have enough funds to take care of my family if one of them gets sick, and to pay for my child to go to school... I’ve been working at the mine since 2006, but I can’t even claim a cent in savings. Even if the mine company hires some people back, I don’t think I want to go back. I am sick and tired of that place, where we are all underpaid and are ill from the contamination. I will look for some other job.

I am worried about the contamination here from the dust, which is very dangerous. I don’t know about the water in our community, but I think it is dangerous too... If a Canadian company opens a mine here, they need to give people a living wage. They also have a responsibility to tell workers about the dangers of working with radiation, with uranium. It makes me angry that they didn’t even tell workers about this. At least the company must clean up the environment, as now they have contaminated our whole community. ☺☺

asia

STANDING UP FOR COMMUNITY RIGHTS IN NORTH-EASTERN CAMBODIA

“My role model is Mahatma Gandhi because he always considered the nation, and treated all people equally – and he did this through promoting non-violence.”

Dam Chanthy, Director of Cambodian Highlander Association

The province of Rattanakiri is one of the gems of Cambodia. It is located in the northeast corner of the country, approximately 520 kilometers from the capital Phnom Penh. For centuries, the rolling hills, lush forests and abundant rivers provided modest but steady livelihoods for all who live here. But the life that people have cherished for so long is now under threat. Mining, logging and agricultural concessions are rapidly transforming the landscape, and people are finding it increasingly difficult to make a decent living. The 150,000 residents of this province belong to many different ethnic groups, making it one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the country. Although it is one of the poorest and most neglected provinces in Cambodia, it is simultaneously rich in natural resources, including semi-precious gems, gold, and bauxite. Deposits of these minerals are currently being explored by local and international mining companies.

Fifty-two year old Dam Chanthy was born in Rattanakiri, and has lived here for her entire life. She has six children, is married to a farmer, and has a grade six education. She is from a diverse community of Tompoun and Lao Peoples but speaks Khmer in addition to eleven ethnic languages. She is known by countless communities throughout the province. Chanthy has learned from her parents that the protection and the respect of the forest and the environment around her are important for survival, and has made a conscious effort to live by this principle. Since 2001, her work as the director of the Highlander Association has allowed her to advocate for the protection of land, ethnic cultures, and natural resources in Rattanakiri.

Chanthy has worked tirelessly since the formation of the Highlander Association, expanding the organization’s reach from seven villages in 2001 to approximately seventy-eight villages throughout the province by 2009. Chanthy recounts:



Chanthy, a dedicated community advocate from Rattanakiri. PHOTO: Oxfam America-East Asia Regional Office. (Cambodia)

“We formed the organization as we were concerned that our land was just given away to companies without anybody asking us—the local communities—for our consent. When you look around in our communities now, you can see the damage this has caused. The forests are gone, the water is contaminated, wildlife is disappearing, and the traditional way of life is quickly changing.”

Small-scale artisanal gem mining is a traditional way of earning a living for many local communities. However, now mid- and large-scale mining companies have arrived to Rattanakiri hoping to extract—and profit from—the resources buried below the ground. In Korp village, the

cambodia



Gems of Korp village provide a livelihood for artisanal miners. PHOTO: Oxfam America-East Asia Regional Office (Cambodia).



Water contamination in Korp village near the industrial gem mining site. PHOTO: Oxfam America-East Asia Regional Office (Cambodia).

destructive footprint of a medium-scale gem mine opened by a South Korean company in March 2003 is clearly visible. Six years later, Chanthy explains:

☞ *It is only four months ago that all of a sudden this mine was closed. They left nothing but a big scar on the land. When the company arrived in this village, none of the local residents were informed. They were just told to move away from the area and were prohibited from entering the mining concession. Both women and men suffered. Women were unable to collect non-timber forest products important for their families' food and income sources, and men were prevented from [continuing] the traditional artisanal gem stone mining which was the main source of income for the families living here.* ☞☞

In response to the Korean mining company's activities, Korp villagers launched a campaign, demanding respect for their rights to land, water, livelihood, and cultural survival. According to Chanthy:

☞☞ *Community representatives came to our organization raising concerns about the company's practices. They were very worried that they were no longer able to support their families. The company also contaminated their water sources and now women had to go far to*

fetch drinking water. Traditional cultural rights were also affected, as land preserved for spiritual life was excavated and exploited... Communities felt afraid to raise their concerns directly with the mine operators, [as well as] local and provincial authorities. ☞☞

Chanthy helped to organize the villagers, documented the hardships caused by the mining company, and facilitated the writing and filing of an official complaint to local, district and provincial authorities. With persistence, these officials finally became convinced to listen to Chanthy and other villagers. The situation of communities affected by mining in Rattanakiri is increasingly reflective of the challenges faced by villagers throughout Cambodia.

In recent years, companies like BHP Billiton, Southern Gold, Oz Minerals, and Chevron have signed deals with the Cambodian government to explore indigenous forests for mineral and oil deposits. According to statistics, the revenue from mining to be generated in the near future can significantly contribute to poverty alleviation—if it is managed responsibly. However, the damage done by the mining company in Korp village is only a fraction of the damage that industrial scale mining could cause to local communities in the very near future. For years to come, safeguarding the rights of mine affected communities and ensuring transparency and accountability of the resulting revenues will be on the minds of many, including Chanthy. Despite receiving death threats, Chanthy continues to be a determined advocate of community and environmental rights in Rattanakiri.

Adivasi Women Say No To Bauxite Mining

“*The essence of life is land, air and water, without which we cannot survive. As important as our land is, so is the forest. Killing the forests means stealing our knowledge, not only from us but from all our future generations. So we ask the government not to touch our lands and our forests, or to give them away to outsiders or companies. We do not want the government to dig up our lands for mining projects, or to submerge our villages for big dams.*”

– Nookamma, Beespuram village

“*The government can help us improve our lands, help us fight the exploitation of the traders and middlemen; it can help us reduce our burden in grinding, pounding and processing by giving us machines to save women’s labour. But the government should not take our lands away as our food security is dependent on our control of our lands.*”

– Ramulamma, Rallavalasa village

The state of Andhra Pradesh, in south-eastern India, is the site of ore deposits containing more than forty-five minerals with an estimated 750 million tonnes of India’s bauxite resources. These reserves are primarily concentrated in parts of the Eastern Ghats that stretch across the districts of East Godavari and Visakhapatnam, in north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

The region also comes under the jurisdiction of the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. This legislation provides protection to the adivasis (Indigenous/tribal people) who live in regions designated as “Scheduled Areas”. Over five hundred thousand adivasis belonging to different tribes live in the district of Visakhapatnam. They harvest a diverse combination of food grains, including millet, cereals, and pulses. Some cash crops like kidney beans, red gram, coffee, castor, and tobacco are also grown. In addition, they collect diverse non-timber forestry products from the surrounding forests to sell in the local markets and supplement their own diets. The adivasis live in remote settlements, with little access to infrastructural facilities, such as health, education, roads or transportation. As a result, their survival depends primarily upon their traditional knowledge of the land, water, and celestial systems. They therefore rely on water, soil, plants, and animal life all being uncontaminated by toxic chemicals.

A considerable opposition force to mining has been mobilized by the adivasis. Nevertheless, the government has pursued a number of ‘closed door’ deals for foreign direct investment in the bauxite industry. In the name of ‘national prosperity’ and ‘development’, the government has proceeded to grant mining leases to several private companies, ignoring constitutional decrees which protect adivasi lands from being transferred to outsiders. A legal case was launched to enforce the constitutional rights of the adivasi people, which resulted in the “Samatha Judgement” being passed by the Supreme Court of India. The constitutional provisions to protect adivasi land were upheld. Furthermore, the Judgement verified that no private mining leases should be granted to the states in the country where Scheduled Areas are located. Yet, under the influence of foreign—as well as national—mining companies, and international financial institutions, the Government of India and state governments, have been initiating multiple institutional structures and policies to promote and protect the expansion of the mineral extractives industries. The government has not developed any process for obtaining the free, prior and informed consent for mining projects on Indigenous Peoples’ territories (despite obligations under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Instead, the government has systematically ignored the adivasis’ vocal opposition to mineral extraction projects and human rights obligations enshrined under national law.

Adivasi and Rural Women Campaign Against Bauxite Mining

Since 2005, the state government of Andhra Pradesh has engaged in numerous new efforts to promote private mining projects. As a result, tribal unrest has been rippling across the Eastern Ghats, with the local communities articulating anger that their lands are being claimed for the purposes of mining. Women’s voices are prominent in these protests, as they are leading public demonstrations, lobbying with political parties, and addressing the media. Meanwhile, in the foothill communities where the bauxite refineries are being established, local adivasi and rural women are actively protesting and questioning these proposals for ‘development’ advanced by the government and mining companies.

Alternative Perspective of Adivasi Women: Feminist Eco-Economists

Adivasi women argue that they:

- have significant roles in sustaining traditional



Hills and valleys where bauxite mining is proposed.
PHOTO: Samata.

livelihoods and cultural cohesion;

- have sufficient sources of food and medicine;
- have skills to grow crops on hill slopes and terraces;
- collect forest products to sell in the market and to feed their families;
- have a life that is interdependent with nature, and more sustainable than dependence on external markets/daily wage labour;
- understand the forest and water as collective resources for everyone;
- earn cash by being engaged in small-scale market trades and working on others' fields;
- would have neither dignity, nor an assured livelihood if they could only rely on the wage labour from mining companies;
- would have to migrate to the towns if there is mining, and consequently be without enough food, proper work, or safe living spaces;
- would be subjected to harassment by men who come to their villages for the mining, likely bringing alcoholism, gambling, and sexually transmitted diseases, and
- would have to leave the land that has ancestral spiritual significance.

Refusing To Be Blindfolded By The Government And Mining Companies

The assertions of adivasi women for their rights to the land and the forests are incomprehensible to the mining business executives and government officials. As a result, the efforts to elicit women's consent for mining proposals consistently fail. Even though mining companies have made few promises to the community, government officials have assured the communities there will be jobs, compensation, new homes, and livelihood investments. In reality, when compensation is offered, men—as the holders of property deeds—have been forced under the militarized presence of armed police to accept the deals being offered by the government. Since land concessions are based on distorted property records, land is being compensated at a rate per acre so low, that it is impossible for families to purchase the same amount of land elsewhere. Women also report that any compensation awarded is being spent by their partners on excessive consumer goods, or gambled away, rather than contributing to the basic

Women Declare 'No to Mining'

In Beesupuram, the *adivasi* women have blocked roads, punctured the tyres of company vehicles, and do not allow the mining company to take samples of the ore or place stakes in the land. They have approached the State Human Rights Commission to submit their complaints, and have sought support from all political parties. One of the *adivasi* leaders, Nukamma, has been fighting against the mining company and mobilizing women; encouraging them to speak up in front of officials, and send petitions to the government. Nukamma has been facing constant harassment from police and company agents who visit her house and try to break her morale with intimidation. The pressure is mounting on these women, but they are holding on to their land, their plantations, and their forest wealth.

In S. Kota, the *adivasi* women and rural women have defied officials by blocking the roads and preventing a mining company from completing exploratory work on their lands. The community, which has already experienced displacement by two other projects, worked tirelessly over two generations to convert an expanse of rocks and wilderness into one of the most fertile belts in the region with rich paddy fields, banana and coconut plantations, and cash crops. The women were enraged when the government declared their lands were 'waste and uncultivable,' and suitable for a bauxite refinery. Determined to stop the proposal from moving forward, the women organized public meetings, lobbied with the opposition parties to support their struggle, travelled to the state capital to register their complaints with the State Human Rights Commission, and have been continuously mobilizing against the project. They have publicly declared that they will not allow their lands to be taken away.

In Makavaripalem, where a bauxite refinery is planned, women leaders from the surrounding villages are using a range of strategies to pressure the government to abandon the project. Although a Public Hearing was held (as mandated under the Environment Protection Act of 1986), the community had not been given prior access to environmental impact assessment documents. Aware of the groundswell of opposition to the proposal, officials sent police battalions to the adivasi settlements to monitor the area days in advance of the hearing. Despite such blatant intimidation tactics, women mobilized from all affected villages to attend the hearing along with their families. They were determined to demonstrate their concerns.

On the day of the hearing, the women were met with an overwhelming force of police in riot gear with tear gas. The only woman given the opportunity to speak, Achamma, clearly stated the reasons why her community opposed the project, expressing the sentiments of all women present. Although the hearing abruptly ended, the building plans for the refinery moved ahead. As a result, the women continued to organize, and eventually decided to go on hunger strike for more than a month. Officials hastily agreed not to go against the will of the adivasi communities. However, they forgot these promises as soon as the hunger strike was called off. The government proceeded to acquire lands and force people to accept compensation, before proper clearances were obtained. Soon, the company began road construction across peoples' fields—during the middle of the night when people were not there to protest.

clean hospitals.

So we came back home and continued to protest... The company started providing medicines and doctors [to our community]. And to break our cohesion, the government and companies ...tried to convince our youth [by] promising them good jobs, sent them off to training camps and... [gave] monetary compensation with which they could buy motorbikes and other material benefits...Now, our youth defy us, and say we women are preventing them from getting 'developed'. Our men drink, and easily fall prey to the tricks of the companies. The political leaders are bought off, and made to sign agreements that say our communities want mining.

The police come and harass us women, who speak our demands aloud. They file false cases against us, and threaten that we will neither have our land nor any compensation... We are confused whether to continue our protest, or resign to our fate. But we will fight until the end, as we have to think of our children.))

Of Gender Justice, Truths & Ecological Sustainability

The adivasi women are asking for the mining businesses to leave them alone. If our governments fail to heed the truths that these women are speaking, then political, economic and social insecurities lie ahead. While local groups like Samata support the struggles of the Indigenous Peoples of south-east India, we hope human rights defenders and institutions internationally will join us in solidarity with the adivasi women.

necessities for survival. Moreover, the small-scale income generation projects for women proposed by the government are ecologically and economically unsustainable.

Women are particularly disheartened by the prospect of new homes on alternative land, asserting that moving away from their traditional lands and fields will mean that their community's collective social cohesion will be ripped apart.

A Future Worth Fighting For: One Woman's Testimonial

)) *[T]he government... put up posters to show how poor we are now, and how our villages would be transformed beautifully if we allow mining. To convince us more, we were taken in buses to other mining areas where they said people were happy and prosperous. We saw some prosperity, but not for people like us, adivasis—who had owned that land before. Prosperity was for the mining township where officers and their families had all the facilities... [T]heir children had good schools and hospitals. Our adivasi people were living in broken-down houses in slums, and were living on the streets even after many years of mining. Their children were not going to the beautiful schools... [T]here were no adivasis in the*



Adivasi women demonstrate their determination to prevent bauxite mining operations on their traditional lands. PHOTO: Samata.

(Re)Claiming Livelihood Rights When the Mines Close



Entire families are engaged in the informal iron ore mining business. PHOTO: Tanya Roberts-Davis.

Children growing up in the Sandur and Bellary districts of the Karnataka province in southern India might never imagine that only twenty years ago, the area was covered by green farmlands and sandalwood forests inhabited by sloth bears, leopards, foxes, deer, as well as diverse reptile and bird species. At that time, families sustained themselves by harvesting sorghum, millets, onions, groundnuts, chilies, rice, coconuts, and sugarcane. Now, after less than two decades of open-cast mining that took advantage of rich iron ore deposits, the landscape is a desert-like expanse of plains and hills that appears reddened, covered by thick suffocating metallic dust. Local waterways have become contaminated, while the toxic levels of metal particles in the air are exacerbated by the billowing smokestacks of local iron processing factories. Farming is a viable option for few villagers, now that surviving plant life in the vicinity is shriveled and brown, while the soil is cracked and infertile.

Beneath the villages of this area of Karnataka, it is estimated that there are deposits of over one billion tonnes

of iron ore, as well as significant amounts of manganese, quartz, gold, copper, and granite. Local sources of iron were in use by ancient civilizations, and much later by the British colonists. However, it wasn't until the 1950s that a small number of Indian entrepreneurs began to explore the region for land acquisition and mineral extraction. Local academics, researchers and journalists note that the mining industry began to be considered an important economic sector in 1995, when public sector companies began establishing mining operations. During the years between 2000 and 2008, a sudden rise in the price of iron ore resulted in a rapid, unregulated expansion of mining businesses in Bellary and Sandur.

As agricultural fields and forests became converted into open-cast mines, there were no processes by which villagers could collectively grant consent for the mining operations. No standards were enforced to require assessments of the potential environmental—or social—impacts. By 2006, an estimated twelve thousand privately owned mines were in

operation without mining licences in Bellary and Sandur, alongside sixty legally registered privately owned mines and three public sector company mines. Until mid-2008, tens of thousands of people were employed as seasonal workers in these mines seven days a week. Alternative activities to generate income were necessary during the monsoon season from June until September, when the mines stayed closed due to the heavy rainfall. Workers and residents testify that the earth seemed to tremble from the frequent mine blasting and the oversized, overloaded trucks roaring across the land to bring the iron ore powder and 'lumps' to local stockyards, smelters and southern Indian ports.

However, by mid-2008, life for women labourers in Bellary and Sandur, and for their families, became substantially different. The iron ore deposits have not yet been exhausted, but those who regularly dug, cut, sieved, and crushed the ore say that mining work is now rare and unreliable. With the onset of the economic downturn and lowered prices of metals, the business of mineral extraction became no longer lucrative. As a result, many of the mines are no longer in operation. Some families do continue to cut and crush the iron ore at sites scattered across the scarred hills of Bellary and Sandur, taking the opportunity whenever available to load any residual stocks of iron onto trucks. Fields that once were occupied by the plastic tarpaulin shelters of migrant families are empty, and the few women still in the vicinity report that thousands of migrants have left in search of more reliable work opportunities.

A Struggle for Survival: Labour with Little Dignity

Typically workers in the Bellary and Sandur mines are:

- illiterate and landless;
- of low caste denominations or of tribal ancestry;
- migrants from other southern Indian states;
- working on a piece rate or contract basis for 16-18 hours a day;
- without access to toilets or potable drinking water;
- without protective goggles, helmets, gloves, or shoes
- living in makeshift plastic tents and shelters at the mine sites;
- employed with family members, including children as young as four years old, and
- suffering from eye, skin, and gastrointestinal and orthopedic problems, asthma, tuberculosis and cancers.

Women mine workers are:

- involved in digging, cutting, carrying and collecting the iron ore fragments ('lumps'), loading iron powder and lumps onto trucks, sweeping the roads, and preparing tea and meals for co-workers;
- paid substantially less than their male counterparts;

- subjected to sexual harassment and violence on the job;
- reporting domestic violence in their homes, and
- compelled to bring infants and children to work due to a lack of child care facilities.

Seeking New Opportunities, Facing Uncertainties

While the entrepreneurs who opened mines have secured immense profits, they have left behind thousands of villagers whose future and livelihoods remain uncertain. Even though wages earned from mining were meager, the majority of labourers are currently unable to attain the same level of income. Consequently, many express the desire for the iron ore sector to be revived.

Many of the workers come from agrarian backgrounds. However, without any rehabilitation of the land, the possibilities of returning to an agrarian lifestyle are limited. One villager who manages to survive on earnings from sweeping the dusty streets of Sandur explained that:

Before the mines, we were all living happily. But when the mines opened here, farming was not possible any more. We poor people face a lot of neglect from the mining companies. But we have become addicted to mining because that is a job we can do and earn enough money to feed our families.

Most concede that the attraction to mining is not related to the occupational tasks—which they associate with chronic illnesses and muscle pain—but the cash earnings. A young mother named Marika, articulated her mixed feelings about her work with the following statement:

From the time I began breaking stones at the mines, I had fevers, pains, and all types of infections. My children came with me to work and they were sick as well. But now what to do except hope that the mining will start again? Then I will once again have an income, at least something to survive!... But if there were opportunities to learn to read and write, and also to learn other types of [occupational] skills, I would certainly participate, no doubt!

In this unregulated environment, alternative occupational training for the unemployed, health clinics for the ill, sanitation services for residents, and rehabilitation of the environment are only carried out randomly, based on the whims of private companies and by compassionate but overstretched community organizations. According to Dr. Bhagyalakshmi, director of the local non-governmental organization Sakhi:

The big organizations and unions were not taking on the issues of health and safety for the women and children working informally at the mines. Nor were they addressing the needs for crèches, schools, health clinics and a better environment. We [staff of Sakhi] are taking on a role here, focusing on empowering women and girls of marginalized backgrounds.

Mamubha, 26 year old mother and former mine worker

Before the mines closed, I worked almost every day to load iron. When we worked, we had headaches, muscle and back pains, and breathing problems. But then we would just take tablets from the doctor. This work was good because it only required two or three hours in the morning. After the loading work, I could come back home and do all the household jobs that need to be done. But then about nine months ago [June 2008], there were no loading jobs anymore. Now I have a small shop to earn money, but it does not provide enough income for my family. Other women who worked in the same loading group as me do construction and domestic work. Now, the whole day is spent doing other work so that we can earn enough to survive. But the little amount that we make is not enough to keep any savings.

As I see it, women are the ones who work all day and take on all the risks and responsibilities for their families and households. We have no time to enjoy life. Meanwhile, our husbands have all day and night to enjoy everything. They drink, gamble, scold, tease, complain and beat us. They don't even take on as much responsibility as our young daughters, who also work to help run the household. Our daughters get married off once they are thirteen or fourteen. Marriage of a daughter is a major burden because her family has to take out a loan of 30-50 thousand rupees for her marriage. These loans accumulate a lot of interest. When we earn such little amounts of money how can we ever manage except by going into debt?

I send my children to the Sakhi crèche because I am able to feel free to go to work without any concern about how my child will be all day. My dream is for my children to go to school, but this dream does not seem to be possible right now.

For villagers who live adjacent to the iron mines and smelters, the damaging legacy of toxic soil, water, and air will last for generations. As of March 2009, many of the women expressed concerns about the quality of the water they use for cooking and drinking. As one mother explained:

There is a problem of water here. Sometimes the water is clear, and sometimes it is cloudy. Sometimes it is mixed with mine waste and is very red. Other times there is no water at all.

According to a group of women in Sandur, whose makeshift homes are located beside an open-cast mine:

There are no drainage facilities for our sewage. With all the mine wastes in the water, there are a lot of cases of chikungunya [similar to dengue fever]. The mosquitoes are everywhere, and give us malaria as well as other diseases.



TOP TO BOTTOM: A local iron processing factory spews plumes of toxic particles into the surrounding communities. Migrant miners sort through broken iron ore in an attempt to earn an income. Former mine workers are now employed as street sweepers. Peasant rights activists in the area have formed a 'Right to Livelihood' movement, and seek an end to reliance on the mining industry. PHOTOS: Tanya Roberts-Davis.

Guligamma, mother and peasant rights activist

We used to grow sunflower seeds, sugar cane, rice and groundnuts, and be self sufficient. But now we have a problem because the crop yields are less, the leaves of the plants are wilted, and our vegetables have gone bad. The factories and mines use so much water, that our fields are now cracked and dry. This never happened before the factory and mining came here. The water we used to irrigate our fields is mixed now with chemicals from the factory and our vegetables have turned a reddish colour. The factory water also flows into the drinking water. Some people are sick with stomach problems; some have died. Only a few years ago—before the factory was operating there were no sicknesses in our village. Now everyone is sick. These are some of the reasons why we villagers organized ourselves into a farmers' rights group.

We organized a satyagraha [non-violent protest] to close the iron factory. We believe that the factory owner should control the dust pollution, rehabilitate the land, pay the workers better wages, properly compensate farmers for their loss of land and agricultural livelihoods, support the building of a community health centre, and build a school too. After three days, the police broke through our protest, and struck us with their batons. The factory owners have now filed a case against thirty of us activists. But at least we have the support of our Gram Panchayat [local governance structure].

Before the satyagraha, the factory owners tried to buy our land by offering us jobs. But this land is ours; it keeps our families alive. Without it, we have nothing. After our protests, no jobs are being offered to us. I would say that the factory and the mines should just close. This would solve most of our problems right now.

Iron Factories Spark Community Resistance

Families in the region who do try to continue to live off the land by growing groundnuts, rice and vegetables, speak of the contamination of the water as well as the soil. They assert that since the mining began, the earth has become parched and cracked, with groundwater sources disappearing due to intensive water extraction by the industries associated with iron and steel production. Meanwhile, crops are tinged reddish-orange from the airborne iron particles.

These subsistence farmers, many of whom are low caste, and struggling to keep their children in school, decided to form a community advocacy group to place firm demands on the owners of the local iron processing factory and mines. They are aligned with the Gandhian-influenced Karnataka State Farmers' Association, and envision community organizing on the basis of principles of direct, participatory and inclusive democracy and self-reliance. Within the farmers' right to livelihood movement, women have their own committees, and have assumed leadership roles in efforts to publicize the demands of villagers. Joining with workers at the factory to improve the unhealthy working conditions, they have organized civil disobedience actions to block iron production until the managers take heed of their demands, as farmers and labourers. In these activities, women take prominent roles as spokespeople, risking arrest and beatings by police. They acknowledge that the mines and factories do provide jobs, but do not believe this sector can be sustainable for the future. From their perspective, alternative economic opportunities for the people of this region are needed. Though these mobilizations remain invisible to the mainstream media, these women farmers and labourers remain determined to convey a message of hope that land can be reclaimed and rehabilitated, social and sanitation services can be provided on a universal basis, and jobs with dignified working conditions can be developed.

Child iron ore miners in the Sandur area.
PHOTO: Tanya Roberts-Davis



indonesia

RECLAIMING RIGHTS: THE ONGOING STRUGGLES OF THE SOROWAKO COMMUNITY

The village of Sorowako is located on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Historically, Sorowakans were shifting cultivators of various crops and collected minor forest produce including rattan, bamboo and other forest products. They lived in relative seclusion among mountains surrounded by impassable rivers, producing lucrative rice yields. In 1957, the Karonsi'e Dongi people were forced to flee their homes when civil war broke out. Before the Karonsi'e Dongi people returned to their ancestral lands, Indonesian President General Suharto signed a contract with the Canadian nickel mining company Inco Ltd. (now known as Vale Inco) that unilaterally gave Inco the rights to extract nickel on the island of Sulawesi. The Karonsi'e Dongi received no compensation for their lost lands and crops. They were not involved in the land negotiations, or any process of community consent.

Today the mining operations have taken a devastating toll. Sorowako is a place of hardship and constant struggle, where homes, lands and livelihoods have been taken away. Lack of access to land and the migration of people seeking jobs have resulted in the establishment of approximately 1,000 shanty homes on the shores of Lake Matano. This tectonic lake, which is the seventh deepest in the world, is now a disposal site for raw sewage and garbage. Its native butini fish—found nowhere else in the world—are a threatened species. The fishes' smaller bodies and teeth mutations are yet to be explained. Frequent community demonstrations in Sorowako have been ongoing to draw attention to unresolved land ownership disputes, and unfulfilled promises of provisions that were supposed to accompany the mine, such as education, health care, electricity and clean water.

Land along the outskirts of the Vale Inco site—once the place of the homes, orchards, and the burial grounds of the Karonsi'e Dongi people—has been taken over by the company for a golf course and staff housing. Abandoned mining sites along the edges of the golf course have been reclaimed by the original inhabitants. Thirty families, including the families of Werima Mananta and her sister Naomi Mananta, have built huts and planted crops of cassava, corn and other vegetables and fruits on this land. They have been told that they may have to leave to make way for a hotel. Despite this uncertainty, the Karonsi'e Dongi people continue to live in their huts beside a Vale Inco golf course, under surveillance of armed security guards. They have no secure water supply, and no electricity. As of June 2009, the Karonsi'e Dongi are being forced to relocate. Some members of the community have accepted compensation while others have not.

The following testimony from Werima Mananta was recorded in 2006 during the Canadian government's roundtable on 'Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Sector in Developing Countries':

My name is Werima Mananta. I am from Sorowako, South Sulawesi, Indonesia where the Canadian-owned nickel mining company Inco has impacted the Karonsi'e Dongi community. Land was taken over arbitrarily for the company. Inco is only taking the rich natural resources in Sorowako, and making the Sorowako community poor. Sorowako is very rich in natural resources. The land is very fertile. The vast forest is home to resources such as rattan, resin, wood, honey and other non-timber products. The lakes are rich in fish. Fishing is a source of livelihood for local people. The lakes are also used for transportation by the local people. The community makes a living from planting rice, vegetables, and cocoa. Women collect resin and rattan from the forest and sell these products. This fertile land was taken away from us in 1968 under the 'New Order Regime' era, without any discussion with the Karonsi'e Dongi indigenous community. Inco came and took over the land and destroyed all that Karonsi'e Dongi people possessed. At that time, we were not on our land—we were refugees because of a conflict that broke out in the 1950s. In the 1970s, we returned when the situation was safe. We found our village had become a golf course, where Inco employees played golf. Our gardens and rice fields were no longer there. Our ancestral graveyard had become a dormitory for the mine workers, with only a portion of the graveyard remaining. This graveyard became evidence that our community existed there. After the authoritarian 'New Order Regime' era was over, we began returning to our land in the year 2000 to rebuild the Karonsi'e Dongi village. Because all the land was taken over by Inco, we finally built huts along the outskirts of the golf course on abandoned mining land.

We have become an audience watching Inco employees play golf on our land. This has caused misery for us. Today, there are twenty-six huts built on the reclaimed land. These huts house thirty families. Since moving there, we have been terrorized and intimidated. We are told that we are not allowed to stay there because it is not safe and healthy. But this area is the site of a planned hotel development by the company. Our community has been torn apart. Not all of the Karonsi'e Dongi people are able to return to the village because there is no land to build homes and grow gardens and farm. Our forest has been destroyed. Our source of livelihood has been taken away and we have become poor because we are not able to get work with the company. Only a few in our community have worked as labourers at the Inco operation on temporary contracts. Our children are not able to go to school because they cannot afford the school fees. The school fees are very expensive. To feed our families, women have planted vegetables and



Clockwise from left: Ibu Yuliana at a hunger strike against Inco in Sulawesi. Karonsi'e Dongi plant gardens in a bid to survive on traditional land (now abandoned by Vale Inco). The Karonsi'e Dongi's traditional lands are still occupied by a Vale Inco golf course. PHOTO: Jaringan Advokasi Tambang/Mining Advocacy Network (JATAM).

bananas around the huts. We can no longer grow rice because the land has been destroyed. In 2003, the police and Inco security threatened to burn our huts because we were on 'Inco land.' Some of us were brought to the police station, interrogated and threatened with a three-month jail sentence. For the more than thirty-seven years that Inco has operated in Sorowako, it has mined Sorowako's rich natural resources and destroyed the source of our livelihoods. The company has never compensated the Karonsi'e Dongi people. But their reports suggest that all the land problems in Sorowako have been resolved.

Because we are suffering very much, and are always intimidated, we have done various actions to demand that our rights be returned to us. University students, the mine workers' union and non-governmental organizations supported our community in the occupation of the Inco office from September 14th to 18th, 2005. A seventy year old Karonsi'e Dongi woman, two university students, a retrenched Inco worker, and a representative from the

community participated in a three day hunger strike. After we returned to Sorowako on September 28th 2005, we did an action there. We were intimidated and some of us were arrested. The company always uses the police to make sure we fail in our struggle. The company causes provocation in the community. This strategy is used by the company to ensure that discussions fail and there is no resolution.))

After Word

In March 2009, more than two years after Werima's testimony, the Government of Canada finally released a report on "Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industries in Developing Countries". Recommendations tabled by a government-appointed multi-stakeholder advisory group—including a complaints mechanism, an Ombudsman system, a Compliance Review Committee, and sanctions for those companies which breach agreed-upon environmental and human rights standards—were rejected. Efforts to hold Canadian mining companies to account for human and environmental abuses—on the streets as well as in the halls of the parliament and courts—continue.

mongolia

IN THE NAME OF SURVIVAL:

Mongolian Herder Women Oppose Mining Companies

Although Mongolia's varied landscape of pasture lands, arid deserts, mountains, and riverine ecosystems provide a rich natural environment to sustain the survival of tens of thousands of nomadic herder families, today, our livelihoods and unique culture are under threat due to the rapid expansion of the mining industry. In 1990, Mongolia began a path towards privatizing services and industries. Under the guidance of the World Bank, the country launched a gold mining programme in 1997, and revised mining laws to grant favourable conditions to foreign mining corporations, including tax exemptions. Foreign companies are profiting from the large gold deposits found beneath the earth. Meanwhile, most Mongolian people live in poverty, and now are confronted with ecosystems that are contaminated by the toxic wastes left behind by the short-lived operations. In addition, there is a severe depletion of water resources, with lake and river basins drying up.

Outside of the main urban centre of Ulaanbaatar, herding has traditionally been the main source of livelihood, with families raising sheep, goats, horses, camels, cattle, and yaks on open pasture lands. However, the Mongolian government's promotion of the mining industry neither respects nor protects the rights of herder families. With up to half of the country being sold off in land concessions to mining companies, the Mongolian herder's traditional territory is being quickly lost, without their knowledge—or their consent. Officially considered a key aspect of national 'economic development', mining operations are violating herders' rights to water, a healthy environment, a self-determined livelihood, and ultimately, to life itself.

As the land occupied by mining companies has steadily expanded, it has become increasingly difficult for herders to sustain their way of life. Even after a closure of a mine, the lands are left scarred and contaminated with toxic mine wastes, including cyanide and mercury. However, if herder families migrate, they face the prospect of highly limited access to social services, an inability to participate in local elections due to a lack of registration in the new residential area, and a lack of compensation for their lost land. In addition, moving to a different region implies that families must abandon basic infrastructure they painstakingly installed on their seasonal lands, such as wells and fences. When they have to request infrastructural support from those who are already residents of the area to which they migrate, economic hardships may be experienced by both new and old residents, and social tensions may be exacerbated.

In Mongolia, nomadic women and men have different roles and responsibilities in everyday life. Herder women are responsible for the household work, as well as processing

dairy products, and caring for small livestock. Their activities rely on a healthy natural environment. Therefore, environmental degradation has severely negative impacts on herder women's livelihoods. For example, as a result of depleted and contaminated water from the mines, women have to travel further from their homes in search of water suitable for household consumption. Some women report that their children are getting sick and have skin rashes after bathing or playing in local waterways. Given the limited access of herder families to public health care facilities, women end up with greater responsibilities to look after family members who become ill.

In 2005, a Mongolian gold mining company, the Mongol Gazar, began exploring the gold deposits along the Buuruljyyt River in Uyanga. The Buuruljyyt River is considered a "mother river" because of its many tributaries which traverse the surrounding areas. The residents of the area, as well as nomadic herders, rely upon the fresh river water for their daily needs, and the healthy grasslands around the Buuruljyyt for animal breeding. This unique ecosystem also has an important historical significance that is connected to Chingghis Khan and ancient Buddhist leaders. The land and watersheds are therefore considered sacred by local herders.

It was only after Mongol Gazar had begun to explore the mineral deposits, that the company informed local herders about the planned mine development. In 2008, Mongol Gazar informed the local representative body that they were intending to start mining operations. Promising to 'develop' the community, and to allocate profits to local people, they requested formal approval from municipal officials.

Meanwhile, twenty kilometers away, at the site of the Ult river basin, another local mining company, Erel, had just shut down a gold mine that had been in operation for twelve years. Publicity about the negative consequences of the mine, including environmental degradation and social hardship, served as a warning to the residents and herders of Buuruljyyt River basin. Aware of the situation at Ult, they were particularly alarmed by the evidence of parched riverbeds, diminished drinking water sources, degradation of pasture lands and contamination of the soil and water by toxic mine wastes. From their perspective, such environmental devastation constituted violations of the right to live in a healthy environment. They expected that the mining operation would similarly force them to migrate in search of uncontaminated pastures.

Once the Buuruljyyt River residents and herders were aware of Mongol Gazar's plans for the future of the area, they organized a strong opposition movement and attempted to prevent the company from opening the mine. However, the

company's representatives strategically met with members of the local governance structure, and presented them individually with gifts. One by one, the members of the representative body withdrew their opposition to the mining proposal. Eventually, seventy percent of these officials gave consent to the company to operate the mine, and Mongol Gazar moved ahead with its operations.

BELOW: Pastures used by traditional herder families.
PHOTO: Steps Without Border.



L. Degdsuren, yak and goat herder

“Our family has been living for the last three generations in the Buuruljyyt River basin to breed our livestock. This area traditionally belonged to herders who have yaks. We now have two hundred yaks, and three hundred goats. In the last decade, many mining companies started to operate on our land. Now, we face large-scale environmental degradation. As a result, herders migrate to neighbouring pasture lands. Now there are frequent conflicts between herders because of the diminished grassland and fresh water sources. Mines now occupy the most suitable land for [our] nomadic lifestyle – those areas with sources of fresh water and grassland. Initially, our governors protected our interests, not the interests of the companies. Eventually, they started to support the companies. We suspect this support is because of bribery. Our governors became wealthy as soon as they started to negotiate with the companies. Therefore, we (herders) decided to fight for our rights, and strongly oppose the mining companies.

However, some herders started to change their minds, and were convinced by the people from the company. Eventually, our struggle lost strength. Now the Mongol Gazar company is operating in the river basin. The river nearby has started to disappear because the company uses a lot of water. They [Mongol Gazar] have constructed a [tailings] pond nearby and also frequently pour polluted water into the river.”

LEFT: Forests surrounding the Buuruljyyt River have been destroyed to make way for mining.

BELOW: Land along the Buuruljyyt River has become scarred by mining pits. PHOTOS: Steps Without Border.



philippines

ATTEMPTS TO UPROOT A GREEN-GOLD VILLAGE

Thwarted by Community Group Led By Women in Barangay Anislagan, Mindanao, Philippines

“We do not want mining in our community because the majority of us are farmers and we are dependent on our land and our water for survival...our land will be mined and our water will be disturbed...[O]ur livelihood will be lost and we will all die.”

—Rizalina Lisbos, Member of the Anislagan Co-operative and Anislagan Bantay Kalikasan Task Force

“Anglo exerted considerable efforts toward community development and relations as it encountered problems in accessing critical areas due to resistance from local government units and residents.”

—Manila Mining Company Statement, November 2008

A small agricultural village on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao with two thousand residents has vowed to keep their land protected from one of the world’s largest mining conglomerates—Anglo American Plc.—and free of mining projects. In March 2007, Kalayaan Copper Gold Resources (KCGR), a joint venture between Britain’s Anglo American and a subsidiary of Philippine company Lepanto, the Manila Mining Company, was awarded an exploration permit covering approximately three hundred hectares in north-eastern Mindanao, home to the community of Anislagan.

Residing in the region of Mindanao known as Placer Surigao del Norte, local farmers—most of whose predecessors migrated from Cebu and Bohol Islands—prefer to be considered as Surigaonons. In this community, women have an important role to till, plant, and harvest the fields where corn, rice, a diversity of vegetables, coconuts, and other cash crops are grown. Significantly, Anislagan is also the site of large spring water aquifers from which water is drawn and distributed to surrounding communities.

Knowing that the development of a gold mine would mean an end to their agricultural livelihoods, and to their locally accessible clean water sources, residents have been determined to keep mining companies off of the green fields they consider gold. According to local councillor Neneng Gamos:

“We know that gold lies underneath our farm lots and our water source [that is] worth millions of pesos. But, we value more the lives of the people here in our small community, the lives of people around our community, and [the lives of] their children’s children. These [lives] are unquantifiable by money.”

When concessions for copper and gold mining were initially

granted to companies that would have displaced their community in 2002, residents of Anislagan quickly mobilized themselves into a multi-sectoral environmental organization that became known as the Anislagan Bantay Kalikasan Task Force (ABAKATAF). This diverse collective includes village councillors, farmers, women, youth, and parishioners from different churches. They have continued to mobilize together over the years. Their vision of Anislagan is for it to remain a productive agricultural zone that is free of mining, with clean water for drinking and irrigation—a resource of the ‘commons’ to be shared and protected. In particular, women activists in Anislagan have tirelessly committed to protect the life, land, and resources of all in their community.

Recognizing the intense level of village resistance, Anglo American, along with its Philippine business partners, initiated a “Community Technical Working Group” through which to plan corporate scholarship programmes, medical dispensary services, a community garden, and other promotional activities. Two activists, who were initially outspoken against mining, were paid to become ‘company community organizers’. In an attempt to further silence dissent, legal actions, considered by the community and their allies to be “Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation”, have been launched by the company against individual activists. Women continue to be at the forefront of the struggle to keep mining companies out of their village despite being targeted by these lawsuits. Tansing Dapar, an elderly woman active in ABAKATAF, has watched as conflicts within and between families, and across the generations have developed since the mining companies arrived on Surigaonon territory. In her opinion, “We cannot forget the fact that the mining issue created divisions in our own families and our once closely knit community.”

Determined to stop drilling companies from entering Anislagan, a human barricade was established along the road leading to the village in January 2008. With the support of alternating teams of villagers, the blockade was sustained for a number of months. At the time, community paralegal Gigi Dapar was quoted as saying, “We will not stop our human barricade until the mining company will get out of our place”. In January 2008, drilling activities were subsequently put on hold.

In December 2008, Anislagan residents installed a scarecrow over four meters in height in their communal rice fields to remind companies that mining will never be welcome in their green-gold village. One mother who was involved in the initiative, Rizalina Lisbos, explained that it was their “symbolic edifice against mining”. Another woman activist involved asserted that they wanted to “show to the whole world that we are against mining in our agricultural

village. This [land] is our source of livelihood in the community.”

Activists in Anislagan have begun to extend their pressure tactics beyond national borders. In April 2008, outside of Anglo American’s Annual General Meeting of shareholders in London, activists from communities around the world angered by the devastation caused by this company’s mining operations gathered. A statement from the Anislagan Bantay Kalikasan Task Force was read aloud to highlight the community’s concerns and reasons for demanding Anglo American cease its gold exploration activities in Surigao. There was therefore a sense of satisfaction in November 2008 amongst the women of Anislagan when they heard on national news that Anglo American planned to pull out of the venture due to the strong resistance demonstrated by community members and the local government. However, the KCGR exploration permits are still valid until 2011. Vowing to remain vigilant, the men and women farmers of Anislagan have now returned to their land to prepare for the next harvest.

TOP RIGHT: Women strategize inside a makeshift shelter to stop exploratory drilling for gold. MID-RIGHT: Road leading to the drilling site during the blockade. BELOW: Community installed scarecrow. PHOTOS: Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan



philippines

WOMEN BATTLE AGAINST MINING PROJECTS IN CONNER, CORDILLERA REGION, PHILIPPINES

Conner: A Land of Promise

Conner is one of the municipalities of the province of Apayao, in the Cordillera Region of the northern Philippines. The municipality consists of twenty-one village districts. This area covers over nine hundred square kilometers of forests, rivers and fertile agricultural lands. Rice, legumes, vegetables, and lowland fruits are grown here. The terrain of Conner is rugged, with rolling hills in the southern part, patches of flat lands on the interior parts, and mountains in the north. Rich deposits of minerals, particularly gold and copper ores, are found in Conner.

Three major rivers, the Acutan, Nabuangan and Barren, bring additional sources of food and irrigation for Conner. This is a land of promise, not just for the original inhabitants, the Isnegs and Kalingas, but also for other Indigenous Peoples of the Cordillera and families from lowland provinces who have migrated here.

The people of Conner primarily derive their livelihood and survival from agriculture. In the past, the people produced more than enough to feed their families from tilling the fertile lands and the sustainable use of the rich natural resources. As a result of this sustainable use of natural resources, they were able to share the surplus harvests with relatives, or sell it at the market.

Though traditional farming techniques still persist in some communities, traditional ways of farming have been displaced by modern agricultural processes. The introduction of high-value rice varieties and other cash crops created a dependence on pesticides. Cash crops—including bananas, corn, and rice—are transported to the markets of Central Luzon and Ilocos.

However, the cost of modern agriculture is becoming increasingly unaffordable for peasant families, leading them to bankruptcy. When they bring their products to the market, it is rare for them to fetch a good—or just—price to compensate for their expenses. Nevertheless, a growing number of women are vending their produce, usually earning about 40-50 Philippine pesos (\$0.80-1.00 US) per day for selling fruits, vegetables and snacks. Now, the tradition of sharing fruits and vegetables with neighbours and visitors is being eroded by the high cost of living, and the pressure to generate cash to meet family needs. The liberalization of agricultural products has also meant local products such as oranges and legumes are being replaced by cheaper imports. Meanwhile, government livelihood projects, including animal husbandry, weaving projects, and food processing, have not been economically sustainable here because the market is not assured, and production costs are high. Small-

scale artisanal gold mining is conducted to augment family incomes in some communities in Connor. This practice is particularly common in the district of Manag, where almost eighty percent of the men engage in small-scale mining during the months of February to May. In some cases, children drop out of school to help their families earn money in the small-scale mining industries. Women are then left to tend to the youngsters and elder family members, as well as their farms.

A high number of college educated women from Conner are unable to find work with decent pay. Some have made the difficult decision to work in generally low-wage, exploitative jobs abroad.

From a land of promise, Conner is quickly becoming a land of impoverishment. Government data from 2008 demonstrates that the province in which Conner is located, Apayao, had the highest rate of poverty incidence in the Cordillera region, and was amongst the poorest provinces in the Philippines. Given that Conner—and the entire province of Apayao—is rich in land and natural resources, the prevailing situation of food insecurity and dwindling livelihood viability is contradictory. Now, the residents of Conner are faced with an even bigger threat to their land, food supplies, and rights: large-scale corporate mining.

Entry of the Corporate Mining Sector into Conner

After the passage of the 1995 Philippine Mining Act, mining companies began to intrude on the lands and the lives of the people of Conner. Currently, land concessions have been sought by two mining companies intending to extract gold and copper deposits. Together, the Cordillera Exploration Inc. (CEXI), a subsidiary of the British-owned Anglo American corporation, and Copperfield Exploration, owned by Australia's Climax-Oceana Gold, are staking claims to a total of 81 percent of Conner's land area.

The applications have the support of government bodies, including the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), an agency which is supposed to protect the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples. Yet, both the NCIP and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have been promoting the interests of mining companies. Local government officials held a series of presentations in 2005 to convince the people of Conner that mining would be good for the community. They promoted the industry by explaining that roads would be built to benefit local residents, scholarships would be offered to youth, employment would be available for the unemployed, and substantial monetary compensation would be given to



Agricultural landscape of Conner, currently providing food security for all in the community. This land would be destroyed if large-scale mining projects begin. PHOTO: Innabuyog.

affected villages. In response, an active opposition social movement to the mine was formed, with a high degree of involvement from local women.

Following a community forum on mining in July 2005, the Save Apayao People's Organization (SAPO) was born. From village to village, SAPO members and leaders campaigned against the proposed mining developments. Women called for community dialogues with local officials, developed educational materials on mining for public distribution, and conducted a petition campaign against mining. During a referendum on the issue, twenty out of twenty-one communities in the municipality overwhelmingly raised their voices against mining. Meanwhile, local government officials continued to disregard the majority of their constituents' views that mining corporations should not enter Conner, and denounced members of SAPO as 'anti-development' and 'backwards'. Instead of being open to a dialogue with SAPO, the municipal council and mayor claimed that only two communities objected to mining, and that mining projects would not be stalled. Local officials declared that anyone against mining should leave Conner.

Harassment of SAPO leaders and members intensified in 2006. At the time, cases of extra-judicial killings also increased nationally, including of Indigenous human rights activists. Villagers in Conner were explicitly warned by authorities that if they continued to oppose mining projects, they could risk becoming the next victims of political killings.

The chairperson of SAPO, Tina Bati-el Moyaen, directly experienced intimidation, testifying that:

☞ *For one whole month in August 2006, I was unable*

to leave my house because of threats. Unidentified motorcycle-riding men were seen at night near my house and my parents' house. My child attending nursery school stopped [going to class] because I could not accompany him anymore to school. I could not even step out of my own doorstep, and communication was very difficult. ☞☞

While leaders and members of SAPO were forced to reduce their mobility for fear of their lives, SAPO as an organization was under relentless attack by pro-mining officials and mining company agents. Representatives of mining companies, local officials, and government ministers exerted a brutal degree of pressure on communities, attempting to win their consent for the mining project. Despite this situation, SAPO persisted with its information campaign on the adverse effects of mining.

SAPO Activists Build Bridges of Solidarity

Through SAPO, the people of Conner sought the support of other people's organizations, allied advocacy groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They brought their concerns to the attention of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), as well as to Innabuyog, a regional alliance of Indigenous women's organizations in the Cordillera, and the Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center (CWEARC). By visiting mine-affected areas, SAPO members were able to visualize the devastation caused by corporate large-scale mining. In addition, the mining struggle in Conner gained momentum when villagers participated in national

and international events, including a national conference of Indigenous Peoples in 2006, fact-finding missions to mining sites in Thailand and Mongolia, and popular protest actions outside Anglo American's Annual General Meeting of stockholders in London during April 2007.

Mobilizing In Defense of Our Rights, Land and Resources

At present, SAPO continues to struggle against corporate and large-scale mining in Conner, sharing their stories and joining campaigns with activists regionally, nationally and internationally.

As SAPO leaders and members have stated:

“We have to continue with our struggle because we know that the government is hell-bent in pushing for the revitalization of the mining industry in the Philippines. Under the Arroyo regime, the way to recover from the national economic crisis is through the mining industry, and in Conner (one of the twenty-four national mining priority areas), this means the mining concession application of Anglo American. We know we will be facing harsher conditions, but we cannot just close our eyes, shut our ears, and do nothing. We will defend our land and resources for our children and for the future generations. We have learned many lessons in our struggle. We realized that we have to link with the broader public for strength and support. We also realized that it takes courage, sacrifice and patience amidst fear to do the right thing for the people.”

In September 2008, the women's committee of SAPO was formed. With this effort, they seek to strengthen women's participation in the people's struggle against the mining giants, and simultaneously respond to specific needs and problems of women. The women assert that allowing large-scale mining operations in Conner and the rest of Apayao will destroy their lands and livelihoods, exacerbate poverty and cause displacement, severely violating the economic and social rights of women in Conner. Cultures and traditions will be eroded, more women will be forced to migrate abroad for work, and others will end up surviving on the basis of selling their bodies to the male mine labourers. From their perspective, if mining companies were to control life in Conner, the systematic economic and cultural violence committed would likely lead to the perpetration of domestic

and sexual violence.

Already, soldiers belonging to the 21st and 77th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army have been deployed in Conner. The only apparent reason for this militarization is the authorities' desire to ensure the security of mining companies and to terrorize the people who are opposing the mining projects.

Yet, the women of SAPO are undeterred and have collectively declared:

“We succeeded in stopping the large logging operations; we survived the dark years of militarization. We stopped two giant mining firms in their exploration, withstanding pressures from the companies and government officials who colluded with the companies. So what will stop us from completely preventing large corporate mines to operate in our land? There is no better place [to live] than Conner, unless we cease living.”



SAPO leaders declare their determination to safeguard Conner from corporate mining projects. PHOTO: Innabuyog.

philippines

DEFENDING OUR LAND, WATER AND HOMES:

Women Activists of Didipio Mobilize Against Multinational Mining Corporations



LEFT: Didipio Earth Savers Multi-Purpose Association member and community medic, Marina Ansibey, speaking out at a rally in front of the office of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in March 2008 to denounce the demolition of houses in Didipio by the mining company OceanaGold, and the lack of government response. Placard: "Stop demolitions in Didipio!"

TOP RIGHT: An Indigenous woman from Didipio shares her advocacy experiences during a regional conference.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Women of Didipio work on the DESAMA citrus farm project.

PHOTOS: Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center - Kasama sa Kalikasan.

From the corporate boardrooms of Melbourne, Toronto, and London, to village communities spread across the Philippine Islands, the abundance of mineral resources in the Philippines is no secret. Neither is it a secret that the current President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, has been promoting the notion that the Philippines is a country "open to the business of mining," even going so far as to declare the revitalization of the industry as a matter of national policy (Executive Order 270). The repercussions of these priorities have been unmistakable and far-reaching for communities throughout the Philippines, and for the lands and water upon which our lives depend.

A microcosm of this context is exemplified in the northern Philippines, in Didipio, located within the municipality of Kasibu, province of Nueva Vizcaya. Kasibu is home

to the Addalam River watershed, which runs through 35,000 hectares of agricultural land. Located in a remote mountainous area, the district of Didipio includes approximately 2000 hectares of farms and fields. High grade citrus fruit is grown in the local fertile valley of Malabing. Before large-scale mining contracts were awarded to multinational corporations here, local households had supplemented their incomes by conducting artisanal gold panning.

Didipio represents an important example of the mining industry's complete disregard for the basic legal rights of citizens, and simultaneously, strong community resistance to mining. In 1994, the area was one of thirty districts affected by a contract specifically developed for large-scale mining operations, referred to as a "Financial and Technical

Assistance Agreement” (FTAA). The contract allows foreign owned mining companies to hold an initial claim on land for twenty-five years, renewable for another twenty-five years. Didipio was the first place an FTAA was ever allowed in the country, predating the passing of the Philippine Mining Act in 1995. This particular FTAA spans more than twenty-one thousand hectares of land traversing the provinces of Quirino and Nueva Vizcaya, over mountains, fields and vast waterways, and was granted to the Climax Arimco Mining Corporation for a gold-copper project. For the local communities, the signing of this contract not only marked the onset of social divisions, escalating violence within the community, and harassment by government and mining company representatives, but also a scarred landscape of flattened mountainsides, dusty roads and craters created by mining pits.

In the years that followed the award of its FTAA, Climax Arimco transferred its assets to the Australasian Philippine Mining Corporation, which later merged with the Australian mining company OceanaGold. The global financial crisis in 2008 caused a standstill in OceanaGold’s operations. In January 2009, the Philippine Mining Development Corporation gave the company six months to resume operations or risk surrendering control of its mine. To date, the South Korean conglomerate Hyundai group has expressed interest in acquiring majority shares in Oceana Gold. For concerned community members and rights advocates, this transaction poses new threats and presents new challenges.

Throughout this time, the communities in Didipio have organized a strong anti-mining campaign, coordinated through a local group established in 1999, the Didipio Earth Savers’ Multi-Purpose Association (DESAMA). The women of Didipio have had a key role in forming, directing and activating this organization as well as an associated DESAMA co-operative shop. Their concerns and tireless efforts to stand up for the rights of their community and future generations are detailed below.

The Right to the Courts

In a landmark court case in 2003, the Didipio Earth Savers Multi-purpose Association and its members brought a petition to the Philippine Supreme Court challenging the legality of Climax-Arimco’s operations (based on the fact that their contract predated any laws regulating mining agreements), as well as demanding the new mining law be declared unconstitutional, and that a restraining order be put on new explorations. The Supreme Court ruled against DESAMA’s position, citing ‘public use’ and ‘sufficient state control’ to justify a continuation of Climax-Arimco’s operations. In January 2004, the Supreme Court issued a decision ruling that certain provisions of the mining act and the FTAA awarded to a mining company operating in Mindanao were unconstitutional. This case could have had monumental implications for the mining licence at Didipio. However, by December 2004, the Supreme Court had reversed their earlier decision, declaring the Mining Act and FTAA agreement process to be valid and constitutional.

Rather than concede defeat after the Court’s disappointing rulings, the struggles of the Didipio community, as well as other areas in the country affected by large-scale mining, did not falter, and continue to persist to this day. Women of DESAMA have assumed a strong presence in court case filings, hearings, mobilizations and barricades.

The Right to Community

As women have become outspoken advocates in the Didipio anti-mining struggles, they have been elected to positions in the Didipio District Council, and as officers of DESAMA. Women are active participants in trainings, seminars and mobilizations, and have represented the community’s concerns and viewpoint in local and international fora.

Significantly, the DESAMA women’s committee has been a key contributor to the development of the organization’s projects and activities. When the co-operative store was being built, women took on the arduous task of hauling the wood and other construction materials to the building site. They currently manage the store, are officers of DESAMA, and volunteer their time and labor on DESAMA’s citrus farm, clearing the land, and caring for the seedlings. Young women of the organization have been training as community paralegals and journalists, hoping to shed light on the community’s plight and support advocacy efforts. Women within DESAMA have also sought to bridge the divisions fostered by mining operations in the area. For instance, they continue to serve as health practitioners and mid-wives, treating households all over the municipality—no matter whether families express opinions for-or against-the mining.

The Right to Water

The Philippine Mining Act grants mining contractors the rights to water usage upon approval of an application with the National Water Resources Board (NWRB). However, if a community can provide evidence that a certain water source has been relied upon over a sustained duration, and/or is recognized and acknowledged by local customs, their right to water is guaranteed under the Philippine Water Code.

These rights were invoked by women community members of Didipio to oppose an application filed in 2007 by an affiliate of OceanaGold, the Northern Luzon Sustainable Development Corporation (NLSDC). The company lodged an application for a permit to dam and drain sections of the Camgat, Dinauyan and Didipio Rivers for mining purposes. Notably, agricultural and residential lands stand to be submerged by these plans. The water resources that the company plans to alter have been used by the community residents for cooking, washing, bathing and other domestic purposes, sustaining day-to-day living. Historically, the district council has been in charge of ensuring equitable distribution of water to the entire community.

Asserting the community’s rights over these waters, DESAMA protested the company’s application before the national water board. The company has countered that the

residents' use of water for household and domestic purposes was not legally registered, and that the community has no basis on which to claim rights to water usage. The company insists that its project will be of "greater and more beneficial use" to Didipio. However, the company has failed to recognize that the affected water sources are relied upon for a public irrigation project supplying the entire Cagayan Valley region.

Thus, it is not only the fields and water resources in Didipio that risk destruction, but also people's livelihoods throughout the valley. This water case has wider implications because it also draws from international law enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Article 14 of this convention recognizes the specific rights of women to an adequate, clean and safe source of water. Ultimately, this case is one to be monitored by women affected by mining operations throughout the world.

The Right to Safety and Security

Since December 2007, OceanaGold has demolished nearly 200 homes in the two villages of Bacbacan and Dinauyan, without providing alternative options for relocation and resettlement. Many of the families had to set up makeshift tents in their suddenly vacant lots, staying there until a new home could be found. Others moved in with nearby friends and relatives. Many eventually moved away. Some of these families were in the process of negotiating compensation packages, while others were resolutely refusing to leave. In an attempt to halt these demolitions, members of DESAMA set up a blockade to prevent any company vehicles and machinery from entering Dinauyan.

After many months, the plight of the residents of Didipio caught the attention of the Nueva Vizcaya provincial government. After a case was filed at the provincial court, an injunction was granted, preventing further demolitions. However, the experience was particularly traumatic for the women and children of the affected areas, who had lost the roofs over their heads in the sudden and violent displacement.

Adequate housing has long been recognized as a basic human need, and is enshrined in both the national constitution as well as international law. However, to date, no compensation or relocation settlement—let alone justice—for the affected families has materialized.

The Right to Land

The large-scale mining operations in Didipio have resulted in widespread land conversion. With less land to till, food production for local consumption has decreased dramatically, compromising local food sovereignty. Without crops of their own, the residents of the community have had to resort to buying foodstuffs from the market more often than before. Preliminary mining operations to shift mounds of topsoil have had highly negative impacts for Didipio residents, who have seen their access to land and farming yields decrease.

Mining contractors have even dumped soil into functioning irrigation canals, thereby destroying farmers' access to regular flows of water. Roads surrounding farmers' fields have also been blocked by the mounds of dislodged earth.

Even as OceanaGold put its mining operations in Didipio on hold, the company continues to interfere with the lives of the community residents. The company has fenced off the land it has allegedly bought, leaving only a small passage for the community residents to use. These new passages only accommodate people on foot, allowing no animal or vehicular traffic. Without the trails and paths that they had been using in the past, the farmers of Didipio find it difficult to load and transport their produce and farming equipment. As a result, much of the local produce had been left to rot, and the hard work of harvesting had also gone to waste.

In 2001, the Arroyo government promised that one hundred new certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) would be issued by the end of the year. However, it is important to note that CADTs are not the ultimate solution to the problems caused by the large-scale extractive industries. In communities across the country, including in Didipio, mining permits are favoured by government officials, despite the fact that the land is often understood by the local residents as the ancestral domains of Indigenous Peoples.

The rights to food, security, housing, and water are the rights of all people. Violations of these rights have particularly severe consequences for women. Household chores, tilling of gardens, cooking meals, raising families, and tending to the sick depend on access to adequate supplies of clean water, arable land, and to housing.

Notably, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women—to which 185 countries, including the Philippines, are signatories—specifies that women are entitled:

to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

OceanaGold's operations constantly endanger, and ultimately deprive the women of Didipio of these rights in the name of 'development'.

The resilience and strength demonstrated by the women of Didipio in the face of the abuses and violations committed by OceanaGold deserves commendation. But, more than this, their struggles and advocacy deserve concrete and genuine results: an earth free from toxins, fresh water on their farms, safe homes for their children and families, peace of mind in the nights, and justice for the losses already suffered. Real justice is the kind that leaves a lasting legacy. In this case, it is the hope of all the women of Didipio—and those who support them—that the community will never have to suffer again from the devastation caused by mining companies.

philippines

TO FIGHT FOR JUSTICE:

Women in the Struggle Against Irresponsible Mining in Marinduque



The Tapian pit pipes that transported tailings into Calancan Bay. PHOTO: Catherine Coumans.

Background Context

The Province of Marinduque is a small, mountainous island near the middle of the Philippine archipelago. Most of its 200,000 citizens are fisherfolk and farmers relying on the rivers, the sea and the land for their livelihoods. In 1956, Canadian mining company Placer Dome (at the time known as Placer Development Ltd.) became involved in a copper-gold exploration project on Marinduque Island, undertaking extensive geological mapping and drilling. In 1964, Marcopper Mining Corporation (Marcopper) was established, jointly owned by Placer Development and—in secret—former Philippine President, Ferdinand Marcos. In 1969, Marcopper Mining Corporation started mining copper in Marinduque from the ‘Tapien Pit’, and later opened the San Antonio Mine in 1991, both of which were in the central mountains of the island. Gold was a significant by-product of these two operations. As the only mining company involved in Marcopper, Placer Dome secured and guaranteed bank loans, managed the mine sites (through executive officers seconded from Placer Dome), and provided technical expertise. In 1996, a massive spill of mine waste into the twenty-six kilometer long Boac River, shut the mine down. A year later, Placer Dome divested from Marcopper, and both Placer Dome and its subsidiary—Placer Dome Technical

Services—left the Philippines in 2001. Early in 2006, Barrick Gold Corporation acquired Placer Dome. As a result, Barrick is considered legally responsible for the tragic legacy of environmental and community devastation caused by this operation.

Decades of Mining Disasters and Community Opposition

Over the past forty years, Marinduqueños have endured one mining-related environmental disaster after another. Throughout this time, many women have played key roles in the struggles against the destruction of the surrounding ecosystems and of their livelihoods. By engaging in efforts to stop the damage being done by Marcopper, the lives of these women—and their families—have been shaped in ways they could not have anticipated. Although three women’s voices are featured in this account—Vilma Piguerra, Beth Manggol and Catherine Coumans—we acknowledge and honour the tireless efforts by many more outspoken women in Marinduque. Vilma Piguerra is a retired teacher from the village of Botilao on Calancan Bay, who has seven children and ten grandchildren. Beth Manggol works for the Marinduque Council on Environmental Concerns (MACEC), lives in the village of Ino in the municipality of Mogpog with her husband, and has five children. Catherine Coumans is

the Research Coordinator for MiningWatch Canada based in Ottawa, Canada and lived in Marinduque to complete research for her PhD.

The following account evolved from informal discussions in Marinduque during April 2009 about the experiences, current concerns, as well as future aspirations of these three community rights advocates.

Calancan Bay: From Healthy Marine Ecosystem To Mine Tailing Dump

Life in Botilao before they [Marcopper] started to dump the tailings into our bay was good. There was plenty of fish and they were easy to get. The income was enough for us. After 1975, our life became very hard. We already noticed the effects after the first months because some of the fish left the bay. Then our main coral reefs became covered by tailings. It made our family life hard. We could only use my salary as a classroom teacher. [My husband]Ka Guding had to leave our bay to fish...and would only come home during the full moon between 1975 and 1989.

—Vilma Piguerra, Calancan Bay Fisherfolks Federation

From 1975 to 1991, over 200 million tonnes of mine tailings from the Tapian Pit were dumped directly into the shallow waters of Calancan Bay by Marcopper Mining Corporation. Now, eighty square kilometers of mine tailings cover the bottom of the bay's corals and seagrass. A "causeway" of exposed tailings formed from the edge of the bay, eventually extending seven kilometers into sea. Although the food security of twelve fishing villages around the bay has been severely affected by this operation, Calancan Bay villagers were never asked permission by Marcopper to proceed with the dumping activities.

In fact, local village residents have continuously protested the dumping since 1975. The local protest movement drew strength and skills from community organizing seminars and workshops based on the teachings of liberation theology that were offered through the Roman Catholic Church. The Manila-based environmental organization Lingkod Tao-Kalikasan of Sr. Zenaida Velasquez also provided support, assisting in connecting Calancan Bay villagers with allies in the legal field as well as internationally. Vilma traces her own involvement in efforts to stop the dumping into Calancan Bay when she made a decision to become active as a community organizer. She explains that, "We [community organizers] walked all over the barrio [village] going into the mountains and to the coastal sitios [small village units] to talk to all the people about the pollution and their rights."

By 1981, the National Pollution Control Commission of the Philippine Government ordered the mine to "cease and desist" dumping tailings into Calancan Bay. However, the order was overturned by the Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, who had invoked martial law in 1972. Years later, it was revealed that Marcos owned half of the Marcopper stocks.

In April 1988, following a lawsuit brought by the Fisherfolks' Federation of Calancan Bay, Marcopper was again ordered to stop dumping mine tailings into Calancan Bay by government authorities. In response, the company closed its operations without prior warning, simultaneously cutting off electricity to the entire island. The sudden loss of jobs and electricity led to frustration and despair. Those who challenged the company's practices, including Vilma and her husband, were intimidated, and at times, feared for their lives. The Philippine President of the time, Corazon Aquino, whose government had acquired Marcos' shares, overruled the constraints placed on Marcopper. The dumping of wastes continued until 1991 when the Tapian Pit was depleted of copper and gold.

For Vilma, being an activist against Marcopper's mine



ABOVE: Tapian Pit. Tailings from this pit were pumped into Calancan Bay for 16 years. PHOTO: Catherine Coumans. RIGHT: Vilma Piguerra from Calancan Bay holding her passport, which she needed to travel to Canada in 2000 to raise awareness of the environmental, economic, and health problems suffered by Calancan Bay villagers as a result of the millions of tonnes of mine tailings dumped directly into the local waterways. PHOTO: Marinduque Council for Environmental Concerns (MACEC).

tailoring dumping operations became increasingly challenging:

☞☞ *Our lives became more difficult in the village because more people told us to stop our opposition. They became pro-mine and just wanted the jobs. Even the Barangay Captain [elected village head] was against us now. When Ka Guding became the complainant [in the lawsuit against Marcopper] he couldn't fish anymore and he always had to go to meetings. I supported his travel with my salary, but I was alone with the children and had to look after my in-laws as well. The worst part was that the ones who opposed us in the village became more angry to[wards] us.* ☞☞

In November 1988, PhD student Catherine Coumans arrived in Marinduque with an initial purpose to study liberation theology. However, she recounts that:

"Almost immediately I was confronted with the fact that as a Canadian, I was expected to have both knowledge and an opinion on the mine waste disposal practices of the Canadian-run mine. They [the villagers] asked me whether I thought the tailings, which were blowing into the open [drinking] wells—the 'snow from Canada'—were poisoning their [drinking] well water. They asked me if I thought the stomach illnesses they were experiencing were the result of eating clams from the bay, and they asked me if a mine in Canada would be allowed to dump its waste into shallow fishing grounds..."

It didn't take long for Catherine to realize how the mine had distorted local politics, created economic winners and losers, divided communities and families, and led to a loss of collective cultural practices which had relied on economic resources no longer available. In a gesture of solidarity, Catherine committed to find scientists to analyze the chemical contamination in the bay, and to write about the problems she had observed.

In the 1990s, concerns arose again over metal contamination from the partially exposed tailings in the bay. Environmental assessments over many years had noted the potential for metal leaching from the exposed sulphide mine tailings. In 1998, the Philippine Government declared a "State of Calamity" at Calancan Bay because of the health concerns related to lead contamination.

Today, a large portion of the tailings remain exposed in the bay. Metal-laden airborne particles regularly blow into nearby villages, while concerns persist over contamination of surface and ground water sources as a result of the tailings. Local children were found to have elevated levels of heavy metals in their blood. Many have become severely ill with lead poisoning and some, including Vilma Piguerra's daughter, Janice, have had to undergo detoxification treatments in Manila. According to Vilma, her nine year old daughter "was very sick with nausea and vomiting for eight years. Now she is away from Calancan Bay and she is doing better."

To date, there has been no compensation for the loss of health and livelihood, nor any environmental rehabilitation efforts. The villagers are currently involved in a lawsuit against

Marcopper and Placer Dome/Barrick Gold, and are demanding compensation as well as environmental rehabilitation.

Mogpog River

In 1991, an earthen dam was built by Marcopper in the mountainous headwaters of the Mogpog River on Marinduque Island. The dam was supposed to keep silt from a waste dump for the new San Antonio mine out of the Mogpog River. The people of the town of Mogpog vigorously opposed the building of the dam, fearing impacts on the river they depend upon for many daily needs. In 1993, the dam burst, flooding downstream villages and the town of Mogpog so severely that houses were swept away, water buffaloes and other livestock were killed, crops were destroyed, and two children died when they were buried in the mud. Although Marcopper's Placer Dome management officially denied responsibility for the disaster, the company did add an overflow to the dam when it was re-built, implicitly acknowledging previous engineering errors. Within two years, the toxic waste behind the dam was so high that it began to flow freely through the overflow. A leaked consultant's report warned of high risk failure of the dam with the potential for causing loss of life. Now, the Mogpog River ecosystem has been severely affected by the toxic waste flowing through the dam. For instance, the bagtuk, a species of crab that was once regularly harvested as a source of food, has completely disappeared. The people of Mogpog are pursuing legal action through the Manila-based Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan.

The Boac River Tailings Spill Disaster of 1996

When a badly-plugged drainage tunnel at the base of the Tapani Pit burst in March 1996, between three and four million tonnes of toxic mine tailings filled the Boac River on Marinduque. Since 1992, this pit had been used to store tailings from Marcopper's adjacent San Antonio mine. Following the spill, Marcopper did not resume operations. Placer Dome claimed the disaster was an "act of God". Under immense pressure by residents and the national government, Placer Dome promised to plug the tunnel that had caused the spill (now done), clean up the river and the affected marine environment (not done), and compensate the affected people (currently incomplete). However, within a year, Placer Dome divested its holdings in Marcopper. Meanwhile, the communities of Marinduque were left with three heavily polluted ecosystems, a contaminated water table, dangerously unstable dams at a decrepit mine site in the mountains, and generations of affected people.

In response to the toxic spill in the Boac River, the Marinduque Council on Environmental Concerns (MACEC) was re-activated. Beth Manggol facilitated the organizing of MACEC chapters at the village level, and was soon assigned a position on a multi-stakeholder assessment team for the compensation payments related to the spill. She suddenly found herself the target of accusations of receiving illicit payments for her work, and after receiving death threats, took protective measures to ensure her family and friends did not reveal her whereabouts.

At the time of the Boac spill, Catherine felt a renewed

sense of urgency to support communities in Marinduque, despite her geographical distance and academic commitments. However, during efforts to hold the Canadian parent company accountable for the mining-related disasters in Marinduque, she was disappointed at the reactions of Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which had been persuaded to ‘work with the company towards solutions’:

“I knew next to nothing about NGOs. In one meeting I attended with NGOs and a Placer Dome executive, I was told categorically [by Placer Dome] that the company planned to divest and would only address the issues in Boac... [but] not the [environmental] legacy problems in Mogpog or Calancan Bay. I was very surprised to see that the NGOs seemed willing to accept this position.”

Soon, the International Calancan Bay Villagers Support Coalition had been founded by Catherine and her husband. At the time, Catherine “learn[ed] everything about being ‘an activist’ from scratch, writing for newspapers, organizing letter writing campaigns, putting out a newsletter, buying shares and speaking at Placer Dome’s annual general meeting.”

By 1998, Placer Dome had developed a mine tailings removal plan that consisted of running pipes from the Boac River into the ocean. A campaign to stop this ecologically disastrous plan from advancing was ultimately successful, involving a broad-based effort in which Beth, Vilma, Catherine, and others—including newly elected Philippine Congressman Edmundo Reyes—participated. In the following three years, Catherine testified at two congressional inquiries in the Philippines and supported the filing of a lawsuit against Placer Dome/Barrick in Nevada in 2005. Both Beth and Vilma came to Canada on solidarity speaking tours organized by MiningWatch Canada and the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, respectively. Ten years later, Vilma, Beth and Catherine remain determined to continue their struggles for environmental and social justice on Marinduque Island.

According to Vilma:

☞☞ *My trip to Canada was an unforgettable experience. I was able to air our grievances with Marcopper and Placer Dome. Canadians really cared about our story. But it was also very hard to make the trip alone, and to speak out against the company in the press conference in Ottawa in the parliament building. Now our biggest concern is to stop mining in Marinduque forever...[W]e want to be successful in our lawsuit for the compensation of those who were affected in Calancan Bay and to rehabilitate our environment. I will continue to be an activist until the end!* ☞☞

In the words of Beth:

☞☞ *I am devoted to this work with MACEC for the environment and for the people of Marinduque, but the hardest thing has been sacrificing my family; my kids—especially when I was the only one [staff person] in MACEC. I left my little kids for weeks with in-laws and my husband.*



Beth Manggol and Catherine Coumans in Bocboc in 2009 helping to dredge toxic mine waste out of the Mogpog River and stop Bocboc from flooding. Villagers have been forced to react, as neither the mining company nor the Philippine government have taken responsibility to stop the waste from entering the river. PHOTO: J.C. Bevan.

Even now, I am always away from home in spite of little pay. You know, one of my kids said to me, ‘Mommy, why didn’t you go abroad?’. That was very hard.

We are worrying about how we will be able to pay for their education...I am really just a simple woman; a simple mother; a simple wife. But from a simple woman I’m expanded—I am learning so much, I’m educated more, and I have become more brave. It was great to go to Canada, but when I came back, I became very much afraid and worried that my life was not safe. In Canada, I spoke out against the company in the media and at the shareholder meeting...Our biggest worry in Marinduque now is the imminent danger because of the old dams and structures up in the mountains at the mine site. These are not maintained. Even the DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] acknowledges the danger, but no action! I hope our lawsuit will be successful so the people can have compensation and there will be money for rehabilitation of the environment and to make the dams safe. This work is not really a job, it is a mission! ☞☞

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thailand

A MOUNTAIN OF GOLD, BUT NO SHINING LEGACY

Gold Mining in Loei, North-Eastern Thailand

The lush green rice paddies, vegetable fields, forested mountains and quiet villages in Wangsaphung district of the Loei province of North-Eastern Thailand could be an oasis of rural tranquility, with clean air to breathe, fresh vegetables and fruit to eat and spring water to drink. From the mountainous highlands to the lowlands along the banks of the Mekong River and its tributaries, the fertile lands provide seasonal harvests of macadamia nuts, bananas, lychees, longan, mangoes, passion fruit, tamarind, coffee beans, soybeans, maize, rice, sesame, and rubber. In the past, some small-scale gold panning was carried out along the riverbeds, as the area is rich in minerals, including gold, copper and iron. However, today the land and water upon which the Isaan People have depended for generations has become poisoned by cyanide, arsenic and other heavy metals. The source has been traced to a recently opened gold mining site operated by a Thai company with Australian origins, Tongah Harbour Plc.

Expedited Process of Mineral Exploitation: Timeline of Gold Extraction

In 1996, the Thai Department of Mineral Resources began a process of approval for granting six gold mining licence applications in Wangsaphung submitted by Tungkam Ltd. (TKL), a subsidiary of Tongah Harbour that has Australian and German financial support. The Thai Ministry of Industry granted final authorization in 2003 for a lease the size of approximately two square kilometers over twenty-five years. By September 2006, TKL began its operations at the first open-pit gold mine on a mountaintop once designated by the Thai government as a conservation area. To date, only two of the six sites have been opened, covering a total of two square kilometers, as well as an on-site plant for cyanidation and carbon treatment of the gold. Once processed, the gold is shipped to an external refinery. As of early 2009, over one hundred mining applications by TKL are pending approval by the Thai government.

Invited Guests Only: A Different Understanding of 'Public' Consultation?

Local residents in the area remained unaware of the mining licence, until mining machinery had already arrived. Although TKL has claimed that they took proper steps to hold consultations with the community, there is no documentation available regarding where these consultations were held, who participated, or what was discussed. Local residents claim that these meetings were not publicly announced and that the company handpicked the few people who did attend.

According to local activists, there is no public access to the agreements made between the company and the government or the mining concession certificate that would indicate the type and time frame of the mining activities on the land surrounding their farms. Furthermore, it was not until 2008 that some information was publicly reported regarding the legally required environmental impact assessments (EIAs). These studies were quietly completed by two Australian firms in conjunction with a Thai company along with Thai faculty from Khon Kaen University, without any input or participation from villagers.

Troubling Waters: Losing The Lifeblood of Agricultural Communities

Although Tungkam claims to be committed to "environmental stewardship", local residents report that some of the most devastating effects of the mining have been related to the loss of clean, local water sources. The mine site has interfered with the route of a natural spring, which originally brought fresh, pristine water from the mountain through Wangsaphung. As a mitigation measure, the company diverted the stream so that it now flows around the periphery of the mine. Residents allege that the spring water has become polluted by not only the mine tailings, but also improper disposal of on-site solid wastes. Since 2006, mass numbers of poisoned fish floating in local streams have been observed on numerous occasions. With elevated levels of cyanide and other heavy metals, this stream runs directly into Loei River, a tributary of the transboundary Mekong River. Furthermore, residents note that contaminated water from the mine flows down the mountain during the monsoons, and they worry that the heavy metals will leach into groundwater. Meanwhile, in the dry season, dust from the mine blows through residential areas, exacerbating respiratory illnesses amongst the local population.

For the first time in known history, farmers are reporting severe water shortages, resulting in dry rice paddies and patches of parched, cracked soil. With the mine tailings pond adjacent to their fields, the majority of residents express fear about the uncertain levels of contamination in the fruits, vegetables and rice they still attempt to cultivate. Given the level of contamination and acidification of the rainwater, residents can no longer rely on gathering drinking water naturally. Instead, they have had to begin buying water, placing a strain on already tight family budgets. Realizing the need to augment cash incomes in order to afford purchases of food and water, some women are travelling more frequently to the provincial capital to take on temporary



Loei protest against gold mining operations. PHOTO: Eco-Culture Study Group/Thai Network of Mining Affected Communities.

day jobs. Ultimately, local residents' abilities to retain their practices of food sovereignty and self-sufficient livelihoods have been lost, while their rights to food, water, and health have all been stolen. As the ones responsible for cooking, cleaning and water provision for drinking as well as other daily needs, women testify that the household pressures they experience have accordingly increased.

Devastating Health Impacts After Only Two Years In Operation

Over the past two years, local residents have begun to report rashes, breathing problems, severely irritated eyes, chronic headaches, dizziness, and weak sensations in their limbs. In addition, the regular and frequent blasting coming from the mine causes not only cracks in housing structures and the shattering of glass windows, but also heart palpitations amongst elders, and chronic levels of distress among children.

After working in their fields and rice paddies, women and men suffer from skin irritations that result in their skin peeling off and opening into festering wounds. Men who work in the

mine have experienced distressing health problems, including skin diseases, severe eye and lung problems, insomnia and neurological degeneration. Meanwhile, women report that after washing clothes worn in the mine and the fields, they suffer from rashes on their hands and arms, breathing difficulties and eye pain. Blood tests conducted on children provide solid evidence of elevated levels of cyanide and other heavy metallic contaminants. A recent report, released in February 2009 by Thai government officials also warned residents to refrain from drinking the local water or using it to cook, due to elevated levels of cyanide, arsenic, cadmium and manganese.

Police and armed security guards have been working with Tungkam to monitor the mine site and the community, reporting on all who enter the site and surrounding vicinity. In general, local people are too intimidated to speak out publicly about the impacts of the mining, and as a result, the voices of social and environmental justice advocates remain muted. The lack of opportunities to participate in decisions affecting the future of their land and means of survival, as well as the silencing of dissent can be understood as nothing less than serious breaches of political and social rights, guaranteed

under national and international laws.

Organizing Roots:

Raising Consciousness and Community Co-operatives

Initially, local residents were frustrated by Tungkam's lack of communication, consultation and openness about their plans for Isaan ancestral lands. After documents about the mining licence were leaked to a local biologist, the information was disseminated amongst the community in 2006. Since then, a small team of concerned residents—the majority of whom are women—formed an ad hoc committee that has been organizing community meetings to discuss the impacts of gold mining on the local water sources, the soil and local vegetables, air quality and people's health. They have held public forums and open discussions, photo exhibitions and workshops. According to committee members, it is mostly local women—and in particular, those from younger generations—who attend discussions about the impacts of the mining, and strategies for changing their situation. In November 2006, an exchange with activists from Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines was hosted in Wangsaphung as part of an international mobilization against large-scale commercial gold mining. According to local women, after this initial international exposure, security was tightened at the mining site. Those trying to investigate Tungkam's operations began—and continue—to be subjected to severe intimidation tactics.

Throughout 2008, local residents helped document the health impacts of the cyanide poisoning. They then proceeded to file complaints with the national human rights and health commissions. A report issued by the Human Rights Commission called on Tungkam to clean up the contaminated areas. However, despite the fact that the commissioners validated community concerns and condemned the company's operations, no remedial action has been taken. Instead, Tungkam has begun publicizing their commitment to "positive corporate ethics", and are sponsoring school festivities, sports tournaments and youth scholarships. For the villagers of Wangsaphung, these initiatives appear disingenuous, detracting from their serious concerns about the lasting legacies of cyanide and arsenic poisoning.

As of late 2009, the Wangsaphung community committee was seeking to halt Tungkam's expansion plans for their gold processing and cyanidation plant. Protests were staged at the local government district office demanding that documents detailing the site expansion be made public. Further demonstrations by civil society networks are planned. Simultaneously, women are organizing weaving and food collectives, which allow them to retain a sense of identity, follow ecologically sensitive principles, and practise self-sufficiency. This groundwork is intended to form a basis of collective solidarity from which to launch into a campaign calling for the closure of the mine, and the prohibition of new mines on Isaan land.

Apanti, mother and volunteer community advocate

☞☞ I am concerned about the safety and health of the people in the villages beside the mine. Especially, I am worried about those who are poor, as no one is interested in the impacts of the cyanide poisoning on them. There are not proper environmental standards to protect their health. Since women have the job of taking care of our families, when more people are getting ill [from the mine], we will have an increasing amount of work. On the surface, many people think that women don't work. But in reality we do...

It is not fair that there are no participation mechanisms for the community [to discuss the mine site] and no information about the mining developments. Meanwhile, the company only tells us about the good prospects of the mine. We never hear about what the impacts will be on our health, our communities, or our land. But what mining company would give the community this information? I don't think there is such a company!

With big 'development' projects like this mine, there are more community conflicts. Our solidarity and identity are destroyed. We need to try to maintain the solidarity of our communities and our identity. In order to do this, we started a cotton clothes collective and other occupational groups, like weaving and food production.

We are trying to spread information to residents in the area about the company's mining licence and the negative impacts of gold mining through word of mouth and community meetings. Our demands are to close the mine and not open any new sites. We want honest information about the future of our health, our land, our children and our communities. We cannot take our mountain back, and will not ever be able to recover the soil, the water, forest and clean air. But we want to reclaim this area for ourselves. It is our community—the forest, the rice paddies, the waterways are for the people—and all of this should not be sold to companies and destroyed. ☞☞

oceania

“ANNGURLA YARTA UDNYU MIRU VADLHIINGA-NIMAANGGU”: SPIRITUAL COUNTRY STOLEN BY WHITE MEN IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Adnyamathanha territory, Flinders Range. INSET: Adnyamathanha Wayanha, the sacred mountain near uranium mine pits. PHOTOS: J. Marsh.

In 1986, a group of young Adnyamathanha women from South Australia traveled to the Northern Territory to meet with the Gagudju People, and to find out about the impacts of the Ranger uranium mine:

“*We heard about the sadness and despair felt by people as they saw their country destroyed and contaminated by open-cast uranium mining. We heard about the way the community became divided because of the promises from the mining company of jobs, land use royalties, better housing and services. We witnessed the despair on peoples’ faces as the royalty money from the company started a cycle of economic dependency.*”

As young Adnyamathanha, this was our first conscious

experience of discussing the possibility of uranium mining in our own country, hundreds of kilometers south of the Ranger mine. We knew uranium deposits were there in our country, and we knew how the land was an important part of our spirituality. We felt certain that our old people would stand strong and resist uranium mining in our country. We felt confident that our community would have the power to stop mining if—and when—it came to our country. To our dismay, in 1997, some of our elders were forced under duress to sign agreements under the ‘Native Title’ legislation that would allow uranium mining in Adnyamathanha country, in exchange for monetary compensation (royalties). As young Adnyamathanha, we felt betrayed that our leaders had succumbed to the pressures from the mining company. Meanwhile, our elders felt powerless. They knew that under the Native Title Act, they had no right to veto mining on our traditional lands. We all knew uranium mining would destroy our land, limit our access to special places, and damage our

spiritual connections to the earth, the waterways, the plant life, and the wildlife.

*“Inhaadi ngalpurlaru yarta—Adnyamathanharu.”—
“This is my country—it belongs to Adnyamathanha.”*

Our Peoples' Territory, Culture and History

Adnyamathanha territory in South Australia consists of an ancient rocky mountain range, sweeping plains and dry salt pans, vast amounts of underground water channels, and a rich diversity of plant life, mammals, birds, reptiles, and marsupials. Though the weather is harsh and dry, with fierce dust storms and thunderstorms during the long summer months, this environment provides a rich and sustainable pool of resources. Indeed, prior to colonization, food and water sources were plentiful for the Adnyamathanha, and trade with neighbouring groups was vigorous. In Adnyamathanha society, the women traditionally hold a large responsibility as community peacekeepers and family leaders. Following the mother's line of descent is a very strong part of our cultural identity. However, since the 1800s our traditions and livelihoods have been severely impacted by the introduction of pastoralism, tourism, and most recently, mining on our lands.

In the early 1900s, the Adnyamathanha peoples experienced a severe disruption of our lives, as we were moved onto a Christian mission run by the “Uniting Aborigines Mission”. Adnyamathanha were forbidden to speak our mother tongue (Yura Ngawarla) on the mission, and were punished for practising customs such as traditional initiation ceremonies or marriage ceremonies. Living standards on the mission were extremely poor. There was no running water, no sanitation, and no electricity. Houses were made from recycled sheets of iron, kerosene tins and other scavenged materials. Health standards were equally appalling. Due to a lack of immunity to foreign diseases and poor sanitation, many people died from dysentery, measles and chicken pox. Until the late 1960s, the Adnyamathanha could not live in townships or frequent public places unless they were prepared to renounce their identity as an Aboriginal person. Shanty towns were built on the edge of townships to physically separate black from white residents. Today, evidence of this segregation can still be seen in the physical layout of many towns.

Many Adnyamathanha women were raped and forcibly removed from their families by pastoralists and squatters. Several massacre sites exist throughout Adnyamathanha country, where armed European settlers rounded up and shot Aboriginal people. Ultimately, the Adnyamathanha peoples continue to live in the shadow of colonial rule, without sovereignty rights over our traditional territory. Many institutional policies have changed, but decolonization of our minds and our lives is a much longer process that presents ongoing challenges for black and white people alike.

Our Lives and Territory Violated by Uranium Mining

In the mid-1990s, our community was alerted that a uranium mining application on our territory was being sought by Heathgate Resources, a subsidiary of the American nuclear and military corporation, General Atomics. Aware of the dire health and environmental effects uranium mining would incur, Adnyamathanha living in close proximity to the proposed mine were alarmed. A petition was developed by the local Adnyamathanha community to call for the mining proposal to be put on hold until adequate consultation and an informed community decision could take place. This petition was endorsed by the Flinders Ranges' Aboriginal Heritage Consultative Committee (FRAHCC), and after being widely circulated, it was sent to the Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. However, our demands were ignored. Some members of FRAHCC sought to form an alliance with environmental organizations and other Indigenous groups campaigning for a nuclear-free future. This outreach was part of a long and arduous campaign trail nationally, regionally, and locally which was led by an alliance of Indigenous women. Despite our lack of financial resources, we drew strength from each other.

Concerned members of the Adnyamathanha community were only able to participate minimally in the impact assessment process leading up to the approval of the “Beverley Mine”. There was a limited understanding of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, a lack of expertise in drafting submissions, limited opportunities to meaningfully intervene, and intense intimidation of dissenting voices by the mining proponents. For example, often we would travel hundreds of kilometers to attend a meeting at our own expense, only to find that the discussions and paperwork were not only all in English, but also overly technical, legalistic, lengthy and complicated. Even though many Adnyamathanha have limited understanding of the English language, no effort has been made by the government—or the mining industry—to provide a translation service. In addition, we witnessed our community being strategically divided through the selection of a small group of people with whom formal, legally binding negotiations took place on behalf of the entire Adnyamathanha community. This was not a fair or ethical process of community engagement. The legal framework used to undermine the whole community is known as ‘Native Title’, a legislative framework introduced during the early 1990s that gives Indigenous Peoples the right to negotiate compensation (royalties), but not the right to protect cultural sites of significance. The ‘Native Title’ process of consultation and negotiation has given mining companies like Heathgate an easy pathway for development. It has enabled mining companies to manipulate a minority of people with financial stipends and then ignore the rest of the population adamantly protesting the destruction of traditional lands. A pattern of meetings organized ‘behind closed doors’ has led to the exclusion of the wider Adnyamathanha community from informative discussions and decision-making processes. Further exacerbating the tensions and fear amongst our people even before the completion of the Environmental

Impact Assessment process, the company informed all Adnyamathanha Native Title Applicants that if they did not sign the Mining Agreement, they would be ineligible for future negotiations with the company and government.

By 1997, mining had actively commenced under a 'trial' mine lease approved by the Australian government. Final government approval of a license to mine uranium at the Beverley site in late 1998 led to heightened levels of violence in our community. A strong alliance between Heathgate Resources and the government had left the Adnyamathanha and the general public in an inequitable position of power. Public rallies, media outreach and strategic campaigns with environmental advocacy groups did little to change the inequitable style of community engagement being endorsed by people who were primarily interested in fast-tracking the licensing process. In press releases referring to Heathgate's Beverley mine, our community has repeatedly asserted: "No to the rape of our land". We have also been very clear that from our perspective, "[O]ur land is being damaged against our wishes".

Poisoned and Barricaded Lands

Government regulations within Australia continue to endorse the environmentally devastating process of in-situ leaching (ISL) to extract uranium. This procedure involves pumping sulfuric acid underground and into the water table to make the uranium soluble. The uranium is then pumped to the surface of the ground. Untreated acidic and radioactive waste water is subsequently returned to the underground aquifer. Under Australian law, rehabilitation of groundwater is not required. Toxic waste solids can therefore be disposed on site. It is impossible to monitor the migration of the water inside the aquifer and consequently, the degree of contamination of groundwater remains unknown.

Adnyamathanha women are responsible for taking our

children to forage for seasonal foods and to practice local traditions, such as open-fire cooking, use of medicinal plants, and locating clean drinking water from springs. But these traditional cultural sites around the Beverley mine are too contaminated for such activities. We are scared to take children anywhere in the vicinity and pick fruit, drink water or eat kangaroo meat. Hunting in the area no longer takes place. The land within the mining lease—including public access routes to cultural sites—has been poisoned and fenced off. The consequence is that we have lost access to this special part of our country. Moreover, the impact of the in-situ leaching process at the mine on our ancient underground water sources will be devastating and far-reaching. It is highly likely that local surface water sources are also becoming increasingly toxic. Even though some local people continue to live within a fifty kilometer radius of these mines, we have no access to scientific instruments to measure the toxicity of the water, air or soil.

Communities Divided and Caught in a Cycle of Violence

The level of violence over the past ten years resulting from the developments related to the Beverley Mine and Native Title negotiations has left shocking scars on our community. One key concern relates to the destruction of our cultural knowledge as a result of mining operations. Another key concern is the continual harassment of our elders and women by proponents of the uranium mine. Lump sums of money set aside for the community as compensation for the occupation of the land by Heathgate Resources have been squandered due to a lack of adequate decision-making structures for collectively allocating such financial resources. Now, having made financial contributions to the Adnyamathanha community, Heathgate has convinced some Adnyamathanha to support an extension of the existing mining lease.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Jillian and her daughters at the site of the Vada Ardlanha hot springs, which are sacred in the Adnyamathanha culture, but have become contaminated with radioactive materials from the nearby Beverley mine. Adnyamathanha children's activities, which have been organized by women in the community, promote Indigenous culture and heritage. PHOTOS: J. Marsh.



Dedicated advocates of women's rights in the Adnyamathanha community continue to harvest traditional herbs and food. Women have extensive knowledge of plants used for medicinal purposes, including the harvesting of Varti Vaka, and plants that have spiritual meanings such as Ngama Wirti. Some plant species have been destroyed as a direct result of uranium mining in the Beverley area. PHOTO: J. Marsh.

Women who dare to speak out against the destruction of our land and culture because of the mining—or about the need for female expert consultants—are denounced as troublemakers, and are often ridiculed using sexually derogatory terms. Alternatively, our views are ignored by the mining company. While some women have been verbally and sexually harassed by their kin brothers in public, others have found themselves under such pressure that they have physically assaulted female neighbours, relatives and friends in public. Many women feel unable to attend public meetings now because of this history of intimidation. Often, this violence also spills over into the domestic sphere. A majority of women speaking up against the injustices caused by mining and Native Title procedures are treated with cynicism and are marginalized from their family and friends. When publicly distributing literature about the dangers of in-situ leach mining and the nuclear industry, we have experienced harassment and humiliation by mining company employees and pro-mining community members. Police and armed security officers are consistently deployed during peaceful community gatherings and protests, effectively functioning to silence Adnyamathanha dissent. One woman who participated in a peaceful protest at the Beverley mine site saw her nine year old daughter pepper sprayed in the face by 'security' officers. This assault has never been compensated with an apology. The toll of this systematic violence on women is enormous and cannot be easily measured. Our children and other family members have witnessed the dedication and tireless efforts we make because we care about our land and our rights to cultural freedom. However,

they also bear the brunt of aggressive outbursts from other people simply because of their connections to us, as 'anti-mining campaigners'. Though there is a chronic lack of support mechanisms for women involved in the negotiations and campaigns related to the mine and 'Native Title', we have had to remain resilient.

We feel the mining companies are only interested in extracting minerals and making profits. They don't care about how they have divided up the community, or what parts of the environment they have destroyed in the pursuit of uranium. The pastoral industry continues to market the meat of livestock grazing in areas close to the mine site—without taking measures to assure us that this food is safe for human consumption. We urge countries that import meat or livestock from Australia to investigate where the animals are raised.

Keeping Our Hope For Change Alive

Adnyamathanha stand in solidarity with other Indigenous Peoples as we all try to understand why the Australian government is pressuring us to agree to an expansion of the uranium mining. The underhand manner in which mining companies and the government are operating in Australia is shameful. The rest of the world needs to know how badly Indigenous Australians are being treated; that we are still being forced off our lands, still being treated with disrespect and contempt, and still being assimilated. We will continue to expose the wrongdoings of the mining industry and government in Australia, as well as to voice the Indigenous women's experiences, and our vision of a nuclear-free world.

australia

“MUNDA YUMADOO ILIGA” — LEAVE THE LAND AS IT IS

Testimonials from the Kokatha Mula Women



Kokatha Mula women and allies gather during a “Rockhole Recovery” excursion on Kokatha traditional territory. PHOTO: Breony Carbines.

Australia: A Giant Quarry

Australia is a Minority World nation with legal and political processes that should protect the environment, labour rights and Aboriginal interests. However, many Aboriginal people still live in impoverished conditions. Furthermore, mining approval processes are flawed and discriminate against marginalized populations, with mining operations having devastating impacts on communities, Aboriginal culture and the environment.

According to mining industry research, South Australia (SA) is ranked amongst the leading mining jurisdictions that are most appealing for investment. This status has been granted in recognition of the massive financial and political support the regional government provides to mining companies. Many of the exploration licences issued by the SA state government are for projects within conservation parks or reserves, and threaten to destroy sites that have cultural significance for Aboriginal people.

In the far west of the state lies the largest stretch of intact stunted mallee forest in the world, and unique water rockhole formations. To the north are arid plains dotted with salt and clay pans. The Kokatha Mula are one of the Original Peoples of South Australia and maintain strong cultural links with these areas in the far west and central north of SA.

Located within the Yellabinna Regional Reserve and the Yumbarra and Pureba Conservation Parks, much of the

western section of Kokatha Mula territory was historically protected from mining. However, in 1999, after extensive pressure from mining companies, the SA government opened up these reserves for mineral exploration. By the end of July 2008, these parks had 16 exploration licences covering 2,022,400 hectares. The exploration licences have been granted to companies exploring for zircon, titanium, nickel sulphide, copper-gold and uranium.

In the Yellabinna Regional Reserve, one mine is currently under construction. Iluka Resources, a Western Australian company, is in the process of developing a strip mine pit to extract zircon found within two deposits in an area that is 6.1 kilometers long and 1.3 kilometers wide. The company plans to extract 300 tonnes of zircon during the first year of operations, and continue production for ten to fifteen years. Mining operations would be ongoing twenty-four hours a day, making this one of the largest zircon projects in the world. Zircon will be transported through the townships of Ceduna and Thevenard before being shipped to processing facilities in Western Australia. Currently, Iluka is proposing to keep mine waste on site, within the Yellabinna Regional Reserve.

South Australia (SA) is the driest state on the driest continent in the world. The Kokatha Mula people traditionally looked after precious water sources: underground water soaks, and rockholes or rock-pools. These practices continue today. In contrast, for just one of the Iluka mine projects, the removal of ten thousand million liters of ancient groundwater

per year is expected. Considering that minerals recovered during the mining process have trace amounts of uranium and thorium, there is concern that northwest winds may carry this radioactive material from the proposed open mine site to population centres such as Ceduna. There is further risk of contaminating the ocean during shipment.

Iluka Resources has six additional exploration licences covering 1,160,000 hectares within the Yellabinna and Yumbarra Reserves. This company has also publicly announced an interest in uranium exploration in this region. Other companies which are exploring on Kokatha Mula Territory include: Sunthe Uranium Pty., Southern Uranium, Red Metal, and Adelaide Resources.

Concerns over new mining operations in the west are informed by our knowledge of the extensive impacts of the mining industry in other areas of the state. Since the opening of the Olympic Dam uranium mine in the central-north of SA in 1987, local Kokatha Mula people have witnessed the severe deterioration of their health, and the contamination of their community's water, land and air. The desert country at this site has often been mistaken as having no ecological and cultural significance. However, Kokatha women have spent a lifetime trying to change this misconception. This desert is their traditional country—the source of their stories and cultural traditions. Kokatha Mula women were part of a council of women elders known as the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, which successfully stopped the development of a proposed radioactive waste dump. Members continue to campaign against the Olympic Dam mine and its imminent expansion. Previously owned by Western Mining Corporation, the Olympic Dam mine was acquired by BHP Billiton—the world's largest mining company—in 2005. The Roxby Downs operation has had an ongoing history of mine waste mismanagement, institutional racism, irresponsibility and neglect. Exempted from federal legislation including the Aboriginal Heritage Act, the Water Resources Act and the Freedom of Information Act, BHP Billiton currently has plans for major mine expansions. With the Olympic Dam already using thirty million liters of precious underground water a day in its mining operations, many fear the consequences of a mine expansion that will increase daily water usage to 150 million liters.

Below is a series of testimonials from Kokatha Mula women campaigning against the destruction of their territory by mining companies. Together, they echo fellow activist and elder Marcina Coleman Richards, who stated:

“Munda Yumadoo Iliga—Leave the land as it is.”

Bronwyn Coleman Sleep

“We are in a semi-arid area that has a very pristine and sensitive environment. It can't take very much interference at all—if any—really. There are already all these issues with climate change and all these water [shortage] issues within the nation, it just doesn't make sense that mining companies will be permitted to use underground water. What do we actually get from mining in the long run? We get inanimate objects that actually don't even sustain life. To sustain life, we need food and water. Much of our

traditional lands have special women's places, [which are] quite significant. Tampering with those sites certainly will have dire consequences...

Right from the start of [the land] negotiations, women were being de-voiced...One of the really sad things that happened was that women were forced out of a committee that was making decisions about places and culture and mining. So we didn't have a voice to protect our sites.

The thing is, if women were to kick men out [of committees], and men didn't have a voice, it would be a different matter. So again, women are being devalued and not being respected...In our culture, in the old ways, women had equal standing to men. Women had their business—and the men had theirs. That was respected. But in recent times, that's gone. We have been a group of people who have known how to live with each other...Certainly, [the procedures for approving] 'Native Title' and mining have been very divisive...Mining becomes...another form of genocide of our people.

For myself, all my life has been spent in and around the bush with old people. I can't imagine it [the land] being destroyed for material gains...

We wish just to be able to have the arena to make demands to the government and mining companies...We've taken the political steps to have our matters addressed...We are the rightful traditional owners who are trying to have our voice heard, and receive answers to our questions in a respectful way...We try to work together very hard for the maintenance and protection of our culture and our lands. Our people vary in skin colour. Don't judge us by the colour of our skin. Look at our hearts and minds. We are Kokatha Mula—meaning true speaking Kokatha People.))

Sue Coleman-Haseldine

“Under the white man's terms, the country belongs to the Crown, and thus the government. Our ancestors never gave it away—and we never gave it away. So in the Aboriginal way, that land is still ours.

If mineral sands spill into the ocean, I guess there'll be devastation: dead fish, the seafood that we've been brought up on will be contaminated—and there's another livelihood gone. Currently, if we've got no money, we can still...feed our kids from the sea and from the land. Should mining go ahead and they start tapping into the underground streams to take the water away, the trees, the animals and the humans that depend on them [will be affected]. Our traditional food is on the land and in the ocean. Whether they kill the animals by taking the water—or contaminating it—the health concerns are probably going to be really bad.



Sue Coleman Haseldine harvesting traditional bush foods. PHOTO: Breony Carbines.

Women won't get jobs in mines. You might get a job as a secretary or a cleaner, but most of the jobs will go to the men. The companies are intending to fly workers in—and fly them out. So a lot of men will be away from their families for weeks at a time. They are not going to build a new community out in the middle of the desert, and women and children will be left on their own. In the end, this will impact on women's mental health as well as their physical health.

The impact on women—at this stage—is the huge pressure of responsibility to stop [mineral] exploration and mining; to save the land. Anybody who goes against the government...is probably looked upon as a traitor.

If mining goes ahead, women will be devastated: they will be destroying our culture, our shops, our grocery stores, our churches, our pharmacies, [and] our schools. They will be destroying all of that knowledge that has come down through the years, what we've been taught by our oldies and what we are still teaching our young ones now. So mining is going to really affect us in a big way. It will actually break our hearts, and destroy us emotionally.

When the mining exploration started, us Kokatha women took our issues to conferences and gatherings. We went up north and spoke at a big meeting called by senior Aboriginal women. Over the years, we have also met with students, [and] non-Indigenous support groups. Now, we regularly attend the meetings of the Australia Nuclear Free Alliance, which is a network of environmentalist and Aboriginal people from around Australia. Anyone else fighting mining companies are coming on board with us now.

We had one blockade, when we stopped all exploration work. Kokatha Mula women will blockade if need be. We have a lot of support from other women around the country.

We used to always go out the back, out the bush, and clean up the rockholes as we could. But then, along with some 'greenies' we started twice yearly trips that we now call 'Rockhole Recovery'. It started off with a whole group of women; different nationalities from all parts of Australia that came with us.... 'Rockhole Recovery' has introduced people to our country and culture at risk.

We are also taking our country and stories to the cities. We have websites and photographic exhibitions...[These materials] help us draw in support, and are an eye-opener for a lot of people. Women do most of the work and planning. So, the women are very, very important to this campaign. Men come along, but women are doing most of the stuff on the ground and [to complete the] paperwork.

To the mining companies, I want to say get out—it's not your country, it's not your culture. Just go away—and stay away. And to the government, the demand is still: this land is not yours and you have no right to give it away. We are not going to let you." ↪

Eileen Wingfield, Kokatha Mula elder and recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize

↪ *It's been a beautiful country before [the Olympic Dam uranium mine]—but it looks terrible now... At the beginning, miners didn't have the decency to sit down and have a meeting with the people. Then they wondered why we were doing the blockade. That's how bad they are—they don't sit down and have a meeting with people or ask if it would be alright to drill. They just went on and touched whatever they wanted. They didn't care about Aboriginal land...*

We don't want that mine. We want the country healthy—good for the children, and the people, and everyone's health. In 1998 we formed the 'Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta'. We came together to protect our culture. We travelled everywhere and we stopped the radioactive waste dump. It was a little thing but it would have been worse if they had put it in.

I'd tell governments and BHP to leave it [the land] alone... From the very beginning, I was right in my own way that I didn't like mining, [I] didn't trust it... Let the whole world know—We don't want this [mine] and I'd be real happy if we can do something about it. ↪



Eileen Wingfield (left) with other community members are demanding an end to uranium mining. PHOTO: Breony Carbines.

Footnote:
McMahon, F. and M. Cervantes, Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies 2008/2009, Feb. 2009 <www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product_files/MiningSurvey20082009_Cdn.pdf>.

australia

LAKE COWAL: A COMMUNITY WITHOUT CONSENT



Canada's Barrick Gold operates this open-pit gold mine on traditional Wiradjuri Territory in New South Wales, Australia without the consent or approval of local communities. PHOTO: Natalie Lowrey.

Multinational mining corporations have been seeking access to New South Wales' Lake Cowal gold deposits since the mid-1990s. Mining exploration rights passed hands from North Ltd., to Rio Tinto, and then finally to Homestake, which later merged with Canada's Barrick Gold. Barrick now owns and operates the Lake Cowal mine, which has been in full production since 2006 and is currently under application to expand.

Lake Cowal is not only a place with significant gold deposits, but is a sacred site for the Wiradjuri Nation, and known as the "Sacred Heartland". It is also well known for an abundance of historical Wiradjuri cultural artifacts, as there is a long history of traditional initiation ceremonies at this site of cultural importance. During colonization, Lake Cowal was the site of many massacres between the Wiradjuri and the English colonizers. Martial law was declared against the Wiradjuri nation in 1924 and the Wiradjuri families, like many other Indigenous people in Australia, were moved onto Mission Stations in the mid 1800s. By the early 1900s, many of the young Wiradjuri girls were removed from their parents by government authorities and taken to the Cootamundra Girls Home. There, Wiradjuri girls were trained to become domestic servants and forced to abandon their traditions in favour of the British ways. Known as the "Stolen Generations", this systematic form of racism and violence had a devastating impact on the Wiradjuri as a People, separating families and communities from one another—and from their land.

Lake Cowal is not only culturally and historically significant, but is nature's nursery for over 172 species of birds as well as many frogs, turtles, reptiles, kangaroos and emus. Lake Cowal is listed on the Australian National Register as

a significant wetland. On paper, it is protected under two international agreements for migratory birds, the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement and the China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement. Lake Cowal is part of an intricate network of wetlands, lakes, rivers and underground water basins. The lake itself is ephemeral, undergoing periods of flooding and drying. It is currently dry, but as history indicates, Lake Cowal will flood again. We can only hope Barrick's gold mine and the waste it is producing will be cleaned up before the next period of flooding.

Consent to Destroy

In 2002, Barrick Gold began exploration drilling at Lake Cowal. However, the traditional land owners of the Wiradjuri Nation got an injunction against the drilling, which was damaging cultural artifacts. Under the State of New South Wales' National Parks and Wildlife Act, Barrick Gold was granted Section 90 Consent to Destroy Permits and Section 87 Consent to Remove Permits. These permits give permission to destroy and remove Aboriginal artifacts—without the consent of any living traditional owners or others from this community.

'Native Title' Claims at Lake Cowal

There were two 'Native Title' claims at Lake Cowal. While one has been withdrawn, the other one—which was submitted by the Mooka Kalara United Families—remains alive in the courts today. A 'Native Title' claimant group has the right to negotiate with a mining company. However, the Native Title Act specifies that when negotiations between a claimant group and a mining company fail after a six month

period, a mining lease may override the Traditional Owners' claims. The Mooka Kalara United Families have entered into the 'Native Title' process to be recognized as the rightful owners of Lake Cowal, while acknowledging and exposing the Native Title Act as an inherently racist piece of legislation. Representatives of the Wiradjuri also have sought court orders to inspect the mine lease areas for the identification and protection of historically significant locations.

Barrick Gold has—whenever possible—avoided negotiating with the Mooka Kalara United Families. Instead, Barrick has chosen to negotiate with the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation, which agreed to the mining at Lake Cowal in exchange for monetary royalties. The Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation has now withdrawn their land claim. There is rivalry between the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation and the Mooka Kalara United Families over the fate of Lake Cowal. This has caused much division in the local town of Condobolin, which is home to many Wiradjuri families. Those who were once close neighbours, now avoid each other on the streets.

Environmental and Social Concerns

The Mooka Kalara United Families share serious concerns about the safety of the mine, including the consumption of water, the use of cyanide, heavy metal pollution through dust and floods, and the disruption of the native and endemic flora and fauna species.

Barrick Gold has obtained consent from the New South Wales Government to use seventeen million liters of water a day. Over twenty farmers around the Lake Cowal mine have felt the effects of these water intensive operations. In the first two years of mining operations, the ground water aquifer dropped by thirty-five meters. While Barrick enjoys the extraordinary privilege of access to 7310 million liters of water a year, communities in the drought stricken area are suffering. Farmers are going bankrupt because crops will not grow on the parched land, and residents are drinking borehole water that has been treated with chlorine and fluoride.

Barrick brings 6,000 tonnes of cyanide to the mine every year to process the low-grade ore dug up from the open pit. The use of this deadly chemical in mining has caused much damage to riverine systems. Cyanide heap leaching is an inexpensive process that extracts gold flakes out of low-grade ore, and creates huge amounts of waste rock releasing deadly heavy metals such as mercury and arsenic. Many people are concerned that the cyanide will leach into the watertable and into surface waters in the next period of floods.

Workers at the Mine

Workers at Barrick's Lake Cowal mine are not unionized, and sign temporary work contracts. They have expressed many health and safety concerns about chronic levels of fatigue, pressures to operate heavy machinery in unpredictable weather, and working in close proximity to explosives without the implementation of sufficient precautionary measures.

Facts & Figures

- Barrick's Lake Cowal lease spans over twenty-six square kilometers.
- Six thousand tonnes of cyanide are transported to Lake Cowal per year for the processing of gold ore.
- There are two tailings dams within 3.5km of the edge of Lake Cowal.
- Barrick has 157 water licences with a total allocation of 7310 million liters a year.
- Since Barrick began operations at Lake Cowal, the water level in the local watersheds has fallen more than 30 meters.

Proposed expansion of Lake Cowal gold mine:

- Total surface area of the open-pit will expand from 70 hectares to 130 hectares, from 1km long to 1.25 km long, from 850m wide to 1.35km wide, from 325m deep to 440m deep
- Life of the mine to be extended from 13 years to 24 years
- Gold production to rise from a total of 2.7 million ounces to 3.5 million ounces of gold
- Tailings produced from mining will increase from 76 million tonnes to 129 million tonnes
- Total waste rock to be removed from the open-pit will rise from 128 million tonnes to 184 million tonnes



Kathleen Towney. PHOTO: Mia Pepper

Kathleen Towney, Mooka Kalara United Families

To the shareholders of Barrick Gold: Barrick should not have touched Lake Cowal. Now we can't take the children out there...The same with Mana Mountain. We can't take the children to see the rock hole that never dries up. We don't want them [Barrick] to touch Mana Mountain, like they have done at Lake Cowal. My father used to work at Mana Station and he use[d] to have his whole family out there...He'd take us out

to the lake, swimming and fishing. It's so sad to see the way it is now. All we've got now is memories. It's all been destroyed by Barrick Gold.))

Betty Atkinson, Mooka Kalara United Families

)) *What really hurt is how the division in the community—amongst the people—has all happened. It's because of the mining at Lake Cowal, which we don't want to happen. It's not only going to affect the environment—as well as our sacred sites—but [the problem is also] the cyanide that's used. There's very little water flowing in the Lachlan River today. And you know, if the cyanide gets a chance to spill into the river, there are no guarantees [about the future of the wetlands]...Now here at Condobolin we're used to big floods, and who is to say it's not going to happen again...*

I don't know how people sleep at night. I don't know what people see here. Do you see gold? Or is it money? Because money is the root of all evil. Or do you see blood? You know, this is where our people were massacred; where they were camped at

Lake Cowal. Our ancestors died out there, they were buried out there. And it's a place where the animals can go—out there, the kangaroos, emus, all the beautiful birds, all the beautiful creatures... All this has been destroyed because a white man and a black man came together because of greed. They sat down and schemed how to get around the community. It doesn't all happen in the brain. It happens in the heart. When you feel what you have in the heart—and that's the love for your people—then you forget about the greed...Now is the time we have to stand up and get together and fight for what we really own--what's ours. We are the custodians of this land; we are the custodians of Lake Cowal. Let's have this feeling again of what we once had—caring and sharing and respect—back into our community.))

—Interview, "Wiradjuri Forever" (Film)

In 2009, the Mooka Kalara United Families took Barrick Gold to court in an attempt to stop the proposed expansion. Although the Land and Environment Court of NSW granted an injunction on the expansion of the mine, Barrick appealed the injunction and won. The Mooka Kalara United Families continue to advocate against the expansion and for the

papua new guinea

Reviving the Lifeblood of the Community: Women Call for Environmental Rehabilitation of the Ok Tedi River, Western Province, Papua New Guinea

The Ok Tedi Mine is situated in Papua New Guinea, at the headwaters of the Ok Tedi River in the North Fly District of the Western Province, two thousand meters above sea level on Mount Fubilan. This remote area is prone to seismic activity and receives high levels of rainfall. Until 2001, Australia's BHP Billiton owned and operated this mine. Today, the current operating company is Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML). Shares are held by PNG Sustainable Development Program Limited (52 per cent), the Government of Papua New Guinea (30 per cent) and Canada's Inmet Corporation (18 per cent). Kennecott Copper Corporation began drilling in the area in the 1970s. By 1984, BHP (now BHP Billiton) acquired a mining lease and began using a cyanide heap leach system to extract the gold and copper ore. In 1999, BHP admitted that the environmental damage was so severe that the mine should 'never have opened'. As a result, after twenty years of operation, BHP sold its shares, which were subsequently taken on by the PNG Sustainable Development Program.

The eighty thousand tonnes of tailings and one hundred and twenty thousand tonnes of rock waste being dumped into the river system daily by the operators have caused a

huge environmental disaster. For the people who depend solely on the river and its aquatic life, the impacts have been devastating. Approximately fifty thousand people live along the stretch of river directly affected by the mine. They continue to demand that the operating company and the government address their concerns related to the negative impacts on the environment and people's health. To support the community, compensation has been offered to affected villagers. However, there are no quick and simple solutions to the devastating legacy of the mine, which will continue to impact the future generations living in the local villages.

The once vibrant economy sustained by agriculture and fisheries has been destroyed due the severe poisoning of the soil and water. Villagers are now no longer self-sufficient, as they became dependent on incomes derived by offering various services to the mine. Given that these businesses rely solely on the mining industry, it is unlikely that they will last after the mine closes. These villagers will therefore be left without an income, as well as without a healthy environment from which to draw their food and water.

Ordinary people along the river know they are living amidst

a contaminated watershed. The elders have clear memories about the changes that have taken place over time. Since palm sago and fish sustain these river peoples, the depleted fish stocks and destroyed tracts of lands along the riverbed have had devastating effects on the quality and quantity of food available. Many scientific studies have been carried out to demonstrate the contamination here. Even without these studies, ordinary women have personally experienced the extent of environmental damage. They are able to compare the sizes, quality, and quantities of local food, as well as the distances they have to travel—by canoe or by foot—to access food sources (such as patches of palm sago, vegetable gardens and fishing spots).

One local group, the Fly River Women's Association, affiliated with the Mine Affected Women's Foundation (MAWF), has provided a strong voice for the community. They have raised concerns about the violations of human and environmental rights caused by the mine, and demanded negotiated compensation settlements for affected communities. The group is led by motivated and articulate leaders such as Elizabeth Matit, who have also helped to strengthen national networks. By attending training workshops organized by MAWF in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Research and Development, members of the Fly River women's group have gained confidence, knowledge and advocacy skills. Now, they are able to inspire others to stand firm in what they believe in—not so much for themselves—but for future generations who might not ever have a river from which to fish.

ABOVE: [LEFT] Elizabeth Matit of the Fly River Women's Association. [RIGHT] Mine affected women meet to share experiences and discuss issues in their respective communities. PHOTOS: Mine Affected Women's Foundation.



BELOW: Toxic mine tailings and waste rock from the Ok Tedi mine have devastated the local watershed, destroying the livelihoods of thousands of people. PHOTO: Stuart Kirsch.



turtle island/ abya yala



Women are involved in small-scale tin mining in the community of Huanuni near the Posokoni mountain. PHOTO: L.R.A. Claire.

bolivia

TAKING OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE:

Women at the Huanuni Tin Mine Struggle for Respect

The town of Huanuni is located forty-nine kilometers from the city of Oruro in Bolivia, with a population of approximately thirty thousand people. The largest tin mine in the country has been established here, and is operated by the Huanuni Mining Company. In 1952, this site—which stretches across the mountain of Posokoni—was nationalized. With the imposition of the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Programme in the 1980s and 1990s, the Bolivian mining industry underwent a process of privatization, and thousands of Indigenous miners—including many women and children—lost their jobs. By 1990, the Mining Corporation of Bolivia (COMIBOL) and U.K. based Allied Deals (later known as RGB Resources) entered into a joint agreement to operate the mine. At the time, Indigenous mine workers continued to dig for tin ore in the shafts, carving out their independence by initiating the small-scale mine workers' co-operatives (coopertivos). In late September 2006, state employed mine workers—whose income was lower than those in the co-operatives—set up a highway blockade at

Huanuni to demand more jobs and better working conditions at the mine. Within weeks, there was a violent confrontation between small-scale mine workers from co-operatives and employees of the state mining company. Members of the co-operatives attempted to take over some sections of the tin deposits on Posokoni. As a result of this fighting, more than a dozen people were killed, and over sixty people were injured. The government decided to re-nationalize the mine—as per the agenda of current President Evo Morales—and hired four thousand people who had formerly been artisanal small-scale miners. Now, the mine employs approximately five thousand Huanuni residents. In August 2008, another violent confrontation broke out between the police and workers—who were on strike at the time. Once again, the result was tragic, as two miners died in the conflict. One mine worker who has been a strong advocate for the rights of women miners, "Mama Isidora", spoke to National Women and Mining Network representative, Lily Rossemary Ardaya Claire. The following is an excerpt of Isidora's testimony.

☞ My name is Isidora Vargas Lopez. I was born in Huanuni. I am fifty-one years old and I work at the Huanuni mine. Before this, I worked in the mines to crush tin as a member of a cooperativo. I am glad now to be an employee, as I enjoy several benefits. I work with my *compañeros* (male colleagues) in operating the ore-crushing machines. In my section of the mine, I am the only woman amongst fourteen men. I had the support and trust from my *compañeros* and *compañeras*, and as a result, I became appointed as general secretary of the workers' union. I have been working as a miner for fifteen years and I am proud to be a woman miner. I understand the suffering experienced by the working class. My comrades call me 'Mama Isidora' because I always struggle for respect.

When we [workers] organized road blockades, some of the *compañeros* could not comprehend the possibility of having a woman at the front of a protest movement when there were police clashes and violence...I did not support using confrontational tactics to blockade the road. But the *machismo* of my colleagues was overwhelming. Two *compañeros* were killed in the clashes with the police. After the violence happened, other *compañeros* could see that they had made a mistake by not listening to the women's perspectives. The pressures of having to cope with the



Women are often engaged in the sorting processes required in tin mines. PHOTO: L.R.A. Claire.

machismo of my *compañeros* caused me to decide to resign as general secretary in the mine workers' union.

As a former member of the mining cooperatives—and particularly as a woman—I have sought to raise awareness amongst other women of the importance of claiming these spaces [in the workers' rights movement]...Women need training, and we need to be able to take our rightful place.



Women miners organize to demand respect for their rights as workers and as community members. PHOTO: L.R.A. Claire.

In the beginning, there was more discrimination against women workers. Now, our *compañeros* usually appreciate our work as women. Before, the *machismo* was much more intense, which is what led to my resignation of the position of the general secretary of the mine workers' union. In the company, there are few women. There are only three hundred women out of a total of five thousand workers. In the general assemblies that bring all of the workers together, the whistles of the men do not let us talk. I do not think this is fair.

For fourteen years, I was collecting and clearing ore as an artisanal miner. I suffered from severe kidney and lung problems, as the hard work was detrimental to my health. Now...I am not exposed to the sun as before. Still, working in the mines, we suffer from diseases such as silicosis and rheumatism, and the possibility of a work accident—including being killed on the job. Certainly, there are health risks inside and outside the mine. Those in charge of industrial safety have given workshops on taking care of our health and safety. However, sometimes workers ignore such

precautions. But having a safe environment inside and outside the mine is important for our future. Ensuring a safe and healthy life for our children is most important.

In our town there is a lot of pollution due to the mining. This contamination will eventually affect our food production. We will not have enough food for the future...

In our community, the level of abuse against women by their partners is high. Young mothers are abandoned by their partners; there are suicides, drug abuse, and crimes committed by young people. Women have to provide guidance to their children so that they [the youth] will not take their own lives.

Women's movements in Huanuni have lost momentum and we need...to reorganize [ourselves]. We need to develop re-orientation courses for both men and women so that they can educate the children in this way [for gender equality]...

We are working as miners because there are no other alternative opportunities for work. We work for our children—we do not want them to have the same as we have experienced. We are working for a better future, and improvements for young miners that will be better than our situation. We, the women of the mines, are the breadwinners of our families. There are many widows, single mothers and abandoned women. There is no choice for us—we have to be both the mother and father for our children, giving them attention, an education, health and nourishment. ☺☺

About the Interviewer:

Lily Rossemery Ardaya Claure is from Oruro, Bolivia. She worked for ten years as a community radio host and producer of educational programs on the environment, human rights, local development and women's participation in Huanuni. Currently working with a local non-governmental organization on issues of food security and alternative health programs, she is also an active member of the Bolivian National Women and Mining Network. This coalition is composed of women miners, wives of workers in the mining area, NGOs, and other allies.

costa rica

BEYOND THE MYTHS:

The Realities and Concerns of Communities Affected by Mining in Costa Rica

The mining industry has brought environmental destruction, social disruption, and economic hardship to the small Latin American nation of Costa Rica. Just fifty-one thousand square kilometers in size, this country is internationally renowned for rainforests, geothermal hot springs, mountains covered by cloud forests, long expanses of beaches, and coastal mangrove forests. However, for residents of communities affected by gold mining, the reality is different. Over the past twenty years, four open-pit gold mines along the Pacific coast have provided ample evidence of the catastrophes caused by this industry. These projects have failed to bring benefits to our communities, and instead have led to the contamination of land and water, and caused rural and Indigenous Peoples alike to lose their livelihoods. These experiences have fueled our determination to urgently stop the current development of the Canadian owned "Las Crucitas Gold Mining Project"—before it begins.

Since the massive influx of Canadian mining companies into Costa Rica in the 1990s, many areas along the border of Nicaragua in the northern region, and along the Pacific coast near the Guanacaste National Park, are now being developed by mining companies for their operations. Proposals for expanding underground gold mining operations

are also advancing in areas in the Puntarenas Province near the Gulf of Nicoya. Although a mining moratorium was enacted in 2002, it did not apply to those operations that had already begun. As a result, many mining projects continued to expand. As of June 2008, the moratorium was repealed, allowing mining companies to seek extensive exploration leases and project permits at an unprecedented rate. During the moratorium, the national social movements that had been mobilizing against mining became less visible to the broader public, and lost much of the momentum we once had. However, throughout all of these years, many of the outspoken women activists from affected communities have remained committed to anti-mining campaigns, and have continued to organize collectively.

Healthy Communities Poisoned

Along the Pacific coastal zone where gold mining sites are located, many women fisherfolk and farmers have seen their livelihoods destroyed due to the sedimentation and contamination of waterways. As the soil has become dry and eroded, fertile land has been lost. Mangrove forests, vital to the maintenance of the coastal ecosystem, have died, while local rivers have either dried up, or have turned a

yellow colour and have a sickening chemical odour. Women have also noted the severe effects of the pollution from toxic metallic wastes on our health, and that of our children. In this area of Costa Rica, we are suffering from a high rate of miscarriages, and an abnormally high percentage of our children are being born with chromosomal disorders or deformed bodies. Rural populations are reporting skin irritations, gastric and respiratory problems and neurological disorders. Since none of these problems existed before the mining, most community members believe there is a connection to the chemicals—including cyanide and other heavy metals—that are spewed into the environment by the nearby gold processing plant. Women have also witnessed the disintegration of their families. Alcoholism, drug addiction, and chronic depression have all become more common. Meanwhile, the sex industry has become more prominent to meet demands from the male labour force at the mines. Mothers have also seen their teenage daughters become pregnant with the children of mine workers.

Confronting the Power of Canadian Mining Companies

In 1995, residents of Miramar and San Carlos were faced with the prospect that Canadian mining companies had been granted a lease for constructing an open-pit gold mine on our land. Located in a mountainous area, fourteen kilometers from the Gulf of Nicoya, this area is a place of streams, springs, vast underground aquifers, and tropical forests. Our homes are located in a tropical region that is already prone to torrential rainfall, landslides and flooding. In reaction to the news of the proposal to build the 'Bellavista Gold Mine', a coalition of concerned citizens, representatives of different non-governmental organizations, and academics formed the "Pacific Regional Front of Opposition to Gold Mining". We launched a successful campaign against the Bellavista Mine, at the time owned by the Canada's Rayrock Corporation. The proposal for the mine included the extraction of water from the Ciruelas River and aquifers (which had supplied drinking water to local populations for over a century), the clearing of a large area of forests, the construction of a cyanide heap leaching system with holding tanks in the river basin, and the development of a tailings pond. We feared that the entire marine ecosystem would become contaminated, and that the area would become more prone to landslides. We predicted that this mine project could turn into an environmental disaster. The project was put on hold, but re-emerged three years later when another Canadian company, Wheaton River Minerals, obtained the operating licence. This mining concession was larger than the initial one, and was designed to produce half a million ounces of gold through cyanide heap leaching over the course of approximately seven years.

Judicial procedures have been used by Canadian mining companies—and their local subsidiaries—on an ongoing basis to silence our protests. For example, lawsuits were launched by the Canadian mining company operators of the Bellavista Gold Mine against outspoken activists, including myself (in 1997) and municipal councillor Marta Blanco (in 2002). Recently, journalists willing to expose the destruction caused by mining companies have also faced defamation suits. Meanwhile, lawsuits were launched by the Costa Rican subsidiaries of Canada's Glencairn Gold Corporation (now B2 Gold) against



Women protest against at a gathering of the Canadian mining industry and local authorities in Miramar. PHOTO: S. Torres.

the municipal councils of Montes de Oro and Puntarenas. Local politicians decided to publicize their opposition to mining by passing several resolutions against open-cast gold mining, as well as declarations that foreign and national mining corporations would be considered 'personas non grata' (i.e. unwelcome).

When the Bellavista Mine Project was being developed, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was quickly approved by the Costa Rican government, but questioned nationally and internationally by experts in the environmental, science, engineering, geology, health, and social fields. At the time, women from the affected communities raised the concern that lawyers working with the company had also been providing legal advice to the government. Meanwhile, Canadian companies and their Costa Rican subsidiaries convinced the local fisheries industries—based along the nearby Gulf of Nicoya—that their activities would not be impacted by deforestation, soil erosion, and the sedimentation or cyanide heap leach system beside the watersheds. These businesses have remained suspiciously silent, despite current evidence of cyanide contamination in the waterways.

Predictions Become Reality: Crisis At Bellavista

Operations at the Bellavista Mine began in 2005, but were shut down only two years later, in July 2007. The operating company, under the name Glencairn Gold Corporation, cited concerns that heavy rainfalls had dislodged heaps of cyanide tainted waste and waste rock piles. Apparently, cracks had been reported in the cyanide leach pads as early as May of that year. Then in October, a major landslide occurred at the site, destroying the then abandoned gold processing plant and flooding the cyanide leaching pads. The concerns of the women of Miramar, and of others from the surrounding communities had been proven correct. Two years after the mine closed, our communities are left with a legacy of water contamination and depletion, while acid mine drainage remains a serious threat. To date, the responsible mining companies refuse to allow independent laboratories to test the water, and the full results of their own testing have not been made public. Many of us consider it unfair that a foreign company has destroyed the municipal aquifer that supplied our community with drinking water for over a century. Even after this disaster, the little support

our community has received from the national government demonstrates an institutional incapacity to deal with the negative environmental, health, social, and economic impacts posed by the mining sector.

While our communities anxiously await the day when there will be a clean-up of the site, it is unclear which company to hold responsible, since the corporate ownership of the mine continues to shift. For example, the original owner of the mine, Wheaton River Minerals, was acquired by Glencairn Gold Corporation, which later collapsed and sold its shares to Central Sun Mining. In turn, Central Sun recently merged with Canadian mining company B2 Gold.

Even in the face of outright hostility by mining company executives, and the indifference of local and national governments, we have never stopped raising our concerns and our voices in protest. We also continue to challenge that there is any real justice in the funds allotted to our community by the mining company for the damages caused by the landslides and cyanide contamination. According to municipal councillor Nuria Corrales, "The money our community received from the company does not compensate for the loss of the very water sources we depended upon."

Future of "Biosphere Reserve of Water and Peace" In Danger

In an area three kilometers from the San Juan River, a natural border between the northern region of Costa Rica and southern Nicaragua, 262 hectares of forested lands are being cleared to make way for the "Las Crucitas Gold Mine". Entirely owned by Canada's Infinito Gold, the land concession covers eight hundred square kilometers. There will be two open pits—averaging sixty-six meters in depth—to extract up to 2.4 million ounces of gold using the cyanide heap leaching method. Requiring the pumping of millions of liters of water per hour out of local waterways, the mining project is predicted to destroy the livelihoods of the fisherfolk and farmers residing along the river who rely on the steady flow of river water. The mining concession for "Las Crucitas" was granted in December 2001, but later annulled by the Supreme Court of Justice in 2004 because the legal requirements for an EIA were not fulfilled. However, in 2007, a follow-up EIA was submitted by Infinito Gold describing an updated proposal to open the mine. Despite

the official "National Moratorium on Mining", approval to begin the development of the site was granted. Although community groups have filed several requests with the Prosecutor's Office and the Supreme Court to investigate violations of constitutional verdicts concerning biological diversity, construction of facilities at "Las Crucitas" is advancing. Not only does the mine pose a threat to the well-being of all Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans on either side of the San Juan River, but also to the survival of rare and unique animals and plants, such as the green parrot and yellow almond tree.

Speaking Truth to Power

Our struggles are based on highly uneven grounds. From an economic perspective, corporations allocate their resources to lobby the government, gain publicity, and win the 'right' to impose their mining proposals on communities. Meanwhile, communities that take a stand against mining have to resort to hiring lawyers on a pro-bono basis, and to building a case based on the technical irregularities of mining projects. We then find ourselves facing a strong alliance between our government—which declares mining to be in the 'best interests' of the country—and the well-endowed mining companies. Meanwhile, the Canadian government promotes mining investment and expansion of projects by their nation's companies. However, when the mining projects collapse, Canada remains silent. Canadian authorities do not supervise their companies to make sure they comply with local and international law. Public pension funds, such as the Canadian Pension Plan, often have ethical standards by which to evaluate and approve their holdings. Yet, they continue to hold substantial shares in the very mining companies that destroy our communities.

Unfortunately, we, the women of Miramar, have little hope that the decisions made by our representatives in government and the judicial authorities will protect our forests, care for the land, and defend our rights to clean water sources. On a daily basis, we wonder:

Who will ensure—and pay for—the rehabilitation of the lands and waters that have been contaminated by the Bellavista Gold Mine?

ecuador

IN DEFENSE OF MOTHER EARTH: Ecuadorian Women Mobilize

In Ecuador, large-scale mining operations have not yet become the norm. In the past, mining was done by self-employed miners using traditional artisanal techniques. However, in the last decade, small- and medium-sized companies have begun to displace local Indigenous miners, particularly in the gold industry. There are serious social and environmental consequences resulting from the mining projects developed by transnational companies that are threatening the rich biodiversity of the land. Unfortunately, the government has failed to adequately regulate mining companies.

In 1993, the World Bank approved a loan of millions of dollars (US) to the Ecuadorian government to implement the Mining Development and Environmental Quality Project. The main purposes of the project were to develop a database to support the expansion of mining projects, draw up a comprehensive 'Mining Map', and inform the 'modernization' of Ecuador's mining laws. Data was collected from protected forest reserves, Indigenous territories, and peasant farmlands—without the consent of local populations. The work carried out in the name of this study has become evident in the rapid pace of agreements made between the



Members of the Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama have been tirelessly organizing in their communities to stop destructive open-pit mining projects. PHOTOS: Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama.

government and mining companies. The land leases granted for mining are located on agricultural and ranching lands, Indigenous Peoples' territories, expanses of protected Amazon rainforest, and at the sites of other ecologically sensitive areas—such as those near glacial springs and aquifers. Yet, when the government granted the companies use of land concessions that are thousands of hectares in size, the communities where these projects exist were neither informed nor consulted.

In the rural regions of Ecuador, many men have migrated to work in the cities and abroad. As a result, there are greater numbers of women than men in this region. Women are the ones who stay behind to take care of the family and tend to the agricultural fields. Our small agricultural fields are the basis of food sovereignty, as we are still able to harvest corn, potatoes, beans, yucca, vegetables, medicinal plants, and various fruits. As well, pigs, chickens, ducks, turkeys, and cuyes (guinea pigs) are raised for consumption and sold for extra income. Consequently, women directly feel threatened by the impending impacts of mining on the water and land.

In Resistance to Open-Pit Mining: Women Take the Lead

Throughout Ecuador, there has been growing resistance to the transnational mining companies that develop mega-projects to extract our copper, gold, silver and other mineral resources. Indeed, since the 1990s, communities have been mobilizing to protest against the transfer of precious natural resources to transnational companies. Women who have been peacefully and legally mobilizing in resistance to mining decided to organize a strong front to unite our efforts. Given that it is our families and future generations who will be stripped of a livelihood, we perceive the mining operations as a direct threat to life itself. Furthermore, since the mining sector relies heavily on a male labour force, we believe that an expansion of this industry could lead to the growing marginalization of women. By 2007, the “Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama” (Movement of Women Defenders of Mother Earth) was established to bring together women from different communities across the country affected by mining mega-projects.

Most of the transnational companies our communities are confronting are Canadian, and include: Corriente Recursos-Ecuacorriente-ECSA, Kinross Gold Corporation, International Minerals Corporation, IAMGold, Georox Resources (formerly Oromonte Resources), and Copper Mesa Mining (formerly

Ascendant Copper Corporation). Our network of activists is concentrating on efforts to stop mining operations which are in the final exploration stages, and are being fast-tracked by the government. Three projects are of particular concern and are highlighted in our national anti-mining campaigns. These include the “Mirador Pananza/San Carlos Projects”, the “Rio Blanco Project”, and the “Qumsacocha Project”.

Corriente Recursos-Ecuacorriente-ECSA is the current owner of the Mirador Pananza and San Carlos copper projects, which are located in the Amazon region of the Cordillera de El Condor, around the Zamora River basin. Open-pit mining would poison the land and water on which local Shuar Indigenous Peoples, and small-scale cattle ranchers as well as farmers depend for their survival.

The Rio Blanco gold-silver mine is wholly owned by the International Minerals Corporation, covering fifty-eight square kilometers of land within the El Cajas National Park on the Andean plains. At an altitude ranging between 3000 to 4000 meters above sea level, this site contains over 235 glacial lakes which feed streams flowing to the Pacific Coast and Amazon River.

The Qumsacocha Project is owned and operated by IAMGold, and is also located on the Andean plains where there are many glacial springs. Local communities here depend upon the waterways for their daily needs as well as for fishing. Therefore, peoples' sources of sustenance and survival would be destroyed if mining operations contaminate and severely deplete these waters.

The Crafting of Legal Loopholes to Legitimize Plunder

Ecuador's former constitution—effective until December 2007—stipulated that people were to be consulted prior to the granting of mining concessions affecting their communities. However, before these mining concessions were granted, communities affected by the current mining projects were never informed—much less consulted to obtain their consent. As community activists, we have been asserting that these concessions are illegal, illegitimate and unconstitutional.

When a new constitution was being drafted, communities affected by mining projects called upon the Constituent Assembly to declare Ecuador a “Mining-Free” zone. This demand was not heeded, but the Constituent Assembly did issue a “Mining Mandate” in April 2008. They recognized that mining companies had been advancing operations without

following legal protocols for community consultations and environmental impact assessments. The mandate called for such projects to be “terminated without any form of economic compensation”. However, this declaration remained only on paper. If it had been applied, approximately 4,500 mining concessions would have been cancelled.

Recently, we have witnessed how our government has done everything possible to legalize and legitimize what many perceive as an invasion by transnational companies that are plundering the country’s mineral wealth. In late 2008, Ecuador’s new constitution established the “Good Living Regime on Biodiversity and Natural Resources”. Even though this law outlines a process for community consultation during the proposal stages of mineral extraction projects, it simultaneously stipulates that the final decision for project approval will be made by the government. We are therefore without any right to decide about the use of land on which we base our livelihoods. Ultimately, the interests of transnational mining corporations will prevail over those of affected communities. As a result, people’s organizations and communities reject this unjust legislation because it denies our right to oppose mining mega-projects. Given the current stance of the government in support of the transnational mining sector, our entire country will now be open for mineral exploration.

Concerning Impending Ecological Disasters

The devastating impacts that these mining projects could have on water are amongst the main concerns of community members. With a surface area of only 256,370 square kilometers, Ecuador’s ecosystems are tightly inter-connected. If large-scale mining is developed in Ecuador, mine tailings will leach heavy metals into the water, sedimentation will occur, and there will be a serious depletion of underground aquifers. All of these problems will have negative repercussions on the environment and communities throughout the country. At this



Women protest in front of the legislature buildings to demand an end to open-pit mining and raise their voices against state repression. PHOTO: L. Solano.

time, the state does not have the political will power or the regulatory capacity to prevent such potentially widespread environmental disasters.

Our Communities Turned Upside-Down

Already, the impacts of transnational mining companies coming into our communities have been extremely serious. From the moment that our rights to information and prior consultation are violated by the state and the mining companies, our communities are turned upside-down. When people mobilize and hold protest actions to demand respect, they have been violently repressed by public security forces, the police and the military. When we raise our voices publicly, the government labels us as “fanatics”, “fundamentalists”, “childish environmentalists”, “extremists”, “terrorists”, and “criminals”. We are also accused of being “paid by foreign NGOs that wish to provoke chaos,” and face harassment and ridicule by authorities. For example, on national radio, President Correa has claimed that leaders of the Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama are motivated by personal interest and “need to see a psychiatrist”.

In our communities, divisions—within and between families—have disrupted our lives. Once relatively harmonious relationships have disintegrated as tensions are created between those considered “pro-mining”, and those who are “anti-mining”. Sometimes, mining companies strategically offer jobs to men with the sole objective to win the support of a family that was initially against the mining proposal. However, such actions by the company exacerbate divisions along gender lines. There have been cases of women activists being brutally beaten and verbally assaulted by men—in their own families—who support the mining operations. Some women have been so severely injured that they are no longer physically able to carry out the strenuous farm duties of planting, harvesting and rearing livestock, or to have the hand dexterity needed for traditional embroidery work. As a result, women, who bravely speak out against the destruction caused by mining companies, are now unable to be economically self-sufficient. Opportunities to pass on the skills of farming, animal husbandry, and weaving to the young generations are also lost.

Attempts to Silence Our Voices and Criminalize Our Actions

In January 2009, a new mining law was approved, without the participation of people’s popular organizations. There was an escalation of community frustration and resistance during this time, which was met with an extraordinarily high level of state repression. Criminal proceedings were launched against entire communities, and against a number of the individual local women activists involved in the social movements against mining. For example, two outspoken activists, Rosa Yolanda Gutama and Virginia Chunir, have been accused of “obstructing a public roadway” during a blockade, and are eligible for up to three years in prison. However, they never even participated in this blockade. Therefore, we believe that they were arbitrarily, unjustly, and illegally detained. During the arrest and detention procedures, they were also verbally, physically, and psychologically abused by the police, who called them “old and ignorant” and “foul-smelling Indians”. Although they were released from custody, an appeal from the state prosecutor has resulted in an arrest warrant being issued against them. Yolanda and Virginia are mothers who subsist on growing corn, beans, potatoes,

and vegetables, and rearing guinea pigs, hens, and pigs. In addition, a number of members of the Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama—particularly those involved in campaigns against the mining projects operated by Corriente Resources—have been interrogated and accused of “organized terrorism”.

Strengthening Our Resolve: Defending Collective Rights and Demanding Dignity

Recognizing the urgency of this situation, the Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama decided to begin coordinating solidarity actions to condemn the prosecution and criminalization of activists resisting transnational mining operations. As detailed above, many of us have personally been unjustly persecuted, arbitrarily arrested and incarcerated, and now face trumped up criminal charges. We have held protests during which women chained our hands together and covered our mouths as a symbol of the repression that we are facing. Holding “National Assemblies of Women Affected by Mining” has allowed us to strengthen our resolve and the coordination of our campaigns.

The Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama is part of the “National Coordinating Committee in Defense of Life and Sovereignty”. This coalition brings together peoples’ organizations and affected communities concerned by the impacts of transnational mining corporations. We are raising our voices to demand that Ecuador be declared free of mining. We also work with women activists from Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru and Bolivia, who have been affected by mining and are part of the Latin American Women’s Union (ULAM). With this regional group, we are raising our voices to call for the right to defend our rights—to land, water, and life.

Denouncing the repression of community members who do not want corporate mining on their land.
PHOTO: Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama.



Women demonstrate against the imprisonment of fellow activists involved in demanding an end to open-pit mining on their land.
PHOTO: Frente de Mujeres Defensoras de la Pachamama.

guatemala

YA BASTA! [“ENOUGH IS ENOUGH”]:

Mayan People’s Assemblies of the Western Guatemalan Highlands Call for Goldcorp Inc.’s Marlin Mine to Close

Located in the western Guatemalan highlands, the municipalities of San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipakapa are home to approximately fifty thousand people, most of whom are Mayan Mam and Mayan Sipakakan peasant farmers. For generations, they have depended upon subsistence farming to survive. However, ever since the construction of an open-pit silver-gold mine by Canada’s Glamis Gold (purchased by Goldcorp Inc. in 2006), this area has become plagued by a pervasive atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and simmering hostilities, as well as by chronic illnesses, despair, and urgent concerns over clean water supplies.

In November 2003, the Guatemalan government granted the fully-owned subsidiary of Goldcorp, Montana Exploradora de Guatemala, a licence to develop an open-pit gold mine that would use the highly controversial and environmentally devastating cyanide heap leach system in San Miguel Ixtahuacán. Ultimately, the Indigenous

farmers residing in the area were treated as if they did not even exist, being neither consulted nor informed about the project. Meanwhile, environmental, health, social, and cultural impacts of the mine project were also never properly explained, considered, or understood locally. With a \$45 million (US) investment from the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation, and backing from the Canadian government, the “Marlin Mine Project” advanced rapidly. The plan was to build an open-pit mine encompassing a total of five square kilometers, affecting all fifty thousand inhabitants residing in the vicinity of the mine.

Despite the fact that community opposition to the mine was vocal, articulate and strong, gold production began in 2005. Across the region, municipalities have continued to come together in assemblies and consultations, clearly demanding that there be no expansion of the Marlin mine and no future mining in the area.



Goldcorp's open-pit Marlin Mine in Guatemala has destroyed the fertile lands and contaminated the watersheds relied upon by local Mayan peasants. PHOTO: Rights Action.

Fostering and exacerbating community divisions, Goldcorp Inc. has proceeded to offer individual contracts for jobs and land in place of collective decision-making, while privatizing social assistance in place of public and collective ownership of the development process. The Indigenous communities now affected by Goldcorp's mining operations were already weakened by chronic poverty, the legacies of the internal armed conflict of the 1980s, as well as the deeper history of marginalization and exclusion of the Mayan People from social, economic, and political realms. Goldcorp effectively took advantage of these weaknesses, and has robbed the affected communities of opportunities to strengthen Indigenous organization and leadership, as well as to direct their own future—on their own terms.

When members of the Sipakapa community heard about the mine in 2005, they organized a referendum, arguing that the respect of their right to permit—or reject—an open-pit gold mine on their land is guaranteed under Guatemala's obligations to adhere to the International Labour Organization's Convention 169. This convention holds signatory countries, including Guatemala, responsible for ensuring the protection of the right of Indigenous communities to be consulted in good faith before industrial activities take place on their lands. The people of Sipakapa voted overwhelmingly against the mine, but their collective decision was promptly challenged in court by Goldcorp. In order to reassert their continued opposition to the mining operations, and their anger at the lack of adequate compensation for their loss of land, the people of San Miguel Ixtahuacán blockaded access roads to the mine in early 2007. Trumped up criminal charges were quickly filed against some participants, and after a year of legal battles, all those who had been detained were released, with two

still having to pay substantial fines. In 2008, eight young Indigenous women were arrested with charges claiming they were “obstructing mining operations”. Legal actions taken by Goldcorp against community members have incited further frustrations, as affected families feel that when they attempt to speak out against the destruction of their health and the environment—in defense of their rights—they are criminalized and brutally silenced. According to one of the Mayan women who was arrested last year, “We don't have money to go looking for the law, and they [government and company officials] said there was no law for me.”

Now the effects of the Marlin Project are tearing apart the very fabric of the local Mayan Mam communities, as families become divided over their perspectives on the mine, and their health becomes ravaged by the toxic contaminants emitted from the mine. They testify that:

- their water wells and small rivers were not dry before the mine arrived;
- their homes did not crack and crumble before the mine began using massive amounts of explosives (above- ground and in the labyrinth of tunnels below);
- their animals now die of unknown causes after drinking from the local streams and rivers;
- people's hair did not fall out before the mine opened;
- people did not get rashes all over the bodies before the mine was built.

Below is a testimonial of an Indigenous Mayan Mam

woman from a community located beside Goldcorp's Marlin Mine. A teacher in the local school, she is also a mother. The testimonial was recorded in January 2009, at which time the woman asked for her name to be withheld.

“ I am from another town in San Miguel Ixtahuacán. I live here now, after arriving a few years ago to work in the school. Everything was calm when I arrived. People were very nice and united. When the mine started, everything started to change...[M]aybe three years ago...everything changed [after the mining companies came]. People became divided. People are more confrontational, rude, and arrogant.

Everything has changed—the environment too. Because we would go out for walks in the mountains with the children...Now we don't see the mountains, only the dust that comes from there. The environment is hotter, and more so with the dust. Before it wasn't like this. We would go out for walks in the mountains with the children and we would go by foot because there was no road...We don't take the children out anymore because where would we go with them?... We do not go out for anything. We cannot go walking to other towns, on other paths, because it is private property—[the land is] dangerous to cross through and [is] restricted, so we can't go. We are shut in...

When I arrived, there was water. There was even water in the school...The children washed their hands—but not any more. The school does not get water anymore and the children don't wash...Fifteen children between six and fourteen years of age [have skin problems]. There are nearly one hundred and eighty [children in the school]...Parents don't want to go to the mine [owners] to show their children... until some of them [the children] die.

My son does not get better...He has had a rash for more than ten months. He is a year and half old... [This rash is] on his entire body from his face to his feet, to the tips of his toes. He had a lot [of bumps] on his feet and now they are on his legs, his face, and his fingers. I went everywhere [to search for treatments]. I went to dermatologists, pediatricians, doctors... [and used] general medicine. They [the doctors] took a skin sample [and] a blood test, but they did not give me the results. I already used medicine for scabies—but it is not scabies! Because I had already used soap, creams, lotions, and I even boiled his clothes

in water with bleach... The clothes were destroyed in the water... Yes, I threw away the clothes, but nothing happened!...They [doctors] told me it was due to fleas. But I don't have any animals. I do not have a dog, cat—nothing—not even chickens. [My son] cries a lot. It is like he feels uncomfortable. When I bathe him, he is calmer. My baby suffers a lot...

I recognize that there are those who are in favour of the mine and those who are against, so these two groups are fighting...Even if the workers are getting sick, they continue to work there. I know a father of a family who got ill in the mine...They found metals in his blood, but he does not have results. He has a headache, fever, and red eyes. His work is surely the cause of his illness. He also has a severe intestinal infection...

Truly from my heart, I have wanted people to rise up...[and] that all the people [in San Miguel Ixtahuacán] recognize their reality. But they don't do it...There are several of us who would like the people to wake up...The mine [company executives]...are so clever! They are providing projects [for us] with the hopes that the people [will] shut up. ”

As suggested by the Mayan villagers, allied human rights and environmental justice groups, and the World Bank, the troubling situation at the Marlin Mine provides ample justification for Goldcorp Inc. to suspend its operations. Consent of all affected communities needs to be obtained in a credible and inclusive manner, and thorough environmental and health tests have to be completed with full transparency. As long as Goldcorp Inc. takes advantage of Guatemala's lack of compliance with ILO Convention 169, as well as with legally guaranteed social and economic rights, then this company will continue to be implicated in fuelling conflict and hardship in the Indigenous territories of Guatemala.



Widespread opposition to the mine was demonstrated during a local referendum.
PHOTO: Rights Action.

panama

INDIGENOUS AND CAMPESINA WOMEN FROM VERAGUAS, PANAMA CALL FOR AN END TO OPEN-PIT MINING



Indigenous and peasant women have been at the forefront of popular movements to resist attempts by transnational mining companies to take over the lands relied upon by entire communities. PHOTO: O. Carrasquilla.

Our Indigenous and peasant communities, all of which are dependent on the rich biodiversity of the Panamanian forests, are threatened by open-pit copper and gold mining operations. The province of Veraguas in Panama contains vast water and forest resources upon which we base our survival. However, these areas are already contaminated by open-pit mining, and our water sources have been virtually destroyed. Thousands of fish from the tributaries of different local rivers have died as a consequence of cyanide poisoning from the ongoing gold and copper mining operations. Indigenous and peasant communities—and especially the women—have been mobilizing to say ‘No’ to mining. We, the women of communities affected by mining, are concerned by the loss of land, the loss of biodiversity of our surroundings, the many health problems we never saw before, and the overall resulting impoverishment of our lives. In our communities, we are losing our traditional ways—of respecting one another, the earth, and life itself. Our ways of collective decision-making and community participation have been overridden by mining companies. Representatives of companies come into our communities and say they are supporting our development—pretending they are doing something for our community, and taking over as if they were our government.

Some men in our communities are employed at the mines. However, in reality, the companies do not provide many job opportunities. Meanwhile, we—the women—hardly ever get a

chance to be properly educated, let alone be employed. It is a problem that many of us remain ignorant—unable to read or write. Since the mining companies offer financial benefits and gifts of alcohol to those who do not speak out against the mining, our families have become divided—between and amongst different generations, as well as the women and men.

We are concerned by the developments at the Petaquilla mine, a Canadian copper-gold mine along the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. Canadian mining companies do not pay taxes, and do not respect national regulations or laws. As a result, we believe our mining laws need to be reviewed and reformed in a process through which we can be active participants. In addition, based on the recommendations of communities nationwide, Panama needs to create laws to ensure sustainable socio-environmental development. If we protest against the mines, the police fire rounds of tear gas into the crowds, and we may be arrested. We are calling for an end to the persecution of leaders and members of our communities, and our organizations which oppose open-pit mining.

As a result of the dire consequences of open-pit mining on the livelihoods of Indigenous and peasant communities, we united to establish the Panamanian Network Against Mining (Red Antiminera Panameña) in 2008. We—the Indigenous and peasant women—have taken a lead in the formation of this alliance. Given the current socio-environmental conflicts



A strong alliance of peoples' movements is emerging in Panama to demand a moratorium on large-scale and open-pit mining. PHOTO: O. Carrasquilla.

caused by mining, and in particular, the dangers related to open-pit mining, we became determined to mobilize nationwide. We are also promoting sustainable alternatives that are rooted in community perspectives because activities related to our land, forests, and water should benefit our communities. We are demanding that our municipal governments keep our communities free from open-pit mining, and that the national government also declare Panama a nation free from open-pit mining.

After Word

In November 2008, the Panama National Environmental Agency fined Canada's Petaquilla Gold and called on the company to suspend operations until the mine complied with

national environmental standards. These orders have never been followed. In May 2009, peasants, Indigenous Peoples and environmental activists set up a peaceful blockade on the highway leading to the mine to demand an end to the devastation of their homeland, and a closure of the project. After ten days, riot police arrested approximately twenty people, reportedly using brutal methods to disperse the group. A number of the local children, women and men who were participating in the non-violent protest action were injured. Despite this repression, community members have vowed to continue their campaign until the open-pit mine has closed. Popular protests and road blockades to stop Petaquilla are ongoing.

canada

ARDOCH ALGONQUIN FIRST NATION AND URANIUM EXPLORATION



Police officer proceeding to forcibly remove Ardoch community members from proposed mine site, 2007. PHOTO: M. LaPointe.

Ardoch is an Anishinaabek community located in the Madawaska, Mississippi and Rideau watersheds on Turtle Island in the Canadian province of Ontario. Our people's land rights to this territory are legally recognized by the Canadian Constitution, and historically predate European settlement. Uranium exploration is being conducted on the unceded homeland of the Algonquin Peoples (Frontenac County) by Frontenac Ventures Corporation (FVC).

Initially, FVC's exploration activities were spread over 33,000 acres. Frontenac Ventures sought government approval, and secured permits and leases without prior informed consent of our community. The province of Ontario has a "free entry" system for mining. This means that mineral exploration and mining interests—whether prospectors or companies—supersede private ownership and First Nations' titles to the land. Currently,

FVC is concentrating on specific areas rich in uranium deposits, and drilled fifteen boreholes during May and June of 2008. In the early winter of December 2008, a neighbouring community, Shabot Obaadjiwan, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with FVC, the Ontario Provincial Government and the Algonquins of Ontario (a group representing particular Algonquin communities willing to participate in the land claims negotiations). However, the Ardoch community has withdrawn from this negotiation process because we view it as flawed and highly problematic.

Frontenac Ventures had already tagged trees on the property of non-Algonquin neighbours when we heard the news in 2006 that our community's lands had been staked for mineral exploration. We tried in various ways to engage in a meaningful dialogue with FVC and the provincial government. Nevertheless, it appeared that there was a pre-determined decision for the uranium exploration to go ahead without our permission, meaningful consultation, or an environmental impact study. In 2007, Harold Perry and William Commanda—two highly respected elders in our Algonquin communities—signed a “Moratorium on Uranium Exploration and Mining” in our homelands. When the province of Ontario failed to respond to our concerns and correspondence, members of our community made the decision to physically occupy the proposed mining site. FVC filed a legal motion to have us removed from the site and arrested. They also launched a \$77 million (Canadian) lawsuit against us.

As Ardoch co-chief Paula Sherman recounts:

“Our goal was not to negotiate for part of the proceeds from exploration, but to challenge the right of the province to issue mineral claims and permits on lands that were covered by a comprehensive land claim and which had never been surrendered or sold to the Crown...If the Province did not have the right to issue permits or register claims filed by FVC, then it would be forced to pull the permits and revoke the claims... We agreed to mediated talks in October of 2007...

The position of the Province was that the staking had already occurred and...[they] only planned to discuss where drilling would occur and how many holes there would be. Our position...was that consultation needed to go back and start from the point when no staking occurred. We did not consider anything else to be meaningful consultation...” As a result of the failure of the negotiations process, the legal charges by FVC against members of the Algonquin community who had been involved in the land reclamation were affirmed:

“[I]n February of 2008, we were allowed to provide evidence to the court in the form of testimony by our negotiator Robert Lovelace, who offered our collective reasoning for disobeying the court order to leave the site...Ontario law allowed the issuance of permits to a third party interest to conduct work that had been banned by Algonquin law. Secondly, Ontario law criminalized Algonquin citizens for protecting our lands and waterscapes...”

On February 13th 2008, Bob Lovelace, retired chief of



Ardoch community members deliver water from the headwaters of the Mississippi River by canoe flotilla to the provincial legislature, summer 2007. PHOTO: M. LaPointe.

the Ardoch, was sent to prison for six months. A joint press release circulated by the Ardoch and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nations clarified that Bob “declared that he could not obey a court order which banned peaceful protest against uranium exploration on his community’s territory in Eastern Ontario, because he must obey Algonquin law which forbids uranium mining and exploration.” Bob served one hundred days of his sentence. Amid a historic gathering of Indigenous Peoples and activists at the end of May 2008, Bob was released. The provincial Ontario Court of Appeals declared that his sentence was unduly harsh. Since then, the Ardoch Algonquin have been consciously focusing on strengthening our own community and deciding upon possible strategies available to us to defend Ardoch territory, researching the impacts of uranium mining, as well as continuing to educate the Ontario public through numerous speaking engagements.

Personal Impacts as an Anishinaabekwe



Ardoch Algonquin and allies camp out on the proposed uranium mining site, 2007. PHOTO: M. LaPointe.

This continuing situation has crushed any belief I had in the political and judicial systems. I feel we have been criminalized for protecting the land, and discriminated against on the basis of our lack of status under the Indian Act. The incursions onto—and degradation of—Indigenous lands due to mineral exploration and to the extraction of resources are not just our problems. These are problems for everyone. The earth will heal in time. But we need the earth to be healthy so that we can all live here and be healthy. When did people forget that we are all related and

linked? The provincial and national governments are still pushing for an expansion of nuclear energy plans, and are still blind to the effects of radioactivity on all creatures. We must persevere in our efforts to seek justice. We also cannot forget that corporate and economic interests are far more important to the government than upholding official agreements, laws and pronouncements claiming respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

canada

CONFRONTING CORPORATE WEBS OF POWER:

Community Poisoned by Vale Inco's Nickel Refineries Demands Justice



Diana Wiggins(left) and Ellen Smith (right) stand in front of the Vale Inco nickel refinery in Port Colborne. PHOTO: Diana Wiggins.

My name is Diana Wiggins and in 1991, I purchased a house in Port Colborne, Ontario. My daughter was two years old. In 1993, I had a son. Both of my children attended a small, quiet school and enjoyed the outdoors.

In late 1999 and early 2000, there were a couple of articles in the local newspaper on the “contamination issue” in our town. There was a public announcement about joining a committee being created as part of a process that Inco was conducting, called the Community Based Risk Assessment (CBRA). This CBRA was developed to assess the whole community and conduct scientific research to detect the human health risks, crop risks, natural environment risks and property devaluation caused by nickel contamination. I lived out in the country, kilometers away

from the smokestacks of Inco, and wondered how it could possibly affect my family. Soon, I found out just how severely this pollution does affect us all.

In March 2000, my son brought home a newsletter from school which announced a meeting pertaining to the soil contamination on school property. I wanted trustworthy information about the contamination. Unfortunately, it appeared that the municipal and school board authorities at the meeting were deliberately misleading about the levels of nickel, copper and cobalt in school drinking water.

Over the next few months, we did our own community research. I had my son tested for nickel in his urine. But when I went to my son's pediatric doctor for the test results, he was elusive. The doctor wouldn't look me in the eye,

stood with his back to me and stated that he “wasn’t allowed to discuss this issue with me.”

For decades, Inco had been dumping “green liquor” (electrolyte nickel) underground into an aquifer below their property in the neighbourhood known as the Rodney Street area. But over time, a fracture developed in the bedrock. By 2000, this “green liquor” was seeping into the water table and into the Welland Canal, where the City of Port Colborne draws its drinking water, as well as into Lake Erie and surrounding areas. When we questioned the safety of our drinking water, we were told that the nickel (a known carcinogen) found in our tap water did not exceed the Ontario drinking water standards. This statement is technically correct, but it is misleading. There are no existing provincial standards pertaining to nickel content in drinking water.

In June 2000, two residents living in the Rodney Street area, Ellen Smith and her husband Craig Edwards, requested that the Ministry of Environment test the soil on their house property. When the results of these soil tests became public—showing that their property contained between 14,000 to 16,000 parts per million of nickel, and over 600 parts per million of lead—Ellen and Craig were astounded—and anxious. Soon, Ellen started researching about these heavy metals, their effects, and what it may ultimately mean to her family. According to Ellen, “Initially we were dumbfounded, listening to the concerned public health official warning us not to let our young children play in the yard because of the very high levels of nickel, arsenic, cobalt and lead that the Ministry’s results revealed.” Ellen’s two boys, who were at the time eight and three years old, had spent their time playing and growing up on their property, and that of their neighbours. Now the children’s play areas had to be restricted. Discussing the effects on her family, Ellen explained that her two sons “can’t be children enjoying the surroundings of their own home, whether it is inside or out...I feel personally violated by those in which we trusted to protect our environment and our health and safety. As a mother watching her young children grow, I am sickened and at a loss for words to explain the feeling of not knowing what the future outcomes will be for my children”.

In September of 2000, I started to attend the CBRA meetings that were taking place. As time went by, it was becoming increasingly clear that nothing was going to be done to ensure the safety of people living with such high levels of contamination. I doubted this company sponsored process. I learned at this time that there was a phytotoxicity report done for my son’s school and extensive soil testing results in the Rodney Street area, none of which were available to the public. A month later, I found out that employees from the Ministry of Environment had been holding strategic communications meetings about how to ‘deal’ with Port Colborne residents and our concerns about the environmental contamination.

During a public meeting in November 2000, a scientist at the Ministry of Environment spoke up for the people of Port Colborne. Although official notes do not reflect his statement, the following account appeared in a newspaper article that was written by Toronto Star reporter Kate Harries:

👂 The shocked silence was broken by Al Kuja, a scientist in



A bag of contaminated soil from Port Colborne that community members handed to shareholders during Inco’s Annual General Meeting. PHOTO: Diana Wiggins.

the environment ministry’s standards development branch who became well known here as he investigated soils across Port Colborne for the ministry’s extensive studies in 1998 and 1999. “I might get into trouble for this, but there’s something going on,” a worried Kuja said. “There’s areas where every single household has someone sick, every single family, some member has something—cancers, rashes, leukemia... Personally I think that something is going on. 🙏🙏

I went to the Health Department looking for the phytotoxicity report that was done at my son’s school. I was allowed into the office of the Medical Officer of Health. There were others around watching every move I made. I was amazed by the extent of paperwork, including a bookshelf dedicated to Inco alone. Though I didn’t receive the report on the school property, I realized that there was a cancer study on the Niagara Peninsula that compared the evidence of several cancer clusters in the area. I returned the next day, but the health department personnel refused to let me see the report. Since then, the department has refused to acknowledge that such a report exists.

By February 2001, we had spoken with lawyers, ombudsmen, air quality specialists and many other types of scientific experts, all of whom expressed concern. For example, upon hearing about the situation in Port Colborne, an American toxicologist at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency responded that she wouldn’t feel comfortable having children playing on this soil. At this time, school soil was tested at levels of 1200 parts per million of nickel. I spoke with the school representatives trying to get them to do something to protect the children. At one point, I had a conversation with the Niagara School Board staff member who was in charge of the safety and wellness of the children. He said, “If it were me, I would just move my child to another school.”

I responded, “That would be fine for my son...But what about the other two hundred children in the school?” Since authorities were not letting anyone know about the contamination statistics, none of the other parents would be aware of the health risks for their children.

After hearing recommendations from many experts, I

The City of Port Colborne is located along the north shore of Lake Erie in the Niagara Region of southern Ontario. The Welland Canal divides the City into east and west, and runs across the Niagara Peninsula from the City of Port Colborne to Lake Ontario. The City of Port Colborne has a population of 18,450. Port Colborne is not directly affected by mining operations, but is severely affected by Vale Inco's nickel and metal ore refineries.

The Inco Limited Refinery is located on the east side of the city, along the north shore of Lake Erie. Residential communities are directly adjacent to the refinery, while rural agricultural lands lie to the east and north-east.

Inco has operated this nickel refinery since 1918. Peak commercial production for nickel occurred during the 1940s. Operations for the commercial production of electrolytic nickel ended in 1984. From the period 1918 to 1930, dust emissions were over 1,300 tonnes per year, and resulted in increased levels of metals in the local environment. It is estimated that over the years, more than 20,000 tonnes of nickel oxide have been spread over the Port Colborne area.

According to the standards issued by the Ontario Ministry of Environment (MoE) for residential areas, the level of nickel in the soil should be no higher than 200 parts per million (ppm). In Port Colborne, there are some areas where there is evidence of more than 20,000 ppm of nickel in the soil. It has been shown that the majority of nickel in the soil is in the form of nickel oxide. Nickel oxide is not only a hazardous substance, but also a recognized carcinogen under Health Canada.

Inco has acknowledged responsibility for emissions resulting from their operations, and is conducting a Community Based Risk Assessment process (CBRA) to assess the environmental and human health risks of these residual depositions in the soil, air and water.

contacted the Canadian Environmental Law Association. With their help, we launched a \$750 million (Canadian) class action lawsuit in March of 2001 against Inco, Her Majesty the Queen, Niagara Department of Health, Niagara Catholic School Board, Niagara District School Board and the City of Port Colborne. Since then, settlements with all defendants—except Inco—have been signed. With the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Canadian Environmental Law Association and Friends of the Earth intervening on our behalf, we were able to take Inco to the Supreme Court of Canada. Although people said we would never win a legal battle against a large corporation like Inco, they were wrong. We were granted certification for a class action lawsuit on November 18, 2005. It is the first time in Canadian history that a class action has been allowed in this context. The court hearings began in the fall of 2009.

A week after the lawsuit was launched, the provincial government finally released their Human Health Risk Assessment for the Rodney Street community. The study

concluded that levels of 10,000 parts per million of nickel in the soil were safe. This statement was made in direct contradiction to the standards set out by the Environmental Protection Act, which verifies that a 'class one' carcinogen, such as nickel oxide, may be hazardous at any level. Since the government boasted that this report was internationally peer reviewed, we decided to arrange individual meetings with the peer reviewers. A year later, the report was revised. Still, it fails to document many of the health problems community members commonly experience, including skin rashes, asthma and lung cancer—all known symptoms of exposure to nickel. To date, these concerns have not been addressed by the CBRA.

Throughout this time, Ellen and I have attempted to be as knowledgeable as possible on the issues related to the nickel contamination in our community. We will continue this fight until justice is served, and a safe environment surrounds the children, agricultural fields, and natural environment. We continue to follow the CBRA process, and do what we can to have our voices heard.

As for the school my children once went to—it is now a vacant lot with the school torn down and the playground gone. If we listen closely, the haunting emptiness of the children's laughter can still be heard by some of us. Maybe someday, someone with the power to do something for the people of Port Colborne will hear our voices—and see our tears. We are looking forward to our day in court.

Epilogue

Over the years, concerned residents in Port Colborne became involved in a network of people who have been affected by Inco's operations around the world. In 2003, everyone involved in this international network agreed to organize a "Global Day of Action Against Inco" in October. There were events held in a number of cities across Canada, as well as in Australia, Guatemala, Japan, Indonesia, New Caledonia (Goro), the United States of America and the United Kingdom. People in communities affected by Vale Inco continue to communicate and coordinate solidarity actions to support one another in common struggles to confront this multinational company and stand up to demand justice.



Port Colborne residents have organized protests to publicize their concerns about Inco and the inaction of the government in front of the legislature in Toronto. PHOTO: Diana Wiggins.

united states

“Stop the Insanity”: Shoshone Elders Call for An End to Destructive Mining on their Land



The cliffs of Mount Tenabo will be destroyed by the expansion of Barrick’s gold mine. PHOTO: WSDP.

The area now known as the states of Idaho, Nevada, and California in the U.S.A. are considered unceded traditional territory by the Western Shoshone People. When European gold prospectors arrived in the 1840s, the Shoshone were open to sharing this vast expanse of land. Permitting the newcomers to pass through the land they called Newe Segobia, the Shoshone signed a “Treaty of Peace and Friendship” in 1863. Under this contract, the Western Shoshone agreed to adopt a sedentary lifestyle and to maintain their livelihood by grazing cattle and horses. However, as the land was still the basis of the Shoshone livelihood—and an important place of sacred cultural sites—they never ceded ownership of the territory. As it became clear that expanses of mineral wealth, including deposits of gold, lay beneath the land, the Shoshone saw that the European settlers were increasingly laying claim to the lands that they had considered necessary for the well-being of current and future generations. At the time, the United States Department of the Interior began to advance the claim that Newe Segobia was under ‘public’ jurisdiction. Under federal mining laws developed in 1870, private companies became entitled to purchase the land considered ‘public’ at discounted rates for the purposes of mineral exploration and operations—without the burden of any required royalties.

High Level Complicity Sought to Undermine Newe Communities

By 1979, the United States Department of the Interior charged Newe ranchers, Carrie and Mary Dann, with “trespass”, claiming that the land was now held by the United

States government, and could rightfully be usurped for such purposes as gold mining and nuclear weapons testing. Since that time, the Cortez Gold Mine has been developed on Newe Segobia territory near Horse Canyon and Mount Tenabo. As the years—and decades—have passed, the mine has grown to become a complex of two open pits with tailings facilities and cyanide heap leach pads. Cortez is amongst the largest mines on ‘public’ land in the U.S., and one of the oldest continuously operating mines in the state of Nevada. At the current time, the Canadian company Barrick Gold is the sole owner of the Cortez Mine. On an ongoing basis, Barrick Gold—as well as other mining companies—have been submitting proposals for further exploration and expansion. Mining operations here encroach on traditional burial and historical sites, and ruin the land upon which the Shoshone women have traditionally gathered medicinal plants as well as harvested wild foods. Water sources at spiritual and cultural sites, as well as at traditional fishing areas are also becoming severely depleted and contaminated. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has noted that the contamination from mercury released from Nevada’s gold mining operations has resulted in the poisoning of fish—far exceeding the level at which consumption is considered a serious health risk. Although there has never been an independent health assessment, the Shoshone—and women in particular—fear that the land, air, water, medicinal plants, and food sources are all being contaminated by mercury, cyanide and other heavy metals contained in the gold tailings. As mothers and grandmothers, they are highly concerned about the health of their children and that of future generations.

Company Tactics to Divide

In response to the high level of community opposition, negative media attention, and a number of legal actions on behalf of the Shoshone, Cortez Mines Inc. began a series of 'community dialogues' and 'social responsibility programs'. The result has been a disintegration of social relationships amongst Shoshone families as individual 'benefits' have been provided to those who express some degree of approval for the mining operations. Meanwhile, attempts have been made to convince local students of the benefits of mining. Participation of children and adults in corporate initiatives is publicly promoted by mining companies as the collective granting of community consent for mine expansion.

Battling for Justice at Neve Segobia—and Beyond

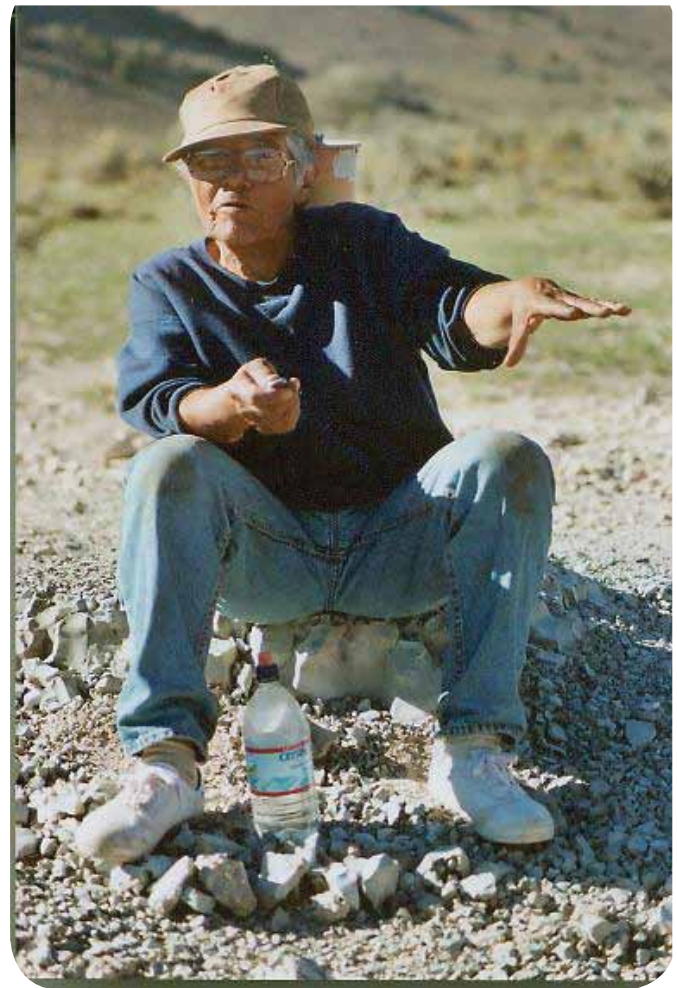
The Shoshone continue to be determined to have their rights respected, and have campaigned for decades to bring attention to their land rights at national and international levels. In 2002, the Organization of the Americas' Inter-American Commission issued a report that outlined how the United States was violating Western Shoshone rights to equality before the law, due process and property. Rather than respond to the ruling with concern for the lives of the Shoshone People, the U.S. took an increasingly aggressive stance and conducted an armed raid on the farmlands of two elders, Carrie and Mary Dann. At this time, hundreds of their cattle and horses were rounded up and seized.

In 2005, representatives from the Neve along with other affected Indigenous Peoples and their allies filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The case is based on the legal interpretation that the BLM did not take adequate steps to consult with the Shoshone or protect their cultural resources; failed to review the impacts of a proposed mine expansion, and approved the mining exploration without requesting the company specify the location of the roads and drill sites (as per regulations). At present, the case has extended to include both Cortez Gold Mines Inc. and the BLM.

Shoshone advocates have also brought their case before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). This committee raised concerns about the conduct of the U.S. government as well as the locally operating 'multinational extractive industries', ordering the U.S. to "freeze" and "desist" from all activities planned or conducted on the ancestral lands of Western Shoshone.

In 2008, Barrick received BLM approval for an expansion of their gold mine directly onto Mount Tenabo. This expansion, referred to as the Cortez Hills Project, would include a new open mine pit, three new waste rock facilities, a new cyanide heap leach operation, and an extended road system. This mine expansion will have far-reaching and devastating impacts for current and future communities on Neve Segobia lands, including the disruption of Shoshone gravesites, ritual grounds and significant water resources, the destruction of 330 hectares of pinion trees (robbing the Shoshone of access to the nutritious food source of pine nuts), and negative respiratory and mental health problems resulting from intensified detonations of explosives. After an extensive legal battle, the federal court granted an injunction

in December 2009 to force Barrick Gold to temporarily postpone construction of the Cortez Project. The Western Shoshone remain vigilant, prepared to continue their struggle to end open-pit mining on their land.



Carrie Dann has helped spearhead the international campaign to call for an end to Barrick's gold mining operations on Mount Tenabo. PHOTO: WSDP.

Testimony from Carrie Dann, Western Shoshone activist

In 1863, the U.S. wanted a safe passage to the gold mines in California. A treaty of peace and friendship was signed by the U.S. and the Western Shoshone. This treaty did not give or cede land. It did allow...mining. But, this was [agreed upon] with the understanding that small holes would be dug with a pick and hand-held shovel. This is not what we see today—earth torn up with modern mining equipment that rips the land...It looks like the earth has cancer and it keeps growing hourly, daily, [and] weekly. Precious water is being pumped out of the ground—20,000 to 70,000 gallons per minute—at these mines...The mine operators were never given consent to operate there.

The mine is in the vicinity of some of the Western Shoshone creation stories. Creation stories tell us about



Mount Tenabo, a traditionally sacred site for the Shoshone People that is being destroyed for gold, seen from Crescent Valley. PHOTO: WSDP.

every aspect of life—what we are supposed to respect... [and] to only take what we can use. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) makes all the decisions if mining can occur there...The BLM and mining companies know about the special status of that area of Mount Tenabo. There has been ongoing concern about this particular area for years.

Women in traditional ways were—or are—highly respected. Maybe not as much in today’s world. But in traditional ways, it was the female who was head of the home and made the decisions. Leaders of the [Shoshone] Nation were recommended by the women.

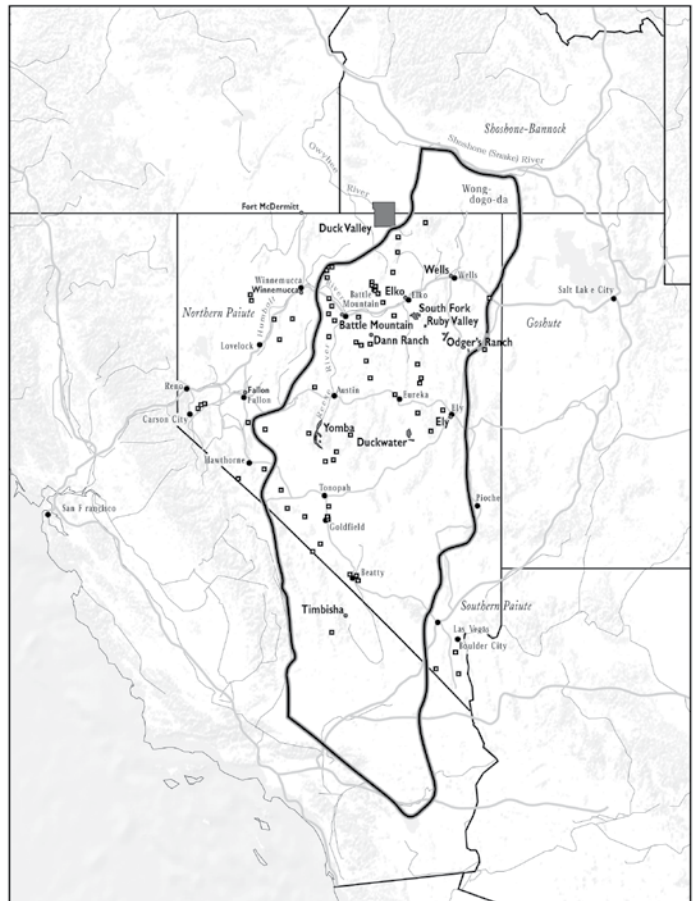
I believe that dollars and cents account for the decisions that are made on behalf of the mining companies. I have yet to see the [U.S.] Department of Interior say ‘no’ to a mine. I believe the U.S. is still in the process of trying to assimilate the Western Shoshone into the European types of values and culture. There are Western Shoshone [people] being used to help these companies to exploit... the areas that hold our history and culture. The U.S. is now attempting to pay the Western Shoshone money for our traditional lands...But we cannot sell the land, because [the] earth is our Mother.

The U.S. calls this land ‘public’ and uses terms like ‘gradual encroachment’ to strip us of our land...This land is our home. We should have a right to live in our traditional manner. Our rights to hunt according to our own seasons have been criminalized, [and] our rights to gather pine nuts have been limited...

We have been denied the right to property. [We have] no equality before the laws and [are] denied the right to due process. The OAS [Organization of American States]

and CERD [Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination] of the UN have found the U.S. guilty of these violations. The Western Shoshone Defense Project... works with other grassroots organizations to stop the insanity of the U.S. and corporations in their efforts to destroy land, water and air—and the very earth we live on. ☹☹

Newe Sogobia and Nevada Gold Mines
[the people's earth mother]



Newe Sogobia (Western Shoshone National Council-1980's* edited to boundary drawn with assistance from Chief Raymond Yowell)

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the lush rainforests of Abya Yala to the island nations of Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines, and from the territory of the Western Shoshone People to the villages of western Ghana, the community profiles in this compilation have demonstrated that women worldwide are concerned about the health, gender, socio-economic, environmental and political injustices perpetrated by the mining industry. As Indigenous People, peasants, villagers, lawyers, researchers, students, workers, labour rights organizers, and community mobilizers, they have taken a principled stand for the rights of their communities, for justice, and for the lives of future generations. Many have indicated the need to embark on long-term processes of reforming the ways we extract minerals from the ground, and using finite natural resources with more care as well as consideration. Women contributors to this publication have also proposed ways the extractives industry and authorities should interact with their communities, in order to respect their rights to life and to a dignified livelihood. The following recommendations are derived from this diverse collection of voices.

To Mining Companies

- Respect the right of communities to reject mining and mineral exploration—on their land or in the vicinity of their houses/properties/traditional territory.
- Cease engaging in coercive tactics to pressure governments into deals which demand onerous concessions detrimental to the health and well-being of the country's affected communities and/or the environment.
- Cease operations in countries governed by regimes which demonstrate blatant disregard for fundamental human rights standards and/or repress local civil society organizations.
- Respect the right to information by publicly disclosing all documents in a timely and culturally appropriate manner.
- Respect community rights to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for mineral exploration and extraction projects. Suspend projects or withdraw proposals affecting communities where FPIC has not been granted by democratic, participatory means. Re-open negotiations for concessions where FPIC has not been granted, or where communities have pending complaints or legal challenges related to the lack of FPIC.
- Respect international human rights law enshrined in the declarations and conventions of the United Nations and International Labour Organization.
- Cease the use of company security units and paramilitary personnel to suppress civil society groups, and/or inflict gender-based violence on women from affected communities.
- Carry out environmental, social, health, economic, and human rights impact assessments and audits—each with specific gender sensitive analyses—before and during operations. Plan and implement project changes accordingly, respecting the needs of affected communities and workers. Pay particular attention to mitigating the negative effects on women's lives and livelihoods.
- Cease dumping untreated mine tailings and rock waste into waterways, forests, residential areas, fields used for farming, or on mountaintops.
- Take responsibility for current or closed mining projects: clean-up the environmental damage; provide free, accessible and potable water to affected communities; pay a dignified level of compensation for health related problems and deaths caused by projects; support the building of decent, dignified housing for displaced communities.
- Respect mine workers' rights in accordance with national law and international standards, including but not limited to: equal pay for equal work assumed by women and men; equal opportunities for upgrading occupational skills and knowledge; no toleration of violence against women, sexual harassment or discrimination; provision of appropriate work-site specific safety gear; and ensuring the availability of gear that meets the needs of women (including those who are pregnant).
- Abandon contractual confidentiality clauses imposed on workers that prohibit public disclosure of potential/

ongoing health impacts, environmental damage, labour rights violations and gender-based harassment.

To International and Regional Monetary Institutions, Institutional Shareholders and International Donor Agencies

- Cease support for the expansion or promotion of corporate mining and oil operations, as well as affiliated company projects.
- Call on the extractive industries to adhere to internationally accepted human rights standards and to respect the rights of communities to free, prior and informed consent.
- Be cognizant of the needs and concerns of mining affected populations, and in particular, women in these communities.
- Call on companies involved in the extractive industries to carry out—and publicly disclose—environmental, social, health, economic and human rights impact assessments and audits with gender sensitive analyses in a timely, culturally appropriate manner.

To National and Local Authorities

- Comply with ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and uphold rights outlined in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Agree to a moratoria on new large-scale mining projects in areas identified as 'greenfields'; on land already protected by national/state/provincial law; at sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples; in regions protected under international agreements (e.g. Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, cross-border migratory/biodiversity agreements, UNESCO world heritage sites); or in areas where local populations face water shortages.
- Make the terms and conditions of agreements with mining companies public.
- Respect community rights to free, prior and informed consent for mineral extraction projects, and the right of communities to reject mineral exploration and mining—on their land, or in the vicinity of their houses/properties/traditional territory. Withdraw permission for—or facilitate a re-negotiation of—projects where FPIC has not been implemented in good faith.
- Publicly disclose information related to social, environmental, and health impacts at mining sites, paying particular attention to the impacts on women residents. Publicly disclose accurate, detailed and updated information regarding public funds used to support the development of extractive industries.
- Require mining companies to carry out—and publicly disclose—environmental, social, health, economic, and human rights impact assessments and audits with gender sensitive analyses in a timely, culturally appropriate manner.
- Provide universally accessible potable water to affected communities, specifically ensuring sufficient availability to women community members.
- Support the building of decent, dignified housing for displaced communities, in consultation with both men and women community members.
- Cease harassing and criminalizing community activists based on their gender and/or race and/or convictions.
- Cease the use of state financed military/security units to suppress civil society groups—and inflict gender-based violence on individual advocates—protesting oil and mining projects.
- Repeal anti-terrorist laws and policies which criminalize people protesting large-scale extractive industries.
- Forbid and penalize the dumping of untreated mine tailings and rock waste into water systems, forests, residential areas, fields used for farming, or on mountaintops.
- Support community-based co-operative enterprises, particularly those promoting full participation of women.
- Implement a national development plan that is based on the needs of people—and is particularly responsive to the needs of women—rather than focused on promoting the interests of large-scale extractive industries.
- Support research on—and implementation of—sustainable alternative initiatives that reduce social and economic dependence on the extraction and exploitation of the earth's finite mineral resources.

To Feminist Social Movements, Civil Society Activists, and Networks Concerned about Women's Rights, Gender Equity & Gender Justice

- Listen to the concerns and aspirations of women from mining affected communities and stand with them in their struggles for respect, dignity, land, just forms of compensation, as well as the right to life itself.

International Women and Mining Network/ Red Internacional Mujeres y Minería (RIMM) Resolutions

I. RIMM Resolutions on Indigenous Women's Rights and Mining

RIMM recognizes the experiences of Indigenous People that the exploration and exploitation of minerals and metals has brought serious social and environmental problems, so widespread and injurious that such development cannot be described as 'sustainable'. Therefore, RIMM asserts its commitment and solidarity with the Indigenous People's Declaration on Extractive Industries from the Oxford Indigenous People's Workshop, the Kimberley Declaration of Indigenous People to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 and the International Labor Declaration Convention No.169.

- We demand for recognition and respect for the call by Indigenous People for a moratorium or ban on new mining projects and the expansion of existing projects that may affect Indigenous People. Until governments and companies have shown accountability towards projects implemented so far and that mining is the final resort to economic development in communities where they have a better quality of life than what exists or may exist, Indigenous Peoples' assertion against mining in green-field areas must be respected.
- We demand that governments, the mining industry, international financial institutions and existing international laws must recognize indigenous people's citizenship and the individual and collective rights of indigenous people and women to self-determination, to ownership and control over their lands, natural resources and territories.
- The rights of indigenous people and women to free prior and informed consent, that such consent is not a static one-off process but is required for the life of any mining project, must be fully respected. No indigenous people or women should be forced out of their lands for the sake of mining either by the industry or by governments or international financial institutions.
- We support the rights of indigenous people and women as owners and stakeholders to mineral resources under their land and territories and if mining should exist, communities must have the first right of exploiting the mineral resources.
- We demand the recognition of artisanal, traditional and community mining where women play an important role and demand that governments provide economic support, development facilities, technology interface, safety measures, training and market linkages to women who are in this sector.
- Households headed by women should be recognized and treated in the same way as that of men with respect to decision-making, compensation and rehabilitation.
- Transnational mining companies must not be allowed to implement projects, use and commit violations in Indigenous Peoples' lands that are prohibited in their own countries.

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II. RIMM Resolutions For the Protection of the Environment

The environment and health of women and local communities have been detrimentally impacted by mining activities for hundreds of years. Such impacts include contamination of our rivers, oceans, land, fresh water bodies, and air through toxic emissions and tailings ponds of the mining industry. Mining companies do not take responsibility for maintaining the health of the environment throughout the cycle of mining and neither do they have proper disaster management or mine management plans that are liable for public scrutiny. Denial and suppression of environmental impacts has been the history of mining in the world.

- We demand that the precautionary principle must apply in its most stringent form to all mining operations given the disproportionate environmental and health impacts on women.
- We demand the immediate cessation of liberalization and privatization of our environment, water and natural resources, and companies using political clout for modification of laws that protect them.
- We demand for a gender impact assessment and audit of all new and current projects.
- We demand that mining companies and governments acknowledge the environmental risks of their projects and give accurate and detailed information to public and communities before undertaking new projects.
- Environment impact assessments must be undertaken by independent bodies and must have proper representation of all stakeholders including women before they are cleared.
- Mining companies must bear the cost of using environmentally sound technologies.
- Destructive practices such as riverine tailings disposal, submarine tailings disposal and the mining of sulphide bodies leading to acid mine drainage must be banned.
- Companies and government must not undertake mining operations in protected areas such as sacred sites, protected forests, marine reserves, world heritage listings and community forests.
- Companies must take responsibility for prevention of contamination, clean-up wastes created by mining activities, and compensate for damages including damages to health of women and communities affected by mining activities.
- Companies must be mandated to undertake training for women mine workers on health hazards and precautions at the work-place and home.
- Companies must take responsibility for clean-up of abandoned mines and reclaim land, water bodies and other resources around the sites and made suitable for reuse by local communities.

III. RIMM Resolutions with Respect to Women Mine Workers

Mining is the most unfriendly and gender unjust industry towards women, excluding them from formal and organized sector work participation. Privatization and liberalization have completely marginalized women in the mining industry by large scale retrenchment and denial of employment. Mining today, is providing only casual, contract or daily wage labor opportunities for women in the informal sector where legislative protections do not exist and collective bargaining through unionization is almost impossible. Most often their only source of livelihood from mining is as illegal scavengers or as 'payiris'. Free trade has led to women and children working in very inhuman conditions without any economic remuneration or work safety or social security. Women mine workers are exposed to high levels of pollution and toxic substances at the work place and are especially employed in the more hazardous and polluting sections of the mining operations. Mining has caused irrevocable illnesses like silicosis, tuberculosis, asbestosis, chronic, debilitating, terminal and reproductive health problems which are deliberately suppressed by the industry, ignored and neglected by our governments. Therefore, RIMM supports the rights of women mine workers and demands that:

- Mining companies must immediately cease the retrenchment and marginalization of women mine workers and end contracting or bonded labour work for women.
- Women mine workers must be provided proper employment in the formal and public sector.
- Women must have protective labor safeguards where they can defend themselves against exploitation of the industry, contractors, mine-owners and male workers.
- Women mine workers must be provided with proper work gear and safety equipment suitable-and designed for-women.
- Women mine workers must get equal pay for equal work of equal value, property rights in cooperatives and a safe and healthy work environment that is free of discrimination, violence and sexual abuse.
- Women must have access to educational opportunities on par with men in mine engineering and related fields.
- Maximization of work opportunities for women, not just in traditional jobs allocated to women but training and transferable skills must be provided for non-traditional jobs.
- Child labour in all mining activities must be banned and governments must guarantee progressive development of mine workers and their children to eliminate child labor not merely as a law but to provide economic security so that mine workers are not forced to push children into mine labour.
- Women mine workers have the right to have a mandatory women's committee which is recognized by government and companies, and that has full decision making power for women workers' concerns.
- Women workers must be given adequate maternity and child care benefits both at home and in the workplace.

Resources for Action:

More Information & Ways to Get Involved

INTERNATIONAL

International Women and Mining Network/Red Internacional Mujeres y Minería

www.rimmrights.org/Email: rimmrightrights@gmail.com

EarthWorks www.earthworksaction.org

Food First Information Action Network www.fian.org

Friends of the Earth-International www.foei.org

La Vía Campesina www.viacampesina.org

London Mining Network www.londonminingnetwork.org

Latin American Mining Monitor Program/Latin American Women's Union www.lammp.org.uk

Mines and Communities www.minesandcommunities.org

No More Dirty Gold www.nomoredirtygold.org

Oxfam Australia Mining Program www.oxfam.org.au/explore/mining/

Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales www.olca.cl

"Protest Barrick" Global Network www.protestbarrick.net

AFRICA

Ghana

WACAM

Since 1998, WACAM has worked in the Tarkwa region of Western Ghana to raise awareness about—and advocate for—respect of fundamental human rights, campaign against environmental degradation, and seek just forms of compensation for communities that have lost their land and means of livelihood due to large-scale mining. WACAM documents the concerns of mining affected communities, while promoting alternative economic models based on the collective right to food sovereignty. In addition, WACAM acts as a liaison with governmental institutions and other agencies to raise the concerns of mining affected communities. Internationally, WACAM seeks to build cross-continental solidarity initiatives with allies campaigning against the destruction caused by the mining industry.

Website: www.wacam.org Email: kowus75@yahoo.com

Nigeria

Environmental Rights Action Nigeria/Friends of the Earth-Nigeria

Founded in 1993, Environmental Rights Action (ERA) is a non-governmental organization advocating for environmental justice and the democratization of development in Nigeria, promoting environmentally responsible practices, and defending the livelihood rights of communities. ERA campaigns to change policies and simultaneously, enable local people to defend their environmental human rights. Currently, ERA focuses on exposing the environmental human rights violations committed by multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta, supporting the communities in the Niger Delta in their democratic agitation for resource control and demanding changes to the West Africa Gas Pipeline Project. ERA acts as the Nigerian chapter of Friends of the Earth and co-ordinates the African-based efforts of OilWatch International, a global network of communities affected by oil extraction.

Website: www.eration.org Email: eration@eration.org

More Information: *Wiwa V. Shell* www.wiwavshell.com

South Africa

Jubilee South Africa (JSA)

Jubilee South Africa was established in 1998 to call for the cancellation of the Apartheid-era debt to international financial institutions, reparations to be provided to affected communities by international corporations that supported and benefited from Apartheid, and the reallocation of resources to support a national agenda for social, economic and environmental justice. Currently, JSA works to stop mining companies from destroying community land and natural resources, and from imposing living and working conditions that threaten peoples' health, culture, lifestyles and livelihoods. At the same time, JSA seeks to generate discussions about alternative forms of development, support the building of local social movements—from below—and facilitate the identification of solutions by mining affected communities. Efforts are concentrated on supporting community capacities to organize, mobilize and communicate with each other, assisting in immediate needs for technical and legal services, as well as publicizing their demands for change. E-mail: george@mail.ngo.za / bnthako@gmail.com
More Information: GroundWork/Friends of the Earth South Africa www.groundwork.org.za

Save the Wild Coast

This coalition of organizations and individuals formed to give voice to concerns about mining and highway developments in the Wild Coast region and call for ecologically sensitive economic alternatives. The SWC campaign calls for a moratorium on any decisions about the proposed open pit mine, the highway extension and other environmentally damaging projects along the Wild Coast until all possible alternatives are thoroughly investigated and asks that any decision making processes take into account the findings of the "Strategic Environmental Assessment and Wild Coast Regional Spatial Development Framework" and the demands of locally affected communities.

Website: www.swc.org.za

ASIA

Cambodia

Oxfam-America East Asia Regional Office (Cambodia)

Oxfam America's East Asia Programme seeks to bring the government, civil society, and the private sectors together to promote respect for the rights of those in mining affected communities, and adherence to transparent revenue processes that contribute to long-term poverty reduction. Oxfam works with communities to ensure that they are informed about any extractive industry developments that will affect their future, and are equipped to advocate on their own behalf. To respond to the concerns raised by members of civil society, Oxfam staff work with governments to strengthen regulatory frameworks pertaining to the extractive industries.

Website: www.oxfamamerica.org/regions/east-asia/background

India

Samata

Samata is a social justice organization working for the rights of the tribal adivasi people in the state of Andhra Pradesh, and for the protection of the natural resources and ecology of the Eastern Ghats. Locally, Samata facilitates the provision of legal aid, media advocacy, campaign, documentation, and research support to tribal communities struggling for the protection of their rights, and help to build the capacities of community members—particularly women—to assert their constitutional and customary rights. At the state and national levels, advocacy efforts are focused on policies affecting tribal peoples, as well as on the sustainable, equitable local management of natural resources. Internationally, Samata collaborates with indigenous peoples' movements to strengthen global demands for just development.

Website: www.samataindia.org Email: samataindia@gmail.com

SAKHI

This organization initially opened as a youth resource center, but under the leadership of Dr. Bhagyalakshmi, has become focussed on creating a space for women and girls to become empowered, by supporting those who have been severely impacted by economic and social exploitation, promoting education amongst girl children and supporting the higher education of girls from vulnerable communities. In particular, SAKHI supports Dalit and Devadesi girls, sexually abused girls and those who have been caught in a cycle of child labour. The strategy of preventing the drop-out of girls from educational and higher educational institutions has included addressing the issues of discrimination and corruption in hostels, poor quality schooling, forced marriage of young girls and the lack of opportunities for broader societal interaction. Email: sakhi.hyka@rediffmail.com

Indonesia

Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (JATAM/Mining Advocacy Network)

JATAM is a network of non-governmental and community-based organizations in Indonesia working on issues concerning human rights, gender disparities, the environment, indigenous peoples and social justice in relation to the mining, oil, and gas industries. JATAM's activities are conducted in recognition of the right of all Indonesians to live healthy, productive lives in ecologically sustainable communities. In particular, JATAM seeks to support indigenous communities in their struggles against the dehumanization and environmental destruction caused by the invasion of the mining, oil and gas industries. JATAM seeks to develop

programs that are participatory, democratic, equitable, non-violent, non-partisan, non-discriminatory, inter-generational, and envision a future with social, economic, gender and environmental justice.

Website: www.english.jatam.org Email: jatam@jatam.org

Mongolia

Steps Without Border

Steps Without Border was established in Mongolia in 2006 to promote social justice, civic participation in decision-making processes, and democratic development. SWB supports participatory rural development and environmental protection initiatives by focusing on outreach to herder families. The social, ecological and economic disruption and dislocation caused by the recent expansion of the gold mining industry in Mongolia is of particular concern to SWB.

Email: lariuna@gmail.com / bayaraa_bulgan@yahoo.com

Philippines

Innabuyog

Innabuyog is an alliance of indigenous women's organizations in the Cordillera region of the Philippines that includes peasants, workers, professionals, urban poor, students, and youth. Innabuyog seeks to empower women to assert their rights to land, life, resources, and dignity, while building solidarity with other women who struggle against all forms of oppression and discrimination. While opening spaces at the village level to discuss the consequences of economic globalization on women's lives, Innabuyog participates in national and international discussions to share the local realities and perspectives of indigenous women. Members continuously speak out against the militarization of communities and the persecution of human rights defenders, and work to expose the specific forms of violence perpetrated against indigenous women and children. Many of the indigenous women in Innabuyog are involved in determined campaigns to oppose large-scale mining and defend their land as well as livelihood rights.

Website: www.cpaphils.org/campaigns/about%20innabuyog.htm E-mail: innabuyog@gmail.com

More Information: Cordillera Peoples Alliance www.cpaphils.org

Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center - Kasama sa Kalikasan/ Friends of the Earth-Philippines

The Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center - Kasama sa Kalikasan/ Friends of the Earth-Philippines (LRC-KsK/FoE-Phils.) is a non-profit policy advocacy and legal research institute. LRC-KsK/FoE envisions a society for all women and men where the ownership, use, management, and conservation of natural resources are carried out in a democratic, ecologically sustainable, culturally appropriate, economically viable, gender just and equitable manner. To advance this overall vision, the Center also links with various organizations locally, nationally and internationally. We work with indigenous and rural communities to advocate for the recognition and protection of their rights to land. The Center seeks to catalyze changes in laws, policies and political structures, while working at the local level alongside communities to develop analyses on relevant policies and social issues.

Website: www.lrcksk.org Email: lrcksk@lrcksk.org

Thailand

Eco-Culture Study Group/Thai Network of Mining Affected Peoples

The Eco-Culture Study Group was formed by an alliance of environmental, community and human rights advocates in the north-eastern regions of Thailand in response to popular concerns about mining, hydroelectric dam and nuclear waste storage site developments. Currently, members are engaged in outreach and advocacy initiatives with community volunteers, local academics, and youth in mining affected areas to discuss the devastating health and environmental impacts of large-scale mining, and open spaces for envisioning community-based development alternatives. Through an inclusive and participatory process spearheaded by Eco-Culture members, a Network of Mining Affected Communities is gradually emerging, providing greater possibilities for a coordinated platform for social and legal advocacy.

Website: ecoculture.wordpress.com

PACIFIC

Papua New Guinea

Centre for Environmental Research and Development/ Mining Affected Women's Foundation

Founded in 2003, the Centre for Environmental Research and Development (CERD) is one of the few environmental and human rights organizations in Papua New Guinea working for the rights of communities affected by oil, gas and mineral extraction. The Mine Affected Women's Foundation (MAWF) is an initiative affiliated with CERD that was established by a collective of women in response to the negative impacts of mining in Papua New Guinea. MAWF is made up of strong women from mine affected communities and allied women who share their concerns. *Email: mawf@cerd.org.pg*

More Information: Porgera Alliance www.porgeraalliance.net

Mineral Policy Institute eyeonmining.wordpress.com

More Information: Friends of the Earth-Australia www.foe.org.au

Australia

Coalition to Save Lake Cowal

Since the early 1990s, the campaign to stop the gold mine at Lake Cowal has been organized by Wiradjuri Traditional Owners, environmentalists, scientists, students, and communities around Australia, all of whom are concerned about the impacts of the open-pit cyanide heap leach operation on the local ecology, cultural heritage and people's lives. A broad base of community, regional and national organizations as well as international allies support the Lake Cowal campaign and are involved in demanding that Canada's Barrick Gold stop mining on the sacred territory of the Wiradjuri Nation.

Website: www.savelakecowal.org

Kokatha Mula Nation/West Mallee Protection (WMP)

The West Mallee Protection is an environmental justice group emerging from an alliance between environmentalists and Kokatha Mula people concerned about the impacts of proposed large-scale mining and mineral export industries on the ecological and cultural heritage of the Ceduna region in South Australia. Combining traditional indigenous knowledge with activist-based skills, WMP aims to secure the protection of this region, while addressing environmental degradation, promoting indigenous heritage, and defending cultural rights. WMP members conduct research on critical issues related to the impacts of large-scale mining and share this information with the local community as well as the broader public. Given the need for employment opportunities, WMP simultaneously promotes alternative initiatives to enrich the community and economic status of the region. The WMP is affiliated to Friends of the Earth Australia.

Website: www.kokathamula.auspics.org.au/Email: westmallee@gmail.com

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA/ABYA YALA

Bolivia

Red Nacional Mujeres y Minería/Bolivian National Women and Mining Network

This coalition is composed of women miners, wives of workers in mining communities, NGOs, and professional women who are allies. There are several committees focusing on different concerns, including economic justice, the environment, public policy, socially responsible mining, and international relations. *E-mail: rossar46@hotmail.com/elsvanhoecke@yahoo.es*

Guatemala

Rights Action

Rights Action is a development, environmental justice and human rights organization that funds community organizations carrying out human rights, development, environmental and emergency relief projects in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico (Chiapas & Oaxaca) and El Salvador. In addition, Rights Action builds north-south alliances and is committed to education and activism in North America to address how the USA and Canada sometimes contribute to—and benefit from—global exploitation, repression, environmental destruction and racism.

Website: www.rightsaction.org/Email: info@rightsaction.org

Additional Websites:

Acción Ecológica (Ecuador) www.accionecologica.org

Asamblea de Vecinos Autoconvocados de Esquel(Argentina) www.noalamina.org

Centro de Incidencia Ambiental (Panama) www.ciampanama.org

Comunidad Agrícola Los Huascoalinos (Chile) www.huascoalinos.cl

Ramirez vs Copper Mesa www.ramirezversuscoppermesa.com

NORTH AMERICA/TURTLE ISLAND

Ardoch Algonquin First Nation

The Ardoch Algonquin First Nation and Allies (AAFNA) is a confederation of Algonquin families that collectively identifies their homeland as the area now known as the Mississippi, Madawaska, Rideau, and Tay watersheds. These Ardoch families express a desire to preserve traditional language, culture and territorial jurisdiction by working together and maintaining a sense of community. Presently, AAFNA is focused on developing strategies to defend their territory from development by the nuclear, mining and forestry industries, and are conducting public consciousness raising efforts throughout the country. *Website: www.aafna.ca Email: info@aafna.ca*

More Information: Defenders of the Land www.defendersoftheland.org and South. Website: www.wsdp.org E-mail: wsdp@igc.org

MiningWatch Canada

MiningWatch Canada (MWC) is a Canadian initiative supported by environmental, social justice, indigenous and labour rights organizations. It addresses the urgent need for a co-ordinated public interest response to the threats to public health, water and air quality, fish and wildlife habitat and community interests posed by irresponsible mineral policies and practices in Canada

and around the world. MWC is a direct response to industry and government failures to not only protect the public and the environment from destructive mining practices, but also to deliver on their sustainability rhetoric. With technical and strategic expertise as well as a vision of sustainable and healthy communities, MWC supports the monitoring, analysis, and advocacy needed to impact the decisions of the mining industry and public policy makers.

Website: www.miningwatch.ca Email: info@miningwatch.ca

Western Shoshone Defense Project (WSDP)

The WSDP was formed to provide support to Shoshone elders—in particular, Carrie Dann and the late Mary Dann—whose lands and livelihoods have been threatened by the expansion of corporate gold mining. Directed by Carrie Dann, the WSDP is guided by the traditional Shoshone governance structures and traditional leaders. Together with organizations around the world, the WSDP has been working to bring international attention to the injustices and devastation resulting from gold mining operations. The WSDP has played an important role in building an international case against Canada's Barrick Gold by exposing its record of violating human rights and destroying the land belonging to communities in the Global North.

Website: www.wsdp.org E-mail: wsdp@igc.org

Mining Corporations Featured in this Publication that Face Coordinated Campaigns & Legal Action by Local Human Rights and Environmental Justice Advocates Include:

Anglo American www.angloamerican.co.uk

Anglo Gold Ashanti www.anglogold.com

AngloPlatinum www.angloplatinum.co.uk

Barrick Gold Corporation www.barrick.com

BHP Billiton www.bhpbilliton.com

B2 Gold www.b2gold.com

Copper Mesa Mining Corporation www.coppermesacorp.com

Corriente Resources Inc. www.corriente.com

Frontenac Ventures www.frontenacventures.com

Heathgate Resources www.heathgateresources.com.au

Goldcorp www.goldcorp.com

IAMGold www.iamgold.com

Iluka www.iluka.com

International Minerals Corporation www.intlminerals.com

Infinite Gold www.infinitogold.com

Inmet www.inmetmining.com

Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company www.lepantomining.com

Mineral Commodities

Oceana Gold www.oceanagold.com

OZ Minerals www.ozminerals.com

Teck www.teck.com

Tungkhum www.tongkahharbour.com/tongkah/company_TKL.html

Uranium One www.uranium1.com

Vale Inco www.valeinco.com

Xstrata www.xstrata.com

Glossary

Acid mine drainage-When rock containing sulphur is exposed to air and water (such as that which surrounds deposits of gold, silver and copper), sulphuric acid is produced. This acid dissolves heavy metals found in waste rock and tailings produced during mineral extraction operations. This toxic chemical mixture drains into ground and surface water.

Acute conjunctivitis-An inflammation of the membrane that lines the white section of one's eye and underside of eye lid, often caused by constant exposure to dust. Symptoms include bloodshot and irritated eyes.

Aquifer-A concentrated amount of underground water found in layers of porous rock.

Adivasis-Understood as the original inhabitants of India, the various ethnic groups which consider themselves as 'adivasi' traditionally led an autonomous existence outside of the dominant Hindu caste system, and remain dependent on hunting and gathering as well as small scale agricultural practices. However, they have been economically, socially, and politically marginalized. Mining operations, logging, hydroelectric dams, and other large-scale development projects have consistently displaced their settlements.

Artisanal small-scale mining (ASM)-Informal extraction of minerals and metals on an independent family or community level, using non-mechanized techniques, such as panning, digging, shovelling, cutting and sorting. Mercury may be used as an amalgam, severely damaging the health of workers and the surrounding ecosystems. When larger mining companies apply for land concessions, local families who depend on ASM are considered 'illegal' inhabitants.

Bauxite-This mineral is used to make aluminium, and also used in abrasives and cement manufacturing.

Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (Philippines)-Legislation in the Philippines that is part of the 1997 Indigenous Peoples Rights Act to approve a community's claims for a land title. In principle, the granting of a CADT recognizes Indigenous Peoples' traditional systems of land tenure.

Cobalt-Primarily used in gas turbines, lithium batteries, and as a catalyst in the production of petroleum, cobalt is also used in porcelain enamels, for glass colouring, and in prosthetic parts.

Copper-Used for thermal and electronic conductors, copper is also sought for building materials, monetary coin purposes and as a component in ceramic glaze.

Cyanide heap leach system-A process through which crushed ore containing gold is heaped on a pad or base, and sprayed with a cyanide solution. The cyanide bonds to the gold while seeping through the heaps. The resulting materials at the bottom of the piles are pumped into a mill for chemical separation. The remaining cyanide is stored in artificially constructed ponds. Contamination of the surrounding environment due to cyanide leakage is considered inevitable.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)-Before a mine is constructed, an EIA is often mandated by national legislation in order to explain possible impacts the mine will have on the environment, and provide information about how destruction to ecosystems can be minimized.

Gold-Between eighty and ninety percent of newly mined gold is used by the jewelry and ornamental industries. The remaining amount is used for electroplating, electrical semi-conductors and anti-rheumatic drugs.

ILO Convention 169- Adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1989, Convention 169 recognizes that Indigenous Peoples should be consulted when legislative and administrative measures affecting them are under consideration; that they should have the right to participate at all levels of decision-making; and that they should have the right to decide their own development priorities. In addition, this international legal mechanism calls for prior assessment of the social, spiritual, cultural and environmental impacts of planned 'development' projects on any affected Indigenous populations.

International Finance Corporation (IFC)-The IFC is part of the World Bank Group, headquartered in Washington, DC. It primarily functions to finance large-scale private sector projects, such as mining, oil and gas extraction projects, and hydroelectric dams.

Indian Act (Canada)-Legislation in Canada originally adopted in 1876 that sought to subjugate Indigenous Peoples under colonial authorities. The 'Crown' (British administration) was established as the guardian of land once collectively shared by different Indigenous Peoples; traditional forms of leadership were displaced; traditional practices were banned;

enfranchisement as a 'Canadian citizen' was prohibited until an individual agreed to assimilate; and the right of Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men to legally claim their status and heritage was withdrawn. An amended Indian Act remains part of the Canadian judicial framework, and is considered by First Nations populations to perpetuate discriminatory and colonial relationships.

Iron-Used for components in the construction of machinery and machine tools, cars, ship hulls, and building structures, as well as for furniture, kitchenware, and office accessories. Iron ore is also utilized in the production of certain types of garments, rubber, paint, insecticides, and animal feed.

Liming-Industrial process used to reduce acidic content of mine tailings and stabilize overall contamination of surrounding environment.

Mine tailings-After desired minerals are removed from the mining area, the remaining ground rock waste, or tailings, are left in piles. Containing residue of heavy metals, tailings threaten to contaminate surrounding air, water and land.

Mining concession-Area of land sold to mining companies for exploration and operations.

Native Title (Australia)-In 1993, the Australian federal government opened a procedure for granting 'Native Title' rights for territories identified as Indigenous homelands. Initially, the 'Native Title' procedures were interpreted as a breakthrough for Aboriginal land rights advocates. Since then, Aboriginal groups report few positive results, as it has become apparent that the Native Title system has in fact had a disempowering impact for the Original Peoples.

Nickel-This ore is used primarily in stainless steel, magnets, electronic components, rechargeable batteries, and monetary coins. In addition, the nickel sulphide compound is mined for use in electroplating and batteries.

Organization of American States (OAS)-Headquartered in Washington, DC, this international organization is made up of North, Central and South American states. The OAS has established two affiliated institutions, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, which provide a mechanism for the denunciation and resolution of human rights violations in individual cases, as well as for monitoring the general human rights situation in member states.

Ore reserves-The amount and grade of ore that a company calculates can be extracted. Amounts are classified as 'possible', 'probable' and 'proven' reserves according to data available.

Open-pit mine/open-cast mine-A great deal of earth removal over vast expanses of land is required for this process of extracting minerals relatively close to the surface layers of soil. Due to the total discarding of topsoil, this process typically has a devastating toll on the surrounding ecosystems.

Palm sago-Edible starch extracted from palm tree trunks. The staple source of carbohydrates for many South Pacific peoples.

Phytotoxicity test-Assessment of toxic chemicals found in the soil, such as those released into the environment by mineral extraction and smelting processes.

Platinum-Used in car emission control devices and engines, electronics and catalysts (particularly for the production of petroleum), platinum is also a common component in ships, steel piers and pipelines.

Sedimentation-Blockage of aquatic ecosystem due to heavy particulate matter deposited into waterways during—and after—mining operations.

Silicosis-Incurable lung disease characterized by the growth of lumps and scar tissue in the lungs. It is caused by repeated exposure to toxic particles of silica in the air.

Silver-As a versatile mineral, silver is used primarily in control rods for nuclear reactors, electronic devices, batteries, jewelry, photograph development, specialized optics, clothing production, medical preparations, musical instruments, dental fillings, and monetary coins.

Sinkhole-Often occurring when mines are decommissioned or abandoned, sinkholes are usually caused by the collapse of underground mine shafts and/or processes of subsidence at mining sites.

Strip mine-A mine that consists of a series of rows/strips where the soil and rock above the mineral/ore to be extracted are

completely removed. This process is sometimes referred to as ‘mountain-top removal’ due to the complete destruction of the surface of the land.

Structural Adjustment Programme (SAPs)—Imposed on governments by the World Bank as conditionalities for loans and debt repayment, SAPs are aimed at reducing national government budget deficits through a set of strict macroeconomic policies that include decreasing government expenditure (particularly on social programs), increasing export production, privatizing state run industries, and liberalizing trade and investment policies.

Subsidence—Gradual sinking—or abrupt collapse—of the rock and soil into an underground mine.

Tailings pond/dam—At mining sites, artificial dams and ponds are constructed to store the toxic liquefied wastes and contaminated water left over from ore processing. Heavy metals contained in the tailings often leach from the storage area into the surrounding soil and watershed systems.

Thorium—Metal used in aircraft engines, electronic wire coating, nuclear reactors, nuclear fuel, and in procedures to determine the age of fossils. It is also added to glass and ceramics for heat-resistant properties.

Tin—Commonly used to make containers for food/drink preservation, tin is also used as a component in alloys, as a preservative for wood and plastics products, for electrical conductors, and as a solder for pipes as well as electric circuits.

Titanium—As an alloy, titanium is used for air and spacecraft, naval ship, missile, submarine, aquarium and desalination plant components. It is also used in metallic sporting goods, sculptures and surgical implants. As a pigment, it is used in paints, paper, toothpaste, plastics, and sunscreens.

Unceded territory—Areas of land which have neither been surrendered by the Indigenous/First Nations Peoples to a government entity, nor ‘officially’ demarcated as a territory belonging to a particular Indigenous Peoples.

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination—A panel of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (173 state parties). The committee examines reports submitted from each state regarding their compliance with the rights set out under the convention, and prepares “Concluding Observations”, which document the concerns and recommendations to ensure people in any given state have access to the convention rights. The Committee also proactively monitors state compliance through procedures for the filing of individual and inter-state complaints, as well as an early warning procedure.

United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)—Adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and outlines an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. All 186 state signatories have committed to uphold the rights outlined in CEDAW. The optional protocol lays out procedures for individual complaints to be submitted as well as the launching of inquiries into grave and systematic violations of women’s rights.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—Adopted in 2007 by the UN General Assembly, this document outlines the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, including rights to self-determination, land and territories, cultural identities, values and beliefs, language, health, and management of natural resources. Specifically, it recognizes Indigenous Peoples’ right to “free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.” (Art. 32)

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing—Appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights, this independent expert has a duty to identify the best practices and challenges related to promoting the full realization of the right to adequate housing. Under the current mandate, this rapporteur has the specific task to identify issues related to women’s access to housing and land rights. Rapporteur concerns and recommendations are submitted to the UN General Assembly.

Uranium—Uranium is primarily used in missiles and other military weaponry, in nuclear weapons and reactors, for equipping combat vehicles, as well as for dating geological formations. Also used in the medical isotope field.

Zircon—This metal is extracted for use in insulation and refractory materials, abrasives, ceramics, nuclear reactors, sandblasting and welding.

Defending Land, Life & Dignity



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