

# Consultation on Women, Mining and Development

**International Women and Mining Network  
Red International 'Mujeres Y Minería' (RIMM)**

*A Skill-share Report  
16 to 19 March 2009, Hyderabad, India*



An adivasi woman of Niyamagiri stares at displacement by Vedanta in Orissa, India

## Consultation on Women, Mining and Development

16 to 19 March 2009, Hyderabad

*Co hosted by*  
mines, minerals and PEOPLE & Dhaatri  
Resource Centre for Women and Children

*on behalf of the*  
International Women and Mining  
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# 1. Introduction

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The leap in demand and extraction of minerals across the world by global markets has created a situation of serious imbalances and human conflicts over control of resources, livelihoods and survival. The global mining industry has positioned itself at a powerful lobbying point with governments, international banks and inter-governmental bodies in redefining the growth path for human existence that reflects an insatiable thirst for high energy and consumer-oriented development so as to capitalise on the exhaustible mineral deposits in most of our developing and under-developed nations.

Transnational mining corporations have pushed the policy of globalisation and privatisation with 100 percent Foreign Direct Investment, relaxation of labour regulations, environmental laws, free trade and access to innumerable natural resources at highly subsidised prices and with impunity from all social and environmental responsibilities, especially in the developing and under-developed countries.

## 1.1 Impact of Mining on Women

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Mining all across the world has serious negative impacts on women, especially indigenous women (tribal/ *adivasi*), as well as on the ecology. Large-scale displacement, retrenchment and loss of livelihoods are imminent due to proposed private and multi-national projects and we are today faced with a large vulnerable population called climate change refugees. Legally women have no rights over lands or natural resources when they are displaced by mining projects in patriarchal systems. Wherever there has been mining, women's economic status has been destroyed; they have lost their right to cultivate their traditional crops, and do not have access to forest produce, for consumption or for livelihood. They are forced to depend solely on the incomes of men. The living conditions of women displaced by

This scale of activity and the pace at which the resources are being planned to be exploited has implications on the extent to which communities and the ecology are under attack in an unscrupulous manner.

The effects are not only on the immediate economic and capital flow, but also have serious consequences on the macro-climate, ecology, biodiversity, drastic changes to land utilisation, human rights, labour, social relations and global peace.

Of these several impacts, those that affect women and children are ones that are most cruel, and yet invisible. The ecological disasters related to extraction of minerals by way of converting large agricultural and forest lands into mining pits, the diversion of life-giving water bodies from local community use as well as the serious impacts on the macro-water tables on which downstream farmers, fishermen and urban societies depend, the resultant displacement and migration, have also the most serious impacts on women.

mining—their private and cultural spaces, infrastructure facilities, protection from social customs, etc—have serious negative impacts reducing them into a state of helplessness.

If employed, it is mostly in the small private sector mines where women are the first to be retrenched, have no work safety measures, are susceptible to serious health hazards which also affect their reproduction, and are exposed to sexual exploitation.

Women have been pushed into menial and marginalised forms of labour as maids and servants, as construction labourers or into prostitution, which are highly unorganised and socially humiliating. Hitherto non-existent social evils like wife-battering, alcoholism, indebtedness, physical and sexual

harassment, prostitution, polygamy and desertion have emerged in many places. Criminal offences against women are alarmingly on the rise and they are rarely brought to the attention of the authorities nor

are there any punitive actions taken. Human rights abuses on women miners or women affected by mining has shockingly increased after industries have initiated violence against any form of democratic protest or resistance.

## 2. Need for the Consultation

As global economics has built its network worldwide for purposes of exploitation, we as struggle groups also find the urgent need to build our campaign alliances in order to face the global economics of mining. We are confronted by the same mining conglomerates who dictate our laws in whichever country they enter and induce similar impacts on our peoples, our lands and our resources. We need to reach out through exchange of information, strengthening local campaigns through building larger pressure on governments and companies by undertaking fact-finding visits, writing to governments and international bodies, taking up impact assessments from a gender perspective, participating in international dialogue and consultations, and by helping women from communities and workers strengthen their strategies of campaigns through providing opportunities for sharing of these skills and strategies. An important focus area is to facilitate the sharing of information, experiences and campaign strategies through organising skill share workshops for women from communities affected by mining and women mine workers.

Through the consultation our aim was to:

- ◆ Help women come together and gain strength and courage from each others' movements.
- ◆ To help build an exchange of information about corporates, laws, international policies and instruments for lobbying at local and international levels.
- ◆ To bring a larger visibility to the public on the concerns of women and children affected by mining by helping articulate the local struggles to

international media, civil society and United Nations (UN) bodies.

- ◆ To work towards documentation of specific and country mining situations that can facilitate the preparation of alternate reports to UN bodies.
- ◆ To strengthen the membership of the International Women and Mining Network or Red Internacional 'Mujeres y Minería' (RIMM) and sensitise the public, communities, civil society of its perspectives on mining.
- ◆ To bring together members with common background of mining and social situations (indigenous women, women mine workers) together for a collective advocacy.

This consultation is a part of processes at different levels—local, national, regional and international—for exchanging skills, experiences and strategies between different mining struggles, particularly the women involved in these campaigns. It was a vibrant meeting that brought forth the current critical problems in Asia reflecting the shrinking democratic and political spaces for women.

There were two broad components for the skill share: one group comprised women from rural and indigenous communities displaced/being displaced by mining projects, their rights and the violations faced by them from the State and corporate powers and the second group comprised women workers working in informal mines/unorganised sector/artisanal and small-scale mines. Particular focus was given to the concept of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in the context of indigenous women.

### 3. Participants

The consultation cum skill share was designed as a programme for field level activists and women affected to present their stories, strategies, campaigns with each other and to plan for collective actions. Forty eight

participants, primarily indigenous women and women mine workers, from six countries in Asia—Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand—participated in this consultation.

Country	Representative organisation	Community affected/ representatives from community
Cambodia	Oxfam America/ Highlander Association/ Village Support Group/DPA	Representing indigenous women and community who undertake artisanal mining
India		
Andhra Pradesh		
Visakhapatnam	Samata/CRYNet/Seetaramaraju Yuvajana Sangham	Adivasi and rural women fighting against proposed bauxite mining and refineries
Hyderabad & Cuddapah	MAUP/VRDS	Representing rural women opposing uranium mining
Jharkhand	Jharkhand Ulgulan Manch / Jharkhand Ulgulan Mahila Manch/ Adivasi Kalyan Parishad/PUCL/ Judav/Adivasi Lahanti Gaoto	Adivasi women campaigning against a proposed thermal power plant and coal mining
Karnataka	Sakhi	Representing rural and adivasi women mine workers in iron ore mines
Maharashtra	Santulan	Rural and adivasi women working in stone quarries
Orissa	Orissa Adibasi Manch/Niyamgiri Surakhya Samiti/Ankuran/ Sasubahumali Surakhya Samiti/ Baphlimali Surakhya Samiti	Adivasi women fighting against bauxite mining and alumina refinery
Rajasthan	MLPC	Rural women working in stone quarries
Tamil Nadu	Veeranganai	Representing community campaigning against alumina refineries
Indonesia	JATAM	Representing women affected by gold mining
Myanmar	KDNG	Representing issues of women affected by gold mining
Philippines	Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan-Friends of the Earth Philippines	Representing women fighting against gold and copper mining
Thailand	Ecological and Cultural Study Group/Farmer Community Institution	Representing women fighting against potash mining

## 4. Outline of the Consultation

The ‘Consultation on Women, Mining and Development’ was held from 16 to 19 March, 2009 at the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises located at Yousufguda, Hyderabad. The consultation was organised by the national alliance mines, minerals and PEOPLE (mm&P) and Dhaatri Resource Centre for Women and Children on behalf of RIMM.

The four day consultation included the below:

- DAY 1 : Exchange of strategies and campaigns by the participants, including power point presentations (details in Section 5).
- DAY 2 : A presentation on the health impacts of mining (details in Section 6).  
Screening of a documentary film about the impacts of gold mining on communities living around Buyat Bay, Indonesia.  
Overview on concept of FPIC and labour rights.  
Small group discussions on FPIC and labour in mines in the context of women.
- DAY 3 : Summary of recommendations of small group discussions (details in Section 7).  
The way ahead (details in Section 8).
- DAY 4 : Field trip to proposed uranium mining site for participants (details in Section 9) and press meet.



## 5. Asia: Sharing Strategies and Campaigns \_\_\_\_\_

The campaign and strategy sharing exercise was an opportunity for the participants to share experiences and take the energy and confidence from this small gathering back to the many hundreds of women fighting in their local campaigns.

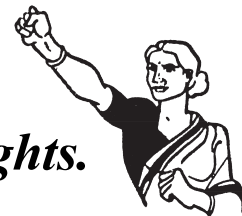
It was hoped that each of the women present would take upon themselves the responsibility of passing on the learning here to the larger community in their continued struggle against mining companies and colluding governments.

The objective of this sharing was to bring about the realisation that each of our struggles and problems are not isolated; the issues faced by an adivasi woman from India in the context of displacement are very similar to the ones faced by women from the community in Thailand. Women artisanal miners from Cambodia were cautioned by women mine workers from Rajasthan and Maharashtra in India about the kind of repression and workplace exploitations one faces in the hands of mining contractors or large industrial mining companies.



*Defending our Lives,*

*Demanding our Rights.*





## 5.1 CAMBODIA

### CAMBODIA



Region/s	Overview of extractive industries in the country
Campaign/s	For preventing introduction of large-scale destructive mining
Organisation/s	Oxfam America/Highlander Association/Village Support Group/DPA
Company/ies	----
Mineral/s	Bauxite/copper/iron ore/limestone/nickel/tungsten/carbonate rocks/gemstones/gold/manganese/phosphate/slate/silica/zircon

From the Khmer Rouges killing fields (1975-79), followed by a decade long civil war (1979-89) Cambodia finally emerged to frame its own Constitution in the year 1993. In the ensuing years, laws regarding the environment (1996), land (2001), mining (2001), and forestry (2002) were also framed to protect the environment and natural resources. While forest cover was severely depleted in the country as a result of forest concessions granted in the 1980s, Cambodia continues to be a nation still rich in natural resources with a considerable area under thick forest cover. The country also possesses reasonably large deposits of mineral wealth.



Cambodia has never invested in the extractive industry except in family-scale mining and this has not been a major threat to the environment. While agriculture helped to meet the needs of the household, family members did take up artisanal mining, like

that of gold and gemstones, as an additional source of income. Anyone from the community could take up artisanal mining on the lands. Even women were involved in small-scale mining using only their hands or small tools. This posed little threat to the environment or to the health of the miners. Thus in spite of the abundance of mineral resources in the country much of it remained undeveloped. Since 2006, however, there has been a drastic increase in the number of exploitation and extraction licenses granted for minerals like iron ore, bauxite, gold, zinc and nickel. This included nearly 100,930 ha identified for gold and 100,000 ha for bauxite mining.

The people living in remote areas, a large number of whom are indigenous peoples, rely on natural resources and traditional agricultural practices. However, land concessions for mineral explorations have begun to affect the natural resources, culture and agricultural base of the indigenous communities. Land in Cambodia is divided into public State land, State land and private lands; however, no official demarcations have yet been done. The indigenous people of Cambodia do not possess land certificates and they live in fear of losing their sacred land, spiritual forest and burial land, all of which form an important part of their cultural identity. At present, in spite of laws and regulations, there are serious lacunae in

monitoring and law enforcement regarding mineral exploration and extraction. No consultations with the community are held before extraction or exploration, no environment impact assessments are carried out, extraction is often carried out before the official contract is signed and the possession rights of the indigenous peoples are being ignored. Another cause for concern is the number of exploration and proposed extraction areas overlapping with national parks and protected areas. These protected areas are home to a wide variety of animals, plants and bird species.

### ***Campaigns to create awareness about destructive mining***

Development and Partnership Action (DPA) has been actively working towards creating awareness about the destructive effects of mining by engaging with different groups at different levels. These include:

- Conducting social and environmental impact studies to document evidence through group discussions and individual interviews.
- Creating awareness and understanding at the community level by organising trainings, providing consultation and legal aid support, and engaging with local authorities.
- Providing awareness and understanding at the provincial level where the provincial governor, representatives from land and mining departments are invited to discuss with all stakeholders.
- Creating awareness at the national level by networking.
- Creating awareness at the international level by way of exposure visits conducted to Philippines, East Timor, China and now India.

DPA documents in detail the natural resources—forests, rivers, streams, etc—and its use by the community. DPA has submitted complaints, statements and petitions from the



community to the government and helps in dialogue with the policy makers. The DPA's campaign tries to influence the international financial institutions and the embassies of foreign companies, and at all times undertakes advocacy within the framework of the law using factual evidence collected. DPA believes firmly in the principle that 'Prevention is better than cure' i.e., it is better to address issues at the beginning with regard to mining by learning from experiences of other countries rather than wait for the same issues to arise in Cambodia.

Natural resources on which the indigenous women depend in Cambodia like non-timber forest produce and subsistence agriculture are all being impacted. Women feel increasingly threatened by loss of land. Most importantly mining has begun to affect the natural water sources like rivers and ponds. The Highlander Association and the Village Support Group work with indigenous women to create awareness about the threat of large-scale mining looming over the country. They provide support to the women from the community helping them understand their ownership rights over resources, providing training on laws, working with women's groups and developing women leaders from within the community. Their efforts to prepare and warn women from the community about the adverse impacts of industrial scale mining have met with some success. For example, in 2005 in one of the villages women engaged in artisanal mining

for gemstones protested against a company taking over the lands for gemstone mining forcing the company to withdraw.

Oxfam America provides support to local groups like the above in their campaigns against mining.

## 5.2 INDIA

### INDIA



#### STATES

Andhra Pradesh
Jharkhand
Karnataka
Maharashtra
Orissa
Rajasthan
Tamil Nadu

#### 5.2.1 Andhra Pradesh

Region/s	Visakhapatnam district/ Hyderabad
Campaign/s	Anti-bauxite mining and anti - uranium mining campaign
Organisation/s	Samata/CRYNet/MAUP/ VRDS/Seetaramaraju Yuvajana Sangham
Company/ies	Anrak Aluminium Ltd/ JSWHL/UCIL
Mineral/s	Bauxite/uranium

up in the plain areas where considerable populations of farmers reside and for whom agriculture is the primary source of livelihood.

#### **Anti-bauxite mining campaign in Visakhapatnam district**

The bauxite mining threat has been hanging over the adivasi people of Andhra Pradesh living in the Eastern Ghats since 1972. The government, for decades, has been trying to unearth the vast bauxite reserves and fill its treasury. Protests from adivasi people along with the support of the Supreme Court in the form of the Samatha Judgment resulted in stalling the project. Samata's (the local advocacy organisation fighting for tribal rights) involvement with the anti-bauxite mining campaign began 16 years ago and

The Eastern Ghats hill ranges, a large part of which falls in the Visakhapatnam district, have rich resources of various minerals including bauxite. These have been marked out by the State government for extraction. However, the region is also home to many adivasi (tribal) communities who have been living here for hundreds of years. These adivasi communities have been strongly protesting against the mining happening in this region. In addition to the extraction, which is to be done by the State entity the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation, two refineries are also proposed to be set up in the plain areas for alumina processing by the private entities Jindal South West Holding Limited (JSWHL) and Anrak Aluminium Ltd. The refineries are to be set



continues till date. Bauxite mining would not only displace thousands of adivasis, it would also destroy the environment of this ecologically sensitive region, which serves as the catchment for coastal towns and cities. The present government signed Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with both JSWHL and Anrak Aluminium Ltd. Samata has been closely monitoring the situation and supplying timely information to the media, political parties and other interested groups on the extent of the problem. Apart from media advocacy, Samata also uses legal mechanisms and laws in its campaign work. Press visits, educational and media tours and press conferences are also organised. Mobilising the community, especially at the time of public hearings, and creating awareness among the community by organising regular meetings, exposure visits and interactions are important campaign strategies. The Coastal Rural Youth Network (CRYNet) a federation of community based organisations in Visakhapatnam and adjoining districts is actively involved in grassroot level mobilisation.

### ***Participation of women in the campaign***

Women, whether in the mining area or the refinery sites, have been at the forefront of the campaign; their demand has been unanimous—no to mining or refineries and preservation of their land and forests. At the consultation women came from both the proposed bauxite extraction and refinery sites. In Makavarapalem, which is the alumina processing plant site of Anrak Aluminium Ltd, in spite of hunger strikes and strong opposition from the women against the Anrak refinery, they were forced to take compensation for their lands and are now living in fear of being evicted from their homes. At the time of the relay fast which went on for 56 days the political parties and administration assured them that the demands of the people would be considered, but once the fast ended they reneged on their



promise. A number of promises made regarding jobs, schools, house sites, etc., have also not been kept; labour for constructing the roads leading to the refinery were brought in from outside. Roads have been constructed cutting across their tanks and ponds depriving them of water for agricultural use. They also gave testimonies of the undemocratic public hearings conducted amidst police intimidation and tear-gas shells. Adivasi women came from Araku and Anantagiri, the proposed bauxite mining project area of JSWHL. The women were firm that they did not want mining in their lands as they did not see a future without their land.

### ***Anti-uranium mining campaign***

The Movement Against Uranium Projects (MAUP), a confederation of concerned individual citizens and voluntary organisations, is campaigning against proposed uranium mining in the districts of Cuddapah and Nalgonda. The uranium mining project proposed in Nalgonda and to be taken up by the Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) included extraction at the Lambapur and Peddagattu villages with the refinery being proposed at the Seripally village. The villagers here have, however, been opposing both the mining and the refinery and have been able to prevent the same from commencing. In Cuddapah the proposed Pulivendula project, also of UCIL involves extraction in Vemulapalli mandal and the processing unit is to be set up in Tummalapalli

village. MAUP has been involved in campaigns against both these projects. The protests have been carried out by media advocacy, by organising women's groups, by networking

with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals for the cause, and by mobilising and participating in the public hearings.

**5.2.2 Jharkhand**

Region/s	Dumka district
Campaign/s	Anti-thermal power plant and coal mining campaigns
Organisation/s	Jharkhand Ulgulan Manch/ Jharkhand Ulgulan Mahila Manch/Adivasi Kalyan Parishad/PUCL/Judav/Adivasi Lahanti Gaoto
Company/ies	CESC-RP Goenka Thermal Power Plant
Mineral/s	Coal

The State of Jharkhand is divided into 24 districts under four administrative divisions—Santhal Paragana, North and South Chhotanagpur and Kolhar—each of which have specific laws protecting the land and resource rights of the majority adivasi population.

However, the administration has been involved in exploration, mostly done in a secretive and insidious manner, with nearly 101 companies both national and multi-national waiting to take up mining activities.

At present coal and uranium mining and quarrying are the main mining activities in the State. Both these mining activities have

severely affected the environment and the social fabric of the adivasis living for hundreds of years in the region. Where mining has been happening, no agricultural activity has been possible for a 5 km radius as a result of pollution caused by mining.

The government's promise of providing power to the adivasi villages is yet to see the light of day. Jobs promised to them are being given mostly to outsiders. Adolescent girls who do find employment are vulnerable to sexual abuse mostly from the very people who employ them.

The Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) has reported cases of rape and has helped adivasi girls file cases and represented them in court as well. However, very little of these issues come out into the open. The company, contractors and the administration take advantage of the ignorance of the adivasis to exploit them.

Whenever the adivasis question the injustice of the government policies, protests are ruthlessly quelled by the administration with the adivasis being branded as naxalites or extremists.



**\*Munni Hansda: Adivasi woman arrested for fighting for her rights**

The Santalis, an adivasi community in Dumka district in Jharkhand have their sustenance drawn from natural resources that abound in the forests around them. Their livelihood sources include collection of forest produce like sal leaves and growing paddy for subsistence as well as for sale. However, the peaceful lifestyles of these adivasis were rudely shattered in 2005 when the proposal for setting up a thermal power plant was floated.

The power plant, owned by the CESC-RP Goenka group, is expected to produce 1,000 MW of power of which 75 percent is to be siphoned off to another State, West Bengal, and leaving the rest for Jharkhand. None of the 250-300 villages that could be affected by the project are to be the beneficiaries. The notification for land acquisition of 1,000 acres for the project was initiated in 2008.

Realising that the implementation of the said power plant would be a disaster to their livelihood and a serious threat to their survival, the adivasis from the affected villages raised their voices in protest and registered their grievances through notices they sent to the authorities. To stifle their opposition and to rob them of their sovereignty over their resources the State has been indulging in repressive measures. On 26 November 2008, Munni Hansda who was spearheading the campaign was arrested on charge of theft of motorbike and multiple charges were foisted on her, including that of being a naxalite/Maoist, so as to make her arrest non-bailable. Earlier in October, several thousand adivasis had gheraoed the Superintendent of Police for 3 days, but this being a peaceful protest the police was unable to file any case against the adivasis. The later arrest of Munni seems to be a revenge for the challenge of their authority.

On 6 December 2008, to protest against the arrest of Munni Hansda, a Jail Bharo Andolan was initiated and nearly eight to ten thousand members of the adivasi community marched towards the Dumka Central Jail, where she was being held. The police opened fire on the peaceful rally causing grievous injury to many and killing one Lakhiram Tudu at whom a bullet was fired from a point blank range. Seven suffered bullet injuries and 15 people, including women were severely beaten; nine were arrested. The arrested have been in jail since then and subjected to violation of human rights, neglect and humiliation. They have been denied food and medical treatment. Saikat Marandi, who had been wounded, was chained and denied medical treatment. He could not even move his body as a consequence of which he developed bed sores. He died in prison due to lack of medical attention. Shival Soren, who has a bullet lodged in his brain, is still languishing in prison. His condition is serious but no effort is being made to save him. The total number arrested is 12; the charges against them are under sections 147, 148, 353, 452, 188, 427, 504, 333, 341 and 342 under the Indian Penal Code. In January 2009 the State of Jharkhand came under President's Rule, with the State government being dismissed till further elections were held. As a result, no appeal or petition gets a definitive reply or response from the authorities concerned. No official enquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation or the National Human Rights Commission has been conducted. Meanwhile the condition of those injured and still in prison is deteriorating day by day.

\*Note: At the time of publication of this report, Munni Hansda had been released on bail after 8 months in jail.

5.2.3 Karnataka

Region/s	Bellary district
Campaign/s	Campaign against iron ore mining and for mine workers' rights
Organisation/s	Sakhi
Company/ies	--
Mineral/s	Iron ore

Bellary district in Karnataka is a key mining district and is the hub of iron ore mining in the State. Before indiscriminate mining began the region was a rich agricultural belt having rich forests. Recurrent droughts and mechanisation of agriculture forced the agricultural labour to look for other sources of survival and this coincided with the mining rush in the region which fast grew into an unchecked free market zone where it is widely reported that the mining mafia dictated the very governance of the State.

While the international demand for iron ore increased, bringing with it larger profits for a few, the environment and the social fabric of the region began to take a beating. Miles and miles of agricultural land were soon converted into iron ore mines where men, women and even children worked in exploitative and inhuman conditions at the mercy of the mine owners and contractors. At the peak of the mining activity, Bellary boasted of the highest number of private aircrafts.

In stark contrast the human development indicators of the district like infant mortality, life expectancy, and literacy are abysmally low indicating that a large population of the district was deprived of even basic amenities.

**Women mine workers of Bellary and the post-recession scenario**

A representative from Bellary presented the post-recession situation of women mine workers in the iron ore mines. Bellary had a huge workforce of unorganised women mine workers who lived and worked in extremely exploitative, hazardous and insanitary conditions.

For a measly wage the women toiled in the mines working as loaders and crushers for more than 10 hours a day. There were no facilities for housing, toilets, drinking water or creches. They faced sexual exploitation and physical abuse at the hands of the mine owners, contractors, other male workers and even from their own spouses. They also suffered from a number of illnesses and health problems, but had no access to any kind of health care.

The recent collapse of the global markets and the fall in demand for iron ore, have adversely affected these women mine workers. Poverty, drought and illiteracy had forced them into mining and today they have neither labour opportunities in mines nor agricultural work. They are struggling to survive. In desperation, many of the women today wish for mining to continue in the region as all other sources of livelihood were destroyed when the lands were converted to mining. Mine owners and contractors have walked away with no responsibility for land reclamation or for workers' rehabilitation. At present the mining mafia is being replaced with the hotel mafia and as a rude irony, advertisements promoting camel rides in the red dunes have sprung up in the district.

*We fight to protect our rivers, our lands, our forest, our cultures and livelihoods and social life with dignity/human right. We fight for the future of Mother Earth*



### 5.2.4 Maharashtra

Region/s	Pune
Campaign/s	Rights of stone and quarry workers
Organisation/s	Santulan
Company/ies	--
Mineral/s	Stone/granite

Maharashtra, a State in western India, is endowed with diverse mineral reserves. In addition to major minerals like iron ore, manganese, coal, limestone, etc., there are a large number of stone quarries in the State. Rapid industrialisation and population growth were followed by a rising demand for housing, roads and civic amenities that fuelled the large demand from the construction industry. Stone quarry workers employed in these quarries are from marginalised and impoverished communities. Most of them are landless migrants who have moved here for various reasons—drought, displacement, etc—have been uprooted from their homes and have come to eke out a living from these quarries. They are unorganised workers who face immense exploitation and abuse at the hands of the quarry owners and contractors; this is more so in the case of women and children, particularly adolescent girls, who form a large part of the workforce.

Participants from Maharashtra included women quarry workers as well as activists of the organisation, Santulan. The participants spoke about the conditions in the quarries: women had to toil from dawn to dusk, face wage discrimination, sexual harassment and suffer from several illnesses [silicosis, tuberculosis (TB), pneumonia, anemia, stomach aches, back aches, lung diseases, injuries from accidents and lack of work gear]. In the absence of any creches, infants and young children also accompany their parents to the work sites and are exposed to the same hazards as their parents. With no hope of education they spend their time doing house

work and taking care of their younger siblings. Most of them go on to become a part of the labour force at a very young age.

#### ***Interventions and women mine workers collective movement***

Santulan (Social Animation Towards United Liberative Action), a not for profit organisation, works with the twin approach of constructive development and advocacy policy towards transformation of these marginalised communities. Its interventions include an education programme called Pashan Shalas (schools for children of mine workers), women's empowerment, organisation of quarry workers, legal aid and counselling, health and nutrition, research, documentation and publication.

Santulan began its work bringing together the women, organising meetings in their communities, urging them to think about the future of their children and asking them: did they want their children to lead the same life as they were leading now? After multiple meetings with the women and discussions there was a change in thinking. Women came together to form self-help groups (SHGs). The SHGs were then together formed into an independent Credit Cooperative Society that is today handled entirely by the women of the SHGs. To address the problem of alcoholism, women collectively filed a case against the





liquor dens and ran a social ban on consumption and sale of liquor in their settlements. Women also agitated to get ration cards for procuring commodities at subsidised rates from the public distribution system and also fought to get cooking-gas cylinders. The Workers' Cooperatives now issue identity cards so that owners and contractors no longer dodge responsibility towards any workers who get injured at the mine site. Through this the women have been able to ensure that compensation and treatment for accidents could be claimed. Insurance schemes, to protect the quarry workers, have also been accessed through different government programmes. First aid kits, health camps and referrals are also ensured by the workers' cooperatives at the quarries as there normally are no hospitals in the vicinity. A special programme for young adolescent girls, one of the most vulnerable groups in the area, was initiated to provide vocational training like sewing. What started with door-to-door meetings with women has today developed into a cooperative of more

than 3,000 women successfully agitating for their rights as mine workers.

With the intervention of Santulan, an innovative education programme was developed—the Pashan Shalas. The main objective of the programme was to provide education to children of quarry workers in a meaningful manner and ensure that children did not end up as child labour. The schools were located in the quarries itself and children could be admitted without any documentary evidence at any time of the year. Mid-day meal scheme initiated has ensured that children have better access to nutrition. Thanks to the efforts of Santulan, the SHGs, the Credit Cooperative Society and the dedicated cadre, there is a greater awareness among the workers who feel that their lives have distinctly improved. This has given a confidence to the women workers who are confident of achieving more rights and social security for themselves. This includes, for example, securing pension for widows whose husbands worked in the quarries.

**5.2.5 Orissa**

Region/s	Kasipur and Niyamgiri
Campaign/s	Anti-bauxite mining campaign
Organisation/s	Orissa Adibasi Manch/ Niyamgiri Surakhya Samiti/ Baphlimali Surakhya Samiti/ Ankuran/Sasubahumali Surakhya Samiti
Company/ies	UAIL/Sterlite-Vedanata
Mineral/s	Bauxite

The State of Orissa is located on the east coast of India and is covered with forests that are home to a very large adivasi population. It is also a State rich in mineral resources like bauxite, iron ore, chromite and manganese. Participants from Orissa came from two regions—Baphlimali hills, Kasipur block, Raygada district, and Niyamgiri hill, Lanjigarh, Kalahandi district.

***Anti-bauxite mining campaign -Kasipur***

In Kasipur the communities are fighting against bauxite mining and alumina refinery project of the Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL). UAIL was set up in 1992 and is today a joint venture of Hindustan Aluminium Corporation (part of the Aditya Birla group) and the Canada-based Aluminium Company of Canada (Alcan). Norsk Hydro, a Norwegian company that had a stake withdrew in the year 2000 following criticism in Norway for its complicity in human rights abuses.

The adivasis in Kasipur have been protesting against bauxite mining on Baphlimali hills, which they hold sacred, and the struggle against mining has been going on here for over

16 years. The protests have been met with severe State oppression with three people being killed in a police firing at Maikanch in December 2000. However, in spite of intimidations from the State, companies and the police, the people here are continuing their struggle especially in the present scenario where the company has applied for expansion of its operations.

One of the participants who attended, spoke about the multiple false cases that were filed against him and the many months he spent in jail as a result. Even today many of the community members continue to be in prison on false charges of murder and theft. The company has also created rifts within the community using divisive tactics. They offer money to a few who have become agents providing information to the company about the people's campaigns. The company constructed a wall around the refinery site that resulted in displacement of three villages and 125 families. Families that accepted compensation and moved out have today returned as most of the promises of housing, schools and jobs by the government remains unfulfilled. Houses provided were extremely small with no place for them to keep their livestock. The only jobs available were as daily wage labourers.

Compensation money did not last long, often used up by the men for consumption of alcohol. Today the very same people who accepted compensation have realised that they have been duped and have returned to join the struggle. One of the first actions they took was to lock the gates and prevent company officials from entering the walled-in refinery site. The Baphlimali Surakhya Samiti, Sasubahumali Surakhya Samiti and Ankuran, along with the Orissa Adibasi Manch have been supporting the people and helping them in their campaign.

### **Campaign against bauxite mining in Niyamgiri**

In Niyamgiri the Dongria Kondh women do not want to leave their lands and their sacred hills. However, Sterlite Industries, the Indian subsidiary of Vedanta Resources Plc., is using its money and muscle power to make the State machinery of Orissa violate all human and constitutional rights. Even women are beaten up by the police and agents of the company while peacefully demanding for their rights.

The Niyamgiri hill, rich in bauxite deposits, is held sacred by the ancient Dongria Kondh community. An agreement to mine bauxite in the region was signed between the Orissa government and the London based company Vedanta Resources Plc. in 1997. In 2003 Vedanata signed another MoU with the Orissa government for setting up an alumina refinery in Lanjigarh and land acquisition for the project was also initiated. Since the beginning of the project the company along with the State has been involved in a number of violations with regard to human rights, and acquiring forest and environmental clearances. The Norwegian Ministry of Finance, taking note of these violations had decided in 2007 to exclude the company from the Norwegian Pension Fund. In the same year, the Supreme Court in India in its decision on mining bauxite said that Vedanta could not take up mining. However, it diluted its own judgment by saying that the Indian



subsidiary of Vedanta—Sterlite Industries—could be allowed to mine. The affected adivasi communities meanwhile are waging a determined battle against the company and the State to protect the hill and forests around

the region. One of the representatives asked how the government, that says it has no land for rehabilitation of adivasis, is able to provide land to private companies—a question echoed by other adivasis in the region.

**5.2.6 Rajasthan**

Region/s	Udaipur district
Campaign/s	Rights of stone and quarry workers
Organisation/s	MLPC
Company/ies	--
Mineral/s	Stone/marble/granite

The State of Rajasthan has the most number of mining leases in India of minor and major minerals as well as leases for quarries. These mines have a huge workforce, including that of women and children, who work under deplorable conditions.

The women mine workers from stone, granite and marble quarries in Rajasthan along with a coordinator of the Mine Labour Protection Campaign (MLPC) gave a brief account of the working conditions of women in the quarries. Repeated drought has forced a large population in the State to abandon agriculture and take up the work of mine labourers. Women come from far off to work for long hours under extremely hazardous conditions with no protective clothing or protection from the elements. The only rest they get during the whole day is a half hour break for lunch. In the absence of any child-care facilities, their children are forced to accompany the mothers and are in turn exposed to the harmful conditions. Blasting of rocks without warning has left many with injuries and has affected the hearing of children as well. A number of health problems like TB and silicosis plague the workers but there is no facility of health care provided by the employers. Like in other mine sites across the country, there is a complete absence of basic amenities like water or toilets. One of the main problems that the

workers here, including the women face, is that they have no identity cards to prove that they are working in a particular mine or quarry which makes them vulnerable to mine owners’ exploitation and their lack of accountability in case of accidents. There is no compensation or financial assistance of any form provided in the case of death or accidents. Mine owners and the contractors, concerned only with profits, exploit the illiterate workforce at every opportunity. Wages promised are never paid in full and often they register lower number of workers with the Labour Department than actual number of people working to avoid paying minimum wages. There also exists a disparity in wage rates; women are paid lower than men. While the mine owners claim that men are involved in more heavy work the women say that this is not true. There also exists no clarity on the wage rates or transparency in payment. With no records the workers are often paid lower than the number of hours actually worked. Alcoholism is rampant among the men, and women face abuse and violence in their homes. The liquor shops are again owned by the contractors who benefit doubly in the process.

***Campaign to secure women mine workers rights***

MLPC’s work focuses on diverse areas that include empowering and supporting women mine workers. MLPC has helped women mine workers form SHGs and encourages their participation in the cooperatives. The cooperative is an assemblage of mine workers that undertake activities as an enterprise to earn profit out of their labour and the profit so earned is equally distributed to cooperative members, the mine workers. This has helped



mine workers become owners of the mineral resources. The SHG is essentially a group of women to ensure protection of their rights, participate in decision-making of the cooperatives and lend credits for income-

generation activities. The main strategy revolves around the promotion of SHGs to involve women in a process of dialogue. Another important intervention of MLPC has been to access government schemes to address the problem of child labour. One of the participants, who was once a mine worker herself, is today in charge of a creche where parents leave the children while at work. Basic literacy and nutrition of children is taken care of in these creches. MLPC also provides assistance in fighting legal cases like fraudulence in ownership of mines, follow-up on mine leases and exploitation of workers as explained by one of the participants who herself was a victim of her husband's mining leases being enjoyed by a benami (false) lease holder.

### 5.2.7 Tamil Nadu

Region/s	Tuticorin
Campaign/s	Campaign against copper smelting plant
Organisation/s	Veeranganai
Company/ies	Sterlite Industries India Limited
Mineral/s	Copper

Tamil Nadu, a State located in southern India, also has large reserves of minerals, especially lignite. The copper smelter of the Sterlite Industries India Limited, a part of the Vedanta group in Tuticorin, was set up in 1995 amidst considerable public opposition and no consultation with the community whatsoever. From its very inception the company has been guilty of several violations; from location of the plant, to production capacity as well as toxic waste disposal. It has created rifts within the communities and at the same time seems to have ensured that all political parties in the region are kept happy so that no criticism is heaped on its functioning.

The company has even organised picnics and excursions for the media and their family members to prevent the media from exposing

their crimes. While the company hushes up accidents on its smelter and dumps toxic wastes in huge mounds within the city endangering the lives of the people, huge hoardings adorn the city congratulating the company for winning awards for environmental protection and upholding human rights. Tuticorin also has one of the highest incidences of cancer and medicines that are hardly stocked in other parts of the State for treating rare diseases, are available in plenty in this region.

#### **Campaign against copper smelter**

Veeranganai, which means 'courageous women' has been campaigning against Sterlite from its inception. From stopping ships



carrying copper at mid-sea using small fishing vessels, to providing information to national networks like the mm&P, Veeranganai has tried to highlight the violations by the

company. Learning from mistakes in the past the organisation continues to take an active part in campaigning against the company from the local to the national level.

### 5.3 Indonesia

## INDONESIA



Region/s	Buyat Bay
Campaign/s	Anti-gold mining campaign: Buyat Bay
Organisation/s	JATAM
Company/ies	PT Newmont Minahasa Raya
Mineral/s	Gold

Buyat Bay is located on the south coast of Minahassa Peninsula on the north of Sulawesi Island in Indonesia. The local community living on the shores of the bay depend largely on fishing. Since 1996 until ending operations in August 2004, the bay had been used as a tailings disposal area for the Mesel Gold Mine, operated by PT Newmont Minahasa Raya, the 80 percent-owned subsidiary of the United States (US) based Newmont Mining Corporation. A pipeline was constructed to transfer the tailings from the mine to the bay and since its operation the company had dumped more than 4 million tonnes of tailings into the bay.

Three months after the company began operations the communities living in Buyat Bay complained of fish dying and over the years reported a reduced catch as well as a decline in the number of fish species. By the late 1990s the people started falling ill regularly. By 2004 the situation had become alarming with more and more complaints of ill health and unusual sicknesses that included skin diseases, tremors, headaches, and unusual swellings on the neck, calves, wrist, buttocks and head. Babies were reported to suffer from bleeding and were badly affected

by skin diseases. A variety of neurological, digestive and respiratory disorders have also been reported. Research conducted by several NGOs found hazardous levels of arsenic and mercury in the waters that were placing the lives of the community under risk. Drinking water sources were contaminated and water used for household needs was also polluted. Both, communities living in the bay area as well as Buyat Village a kilometer away, were found to have been affected. Women were major victims in terms of both health as well as livelihoods lost.

In August 2004 the Indonesian Ministry of Environment filed a suit against the company charging it with polluting the bay and risking the lives of the people. This was, however,





1-3 : Land concessions granted to mining companies on indigenous peoples lands  
4 : Mining leases overlapping with protected areas



5-8 : DPAs campaign to create awareness by engaging with stakeholders and networking at different levels





1



2

1-2 : Greenfield areas threatened by mining  
3 : Police deployed at a public hearing  
4 : Indigenous women protesting against mining



3



4

5-8 : Women mine and quarry workers who work in hazardous conditions with no basic facilities like drinking water, housing and health



5



6



7



8



1



2



3

1-3 : Rich natural resource base; 4 : Toxic waste from potash mines



4

5-10 : Udon Thani anti-potash mining campaign



5



6



7



8



9



10



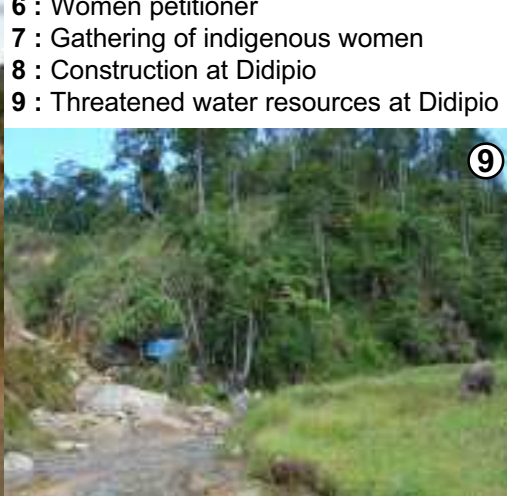




1-5 : Environmental degradation and social impacts (drug abuse, trafficking) as a result of gold mining in Hugawng Valley



6 : Women petitioner  
7 : Gathering of indigenous women  
8 : Construction at Didipio  
9 : Threatened water resources at Didipio



dismissed by the court on technical grounds by saying that the government had breached its own agreement with Newmont. All through this time Newmont continued to maintain that the health problems were a result of poor hygiene and poverty among the community. In June 2005, 66 of the 75 families in Buyat Bay chose to relocate to Duminanga 100 km away.

The community says that while the move from their original homes and fishing sites has been traumatic there has definitely been a perceptible decrease in the incidences of ill health. The government in December 2005 went in for an out-of-court settlement with the subsidiary company, the outcome of which was the settlement of a civil suit of USD 30 million to be paid as compensation and to be used for community development over the next 10 years.

A criminal suit against Newmont's top executive was also dismissed in April 2007 and the Indonesian court held that the company had complied with all environmental regulations and had not caused any pollution during the entire period of its operation.

### ***Campaign against gold mining in Buyat Bay***

JATAM has been involved in a campaign to highlight the plight of the Buyat Bay communities internationally, as well as to create awareness and build capacity within the community itself. Along with other local NGOs JATAM conducted research to ascertain the cause for the illnesses suffered by the company and helped collect evidence. As a result of this and with a view to appease the community the government provided temporary health services. During their campaign JATAM has helped empower the women to raise their voices against mining.

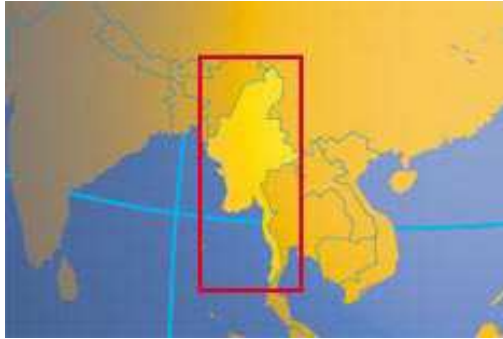
The women from Buyat Bay have participated in exchange programmes where they have visited other villages where mining is being proposed and warned the community there, especially the women, of the adverse impacts should they allow mining on their lands. Narrating their personal experiences with mining, they are actively campaigning to ensure that a fate similar to theirs does not befall women from other regions.

JATAM's campaign also received support from various countries and organisations in different countries. Being a US based company, support from the US embassy was also sought—and received to some extent—with the latter asking the Indonesian government to ensure that companies complied with the country's norms. This, however, did not translate into any real steps by the US government to check Newmont's violations in Indonesia. The Indonesian government on the other hand is careful not to rub the US government the wrong way and makes promises to the community that it will protect them from exploitative multinationals—a promise it has not kept. While the Indonesian government continues to give fresh mining leases catering to the demands of foreign multinationals, JATAM is working on strategies to stand together with other groups to oppose mining on islands in Indonesia, big or small.



## 5.4 MYANMAR

### MYANMAR



Region/s	Hugawng Valley
Campaign/s	Anti-gold mining campaign
Organisation/s	KDNG
Company/ies	---
Mineral/s	Gold

Hugawng Valley, situated in the northern Kachin State of Myanmar, has been ravaged by gold mining happening at a huge cost to the environment and the communities living in the region. The area controlled by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has also the world’s largest tiger reserve that was established with the aid of the US based Wildlife Conservation Society. The ceasefire in 1994 between the military junta and the Kachin Independence Organisation saw an increased military presence in the area. This marked the beginning of the steady decline in the environment and natural resources of the valley. Large number of lands and houses were confiscated by the military. Mining that was earlier done on a small-scale using simple tools and covering a smaller area soon spread to 31 sites in the valley causing large-scale environmental destruction and tearing apart the social fabric of the community.

Mercury used in gold mining has had serious effects on the health of the communities. The people in the valley have little knowledge about these harmful effects and use the water for drinking, bathing and other household purposes. Trees are dying and water resources have all been heavily polluted as a result of mercury contamination.

A nexus between the SPDC and the mining companies has ensured that profits are siphoned off to the military junta and the

community receives little for their own development. Originally the area was home to the Kachin, Shan and Naga tribes but with the mining there has been a huge influx of outsiders and the valley today has a population of over 70,000 people.

Women have been particularly affected as a result of mining. With no livelihood options or access to higher education they are forced into prostitution for their survival. Gambling dens and massage parlours have sprung up unchecked and are flourishing forcing many young girls into the sex trade. Another cause for concern is the high rate of drug addiction, particularly among the youth. Every household has been affected with opium being used by 80 percent of the population and heroin intake by 30 percent. The local administration meanwhile is doing nothing to address the problem and seems to encourage the drug trade. Syringes are found lying all over the place posing an additional risk. The incidence of HIV/AIDS is highest in the region among civilians. The military officers also have a considerable number infected with the deadly virus. However, health facilities to treat the sick are practically non-existent.

There is only one hospital in the valley and most of the population is too poor to afford treatment elsewhere. While mining laws exist for the country a military rule ensures that these are never implemented or adhered to.

### ***Camping against gold mining in Hugawng Valley***

Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG) has been involved in working with the community, particularly the youth providing them information, organising training and creating awareness among them to help them battle drug abuse. They also conduct action research and publish reports

to bring to light the severe devastation wrought by the military and the mining companies in the Kachin State.

Myanmar has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and KDNG is working towards recording meticulously the abuses suffered by women to take their plight to the international platform, particularly the UN.

## **5.5 PHILIPPINES**

### **PHILIPPINES**



Region/s	Barangay Didipio, Kasibu municipality, Nueva Vizcaya/Marinduque, Mimaropa region, Luzon
Campaign/s	Anti-copper and gold mining campaign
Organisation/s	Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan/Friends of the Earth Philippines
Company/ies	Oceana Gold Corporation/Placer Dome Marcopper Mining Corporation (now part of Barrick)
Mineral/s	Gold/copper

### ***Didipio community struggle against Oceana Gold Corporation***

The communities of Barangay Didipio have been involved in a protracted battle against Oceana Gold Corporation, an Australian based company prospecting for gold and copper extraction. Oceana Gold had acquired the Didipio Copper and Gold Project through the Climax Mining merger in November 2006. The community consisting of farmers and artisanal miners had moved to this region from the Cordillera in the 1960s and had been living here ever since. In 1994 the Philippines entered into a Financial and Technical Agreement with the company (then Climax Mining) to mine 37,000 ha in the region. Community rights were ignored by the government that discriminated against the community by claiming that since the indigenous people living there were migrants

the concept of FPIC was not applicable to them. In 1995 the Mining Act came into force and in 1997 the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) modelled on the provisions of the UN Draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples' Rights was passed. In theory IPRA is one of the most enlightened laws dealing with indigenous peoples, recognising their right to FPIC, and asserting that in the absence of such a clear level of consent, a project cannot proceed.

However, the company said that since its contract predated both these Acts they were not applicable to them. They claimed that their contract with the government was above both these laws. In early 2004 on the basis of a case filed in the Supreme Court, the court in its verdict said that since Climax Mining was a foreign company it should not be allowed to do mining in the region; however, just 10

months later the court reversed its own judgment and said that foreign nationals/ companies could be allowed to mine on Philippine land.

Cases were filed on the community members accusing them of being illegal forest occupants, which is a criminal offence under Philippines law. In January 2007, the company began demolition of people's houses, assisted by the Philippine National Police and the military. The company and government said that the police and military were present to ensure peace but in reality they were assisting the company in the demolition process. In February 2007 the people filed a case asking for demolition to be stopped and the court upholding their rights asked for a stop to the demolition. In mid-2007 the provincial government and the governor came out in support of the people and said that they were barricading the province preventing company officials from entering the region. The provincial government also issued a resolution withdrawing its endorsement for the project. Finally in December 2008, the company issued a press statement saying that the company was under 'care and maintenance' and was suspending the Didipio operations. They said the financial crisis was also a major cause for their withdrawal from the project.

***Placer Dome's mining disaster at Marinduque***

On 24 March 1996, a massive tailing spill resulted in severe contamination of the 24 km long Boac river. Considered one of the worst mining disasters of the country, the spill caused immense damage to the marine fauna and the life support system of hundreds of people living around the river. Placer Dome, a Canadian company, had been undertaking open pit copper mining since the 1970s and had accumulated 23 million metric tonnes of mine waste in a pit. The discharge from this pit initially caused flash floods cutting off



villages, inundated low lying areas, destroyed crops and vegetables and also clogged the irrigation channels flowing into the rice fields. Not only were food sources of communities found to be contaminated but medical tests conducted showed that the people themselves harboured higher levels of zinc and copper in their bodies that was beyond tolerable limits. The river was declared dead and 13 years later the condition remains the same with no efforts made for reclamation of the river system.

***Campaign against mining in Didipio and Marinduque***

The Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC)-Kasama sa Kalikasan is a policy and legal research and advocacy institution. LRC's overall mission is to work for the empowerment of marginalised indigenous peoples and rural communities directly dependent on natural resources. In both the Didipio and the Marinduque cases LRC assisted the communities legally as well as in bringing international attention to the projects. They have conducted fact finding missions in Didipio and protested in front of the National Commission for Indigenous People's office in Manila asking for a stop to demolitions of buildings in Didipio. LRC ensures that in all its cases women are represented. LRC has expressed its solidarity for the communities affected by the Placer Dome mining disaster, and has been assisting the communities lobbying even with the

Canadian government and networking with groups across the world.

**Women fight for right to water in Didipio and Marinduque**

Oceana Gold created a sister water company. The water company filed for water permit applications covering all rivers and groundwater sources in Didipio. The community decided to challenge the water permit application. LRC filed a case, with women as the main parties to the case. The government agency that was to take the decision said that since the indigenous people were not registered with the Indigenous Statistical Organisation and had no documents to prove their identity they had no right to water. This is wrong and unjust as the law states that even if indigenous peoples are not registered or don't have any document if they use water for cooking, bathing, watering plants, etc., they do have a right to water. LRC then filed a motion for reconsideration stating to the government experts that the right to water is not evidenced by a mere registration paper or document. This case is still under consideration with the government taking its time over the resolution. While there is no specific law in the Constitution that ensures people's right to water, LRC holds that water is a human right and a right of women,



specifically. This is also upheld by the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to which Philippines is a signatory, and which states very clearly that water is a human right as water is life.

In Marinduque the women from the community have bought a minority stake, a few shares, of the company that enables them to attend the general assembly of shareholders where they speak out against the company.

**5.6 THAILAND**

**THAILAND**



Region/s	Udon Thani Province
Campaign/s	Iron Women of the anti-potash mining campaign
Organisation/s	Ecological and Cultural Study Group/Farmer Community Institution
Company/ies	Asia Pacific Potash Corporation
Mineral/s	Potash

Thailand was anciently called ‘Suvvanphum’, meaning the golden land as a result of its rich

mineral deposits. Udon Thani, a province in northeastern Thailand, is one such mineral



rich region. It received international attention because of the discovery of a large potash deposit and is slated to become a main exporter of the mineral. Potash is primarily used for production of fertilizers that are used in increasing agricultural productivity. It is also used in the manufacture of glass and soap. The mineral exploration is being carried out by the Asia Pacific Potash Corporation (APPC). The Canadian based Asia Pacific Resources Ltd owns 90 percent of APPC; the rest 10 percent is held by the Thai government. The mine cover 60,500 ha that includes 80 villages. APPC has planned to mine a thin layer of potash salt located 350 m below the earth's surface using the room and pillar technique. To allow potash mining, the Thai government even amended the Mineral Act in 2002. This was done to bring the Act in line with modern international practices for underground mining that permit mining at depths greater than 100 m below the surface without requiring the specific consent of the owner of the land. However, the project since inception has faced large-scale protests from NGOs and the communities whose lives will be affected by the mining. The communities fear that this will lead to subsidence of land and contamination of agricultural land and groundwater.

***The Iron Women and the anti-potash mining campaign***

The Ecological and Cultural Study Group, Farmer Community School and the Udon

Thani Conservation Club are all organisations fighting against potash mining in Udon Thani. They are strongly supported by the larger community who fear that the mining spells doom for their livelihoods (rice cultivation), culture and way of life.

The groups use a multi-pronged campaign strategy: taking out rallies and protest marches, using community radio to create awareness, encouraging the participation of youth groups and school children, undertaking media advocacy, engaging in academic forums for policy level campaigning, and initiating a chemical fertilizer-free campaign. At the specific request of the Udon Thani Conservation Club, the Thai Ministry of Public Health also conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) (see box *Local empowerment through the HIA process*). The HIA indicated that contamination of groundwater resources was a major concern and threat due to the potash mining.

At the forefront of the struggle against mining have been the Iron Women of Udon Thani. Dressed in green T-shirts saying 'No potash' and waving matching flags—both of which have become symbols of their struggle against potash mining, they demand for a green toxic free environment—these women have courageously stood up to protest against mining in their lands. Mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and grandmothers have marched in unity even courting arrest and taking on the security forces.



The women feel that their decision of being at the frontline of the protests has made their activities more effective as confronting women, especially older women, are not what the authorities are keen on and goes against their tradition that speaks of respecting women.

The presenters also spoke about the Nam Siew Movement to protect the Nam Siew river in northeast Thailand. Illegal and rampant rock salt mining over two decades has resulted in land erosion and subsidence, increased salinity of the river and adversely impacted the aquatic life of the river.

### Local empowerment through the HIA process

The HIA process encouraged people from various sectors such as the NGOs, local community, academicians and the local government to come and work together. The idea was not just local empowerment of people from the area around the potash mine but a process to empower all people from every sector of the province. The exercise helped people learn about holistic health i.e. physical, mental, social and spiritual. Through the experience of the HIA many sectors of the Udon Thani province expanded their learning experience into other areas—the Udon Thani Rajabhat University incorporated the HIA as a part of its curriculum, the Regional Environmental Office plans to undertake surveillance of water quality in the project area and the Udon Thani Provincial Health Office is looking at incorporating the information into the Health Planning and Public Health Policy.

The HIA process while initiated to study impacts of potash mining has helped strengthen the Udon Thani civil society by serving as an entry point for local people to discuss other issues concerning their province. Through this deliberative and learning process the community today is able to explain the linkages between mining and the impacts on health, environment and eco culture. Today the people of Udon Thani question the direction of the cities' development vis-a-vis self-sufficiency and sustainable development.

## 6. Health Impacts of Mining

A presentation on the 'Health impacts of mining' was given by Dr. Satylakshmi. The presentation began with an introduction of the mining processes and types of mines. Mining health issues in surface mining that were elaborated upon included dust from ore and the road, vehicular and machinery disturbances, noise pollution and vibrations. Underground mining hazards described included both natural and manmade. Natural hazards included health impacts as a result of oxygen deficiency, radon progeny, extreme temperatures and humidity while man-made hazards listed were poor lighting, noise pollution, ergonomic issues of labourers' working conditions, generation of toxic vapours, and health impacts of silicosis.

The environmental impacts of the ore extraction and exploration, processing and discarding were also elaborated upon. These included degradation of natural resources like soil, air and water as a result of scarring,





erosion, acid mine drainage, toxic emissions and heavy metal contamination (tailings). The different impacts on health as a result of use of chemicals like arsenic, cyanide, mercury and specifically the impact of cyanide and mercury used extensively in gold mining were also discussed. Livelihoods are the first to be affected for communities that depend on land for their agricultural base and forests to meet their household needs like fuelwood and fodder. The presentation also touched upon how the community should react and respond to these health hazards. This involved documenting in detail all information about the community, the community dependence on the environment, changes in the environment, any effects on health, etc. This will all help in questioning the company environment impact assessments vis-à-vis the information collected by the community and the activists. At another level it helps the community itself record changes in health. The survey need not be a technical one but a simple documentation by the community.

The machinations used by the companies to absolve themselves of responsibilities were also discussed. An example given was of Jharkhand, where the employee of a mining company who was suffering from lung cancer was treated for TB for 4 years; TB can be cured within 6 to 8 months of treatment. Companies say that health problems of workers are a result of alcohol consumption and not as a

**What a woman who attended the public hearing for expansion of Singareni Collieries had to say.** (as told by Dr. Sathyalakshmi)

“I worked in the coal mine as contract labour. My husband worked inside the mine as well but he died; I survived as I was working above ground. My son today works with the mine.

Earlier we had farming lands and abundant water. Now we do not have enough food for our grandchildren. All our agricultural farmlands are covered with dust...water is black and unfit for use. My son has a job but we have no good food or water. We had a school where all the children from the community studied. With the mining company coming in, there are different schools. Our children study in the government schools while the company managers’ children go to the better private schools. We have no temple; it was removed when mining started. Why am I living?”

result of mining. Companies and the administration refuse to accept that silicosis is caused by mining or quarrying, and silicosis cases are often recorded as TB. There are also cases filed by NGOs in the Supreme Court in India asking for redressal for affected workers.

## 7. Recommendations of Small Group Sessions

### 7.1 Summary of Session on Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Areas of discussion keeping in mind local campaign experiences

1. Strategies for mobilising and organising to inform the community
2. Demanding compensation

3. Representation through the local governance structures (for example, Gram Sabhas or village councils)
4. Corruption among community leaders
5. Wildlife Conservation Areas conflict

### **Discussions of the India group: Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Orissa**

The members exchanged their experiences from their respective campaigns and spoke about the site specific issues that they were facing with regard to the above; the details of the discussions are given below:

- ◆ It was seen from the experiences that there is no single strategy that can be adopted. It is simplistic to assume that there would be considering the widely different situations and local dynamics. For example, in a State like Orissa or Jharkhand, there are numerous projects and communities are simultaneously fighting different struggles that are at different stages. Different strategies are being used by different groups. In Jharkhand the traditional dynamics between communities that exist are often used to mobilise people from different villages. For example, people who make pots are involved in trade with people who grow grain. And anything that affects the life of one community will also affect the other. This relationship helps at the time of bringing about a community movement or mobilisation.
- ◆ It was also found that a particular strategy that worked in some places does not work in others. For example, when we talk about representation of women in local governance Jharkhand has not had *panchayat* (local level) elections for many years now; hence they do not have any elected members through the election process. Decisions that affect the community are taken in the traditional manner at local village meetings presided over by the village elders.
- ◆ One of the primary issues seems to be that there are laws, both at the State and national level, but these are not being implemented.

- ◆ What it all boils down to is: how sustained is the local campaign in the face of corruption, illegalities and internal community rifts created? How informed are the communities who are fighting against the project?

Possible methods of action that were discussed included:

- ◆ Women are actively involved in campaigns. The threat of losing their lands and the impacts are something they are able to identify with and this is the strength that enables them to continue with the struggle. While continuing with the protests through rallies and dharnas what is critical is to meticulously record what is happening in terms of violations, intimidations and pass on this information to the NGOs or individuals who in turn can help them either legally or even in strategising for the campaigns. It is important therefore to **develop the skills of the community in the areas of documentation and recording**. Literate youth, especially girls, should take on this task. It is important that the community members are vigilant and act upon every single notification that comes regarding the project. Often what is seen is that the community ignores many of the initial



notices and only to suddenly find that it is too late to do anything. For example, the process of land acquisition is done in stages and we should start the protests and campaigns against this from the very first stage itself.

- ◆ **Understanding procedures of laws** [in the Indian context, using the Right to Information Act (RTI) to get information, Environment Impact Assessment, Environment Protection Act, etc] and legalities. This will help in learning how to stall project proceedings using loopholes and use it to our advantage to take legal action. Stalling projects long enough has worked and ensured that the companies have withdrawn from the area.
- ◆ **Increase contact and information exchange** between the groups. There is a need for communication but it is difficult to link grassroots groups to the international level. With groups being busy with their respective campaigns it hard for them to be physically present to provide support at other sites. But, it would help greatly if pressure could be applied across States. For this, first and foremost we need to more efficiently stay in touch with each other. This will need to be done primarily by telephone as other means of communication like the



internet do not exist for these small groups.

- ◆ Media is a very strong tool and **media advocacy** is critical for any campaign. We must develop better links with those who are sympathetic within the media and who will help in highlighting our campaigns for greater visibility.
- ◆ Develop a **network of like-minded people** other than NGOs that includes government officials and people in politics. Through our Parliament members questions regarding the issues of displacement and compensation with specific focus on gender must be more frequently raised in the Parliament
- ◆ Since campaigns are against same companies across the region India and the world there is an urgent need for organisations working against the same companies to develop **company specific campaigns** for eg. Vedanta Victims Group that consists of affected communities from different parts of the country and the world. These groups should work more closely together.
- ◆ **Assistance in fighting legal cases** is critical for many at this juncture. This is both financial as well as in terms of helping with legal advice.
- ◆ An **Election Manifesto** needs to be developed for candidates standing for elections. Boycotting elections has been used as a strategy but this might not always be effective. An example from Tamil Nadu was given where a call for boycott in earlier elections had resulted in no political party coming to the community for votes and the community demands were totally ignored. The option to exercise boycott or to vote is a choice that has

to be taken carefully. We need to have issue based election support so that our demands are represented in the Parliaments in our countries. With the increasing awareness among the people it is possible to hold the elected representatives, at least at the lower governance levels, more accountable.

- ◆ **Gender based compensation** needs to be considered. The issue of compensation comes with many complications. It creates rifts within a community when some members opt for compensation either out of need or greed. Then there is the question of how much or what kind of compensation—cash or land. It must

also be ensured that women too form a part of the compensation process. Traditionally titles for land and houses were held by men and most often the new titles and compensation are given to the men excluding the women entirely from getting any benefits.

- ◆ Mobilisation and **developing campaigns around specific days** recognised internationally: for example, International Women’s Day (March 8), Indigenous Peoples Day (August 9). Groups present said that organising rallies on such days enables them to mobilise the community in large numbers. This show of strength also helps to intimidate the company.

### ***Discussions of the international group: Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar***

Many countries have laws for the protection of indigenous people’s rights; however, their mere existence does not mean protection of rights. In Philippines there exists a law that approximates the idea of FPIC, Indonesia has an agrarian law while Cambodia has communal land laws for protection of indigenous peoples rights. However, in spite of these laws, existing mining regulations for companies often trump human rights, and companies are given priority. The participants from the international group discussed different strategies to say ‘no’ to mining. These are briefly outlined below:

- ◆ Using **community radio/ community newsletter** to get news out to the community and to update and disseminate information about the campaign.
- ◆ Holding a **referendum**. While this might not be sanctioned by the government in the country it will serve as an informal vote on what the community wants; a voice of the community protesting against mining.



- ◆ **Networking with academicians** to influence policy level issues.
- ◆ Developing a **media strategy** from internet to grassroot level; involve local as well as international journalists and invite them to write about the issue.
- ◆ **Organising by foot, family by family, village by village** to inform people about what mining would do to the community and environment and why one needs to fight it.

- ◆ Taking up **common fund raising** activities to develop a social movement.
- ◆ **Alternative organising**, for example, using local activities like farming to build on the feeling of ownership and unity.
- ◆ Garnering **NGO support** for campaigns.
- ◆ Organising **community exchanges** with other communities that are suffering as a result of mining.
- ◆ Using **international tools like CEDAW** and under it women's right to water to build pressure and strengthen the campaign.
- ◆ **Combining campaigns** on different environmental issues—water access, dams, etc—and address several concerns of the community collectively.
- ◆ Organising community protests with **women in the forefront** as the movers and shakers of campaigns. Women in many communities are equated to Mother Nature and this symbolism is often used to equate destruction of the environment from mining to harming one's own mother.
- ◆ **Developing self-sufficient industries** in the community and recognising the importance of these traditional livelihoods as a source of livelihood.
- ◆ **Mobilising the youth.**
- ◆ Taking the **help of other community institutions** like the Church in campaigning.

## 7.2 Summary of Session on Labour

### *Groups from Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Cambodia.*

The group had a very interactive and effective exchange of their different experiences: Cambodia that is yet to see large-scale mining introduced, with the States of Rajasthan and Maharashtra where there is a large workforce of unorganised women mine workers.

The women from two States, Rajasthan and Maharashtra in India, spoke about their many problems and the different ways they were



working together to find solutions. When compared to Rajasthan, the group from Maharashtra has had considerable success in mobilising women into collective groups to fight for their rights. Some of the recommendations that the group came up with where women mine workers were concerned included:

- ◆ **Organising similar skill shares** at local levels with exchanges between women workers from different mine sites to learn from successful campaign strategies.
- ◆ **Educating women workers on health** hazards and precautionary measures.
- ◆ **Testing water quality** and provision of overhead tanks at the mine sites.

- ♦ **Distributing identity cards** for workers. If a mine worker is working in two sites, there are two cards given. This ensures an identity for the workers—a proof that the worker is employed in the mine—and the mine owners or contractors are answerable for accidents or deaths.
- ♦ **Counselling** to help women to cope with issues at work—physical and sexual abuse—through SHGs, cooperatives, etc.
- ♦ **Savings and insurance schemes** for workers; demanding for social security.
- ♦ Educating them about and providing **access to government schemes**.
- ♦ Setting up **rehabilitation and vocational centres** for adolescent girls who form one of the most vulnerable groups working in the mine sites.
- ♦ **Establishing cooperatives** to unite together and demand for rights and facilities collectively.
- ♦ **Developing an informal grapevine** within the community to spread awareness among women. This was an effective strategy that was used by Santulan in mobilising women at the quarries in Maharashtra.
- ♦ **Collective bargaining** and negotiating for better wages to address the abysmally low wages that they are receiving now for back breaking work.
- ♦ **Lobbying** for basic amenities like water and toilets.
- ♦ **Uniting women** to fight domestic violence and alcoholism.

## 8. The Way Ahead

The regional skill share gave an important opportunity for women to meet and exchange their strategies. The women mine workers clearly spelt out their need to link up with the network for addressing some of their pressing demands and transferring this understanding to more of their co-workers –lobbying on the need for work security and safety, bringing factual information of health impacts on women and children, dialogue on strategies



to win basic rights over clean drinking water, housing and education for their children. They re-emphasised the importance of workers' exchanges between different States/regions.

In India, the groups identified the need for lobbying on legal safeguards for minimum wages for women and on the Social Security Bill that is being discussed in the Parliament. In some countries like Cambodia workers issues were not yet serious as mining was restricted to community/informal mining with little pressure from companies; they foresee the threats that are beginning to emerge in their country too. Such skill shares at a local level would prepare communities for anticipated problems in the future. The groups strongly felt that they had to build into their national and local actions, facilitating women workers to have meetings and workshops to build lobbies with their governments and unions.

With respect to indigenous women, the strong similarities in the territorial issues of land rights and women’s economic empowerment, brought forward the issue of FPIC as a common tool to address in the future. It was felt that we should effectively make use of this instrument and gather testimonies from indigenous women affected by Greenfield projects to strengthen their campaigns in using the UN Declaration. The participants felt women had no access to information

particularly with regard to companies that have violated rights of women in other regions or countries so as to link up with each others’ campaigns and build a collective voice against these companies. Also, the need to network amongst indigenous women across continents was expressed. Members felt that RIMM should work towards facilitating such strategising and linkages across members as this was the only platform directly addressing gender rights in the context of mining.

## 9. Field Trip

A field trip for the participants was organised on day four to the proposed uranium mining site in Nalgonda district (see 5.2.1 for details of site). When the government proposed the setting up of the project there was a

spontaneous protest from the local communities in the region.

The participants visited the village of Peddagattu and interacted with the villagers.



## 10. Annexure

### *Annexure 10.1: Gender Mainstreaming in Mining in India*

The new forms of globalisation and privatisation have worsened the situation of women and children as they are being pushed out of their lands and resources as larger areas are being grabbed by the extractive industries. These are aiming at cheaper ways of exploiting the resources where human resource is replaced by technology and social and ecological costs are swept under the carpet. Organisations and communities fighting mining issues are faced with highly repressive despotism of the State and corporate powers

across military regimes and supposedly democratic governments.

While national laws and international standards for governance and corporate responsibility exist, the blatant violation of both in the mining sector needs to be exposed if women are to achieve justice as most national and international policies do not directly provide for legal safeguards that bind companies and governments to respect the rights of women in the mining sector.

For this it is important that issues with regard to gender justice in mining are brought into the mainstream. Samata and the Dhaatri Resource Centre for Women and Children, mines, minerals & PEOPLE (mm&P) and the International Women and Mining Network Red Internacional “Mujeres y Minería” (RIMM) are all involved actively in this effort in India.

### **Samata and the Dhaatri Resource Centre for Women and Children**

Samata is a social action group working on issues of human rights and environment, particularly in the context of indigenous (tribal/ adivasi) communities in the Eastern Ghats of southern India and specifically in the north coastal region of the State of Andhra Pradesh. Samata’s primary focus in the last two decades has been on organising the tribal people to assert and protect their constitutional and traditional rights over their natural resources and traditional livelihoods. Samata’s focus of work in the first 10 years from 1987 to 1997 was on community based development action with the objective of assisting tribal people in obtaining development and infrastructure facilities like education, health care, drinking water, housing, etc., creating awareness about tribal peoples rights and organising them to fight against exploitation.

In the year 1997 the Supreme Court verdict better known as the Samatha Judgment transformed Samata from a community based social action group into an organisation for advocacy and support of tribal and environment protection in the Eastern Ghats. In addition to the development activities Samata’s work now includes advocacy, lobbying and networking for protection of the Fifth Schedule, fighting against displacement caused by developmental projects like mining, promoting decentralised government and tribal self-rule.

For more information visit [www.samataindia.org](http://www.samataindia.org)

### **Genesis of Dhaatri**

As Samata’s focus has been on advocacy for tribal rights with a campaign approach, we have been working gradually on evolving a new identity and structure for the activities concerning rights and development of women and children. To meet these objectives, Samata developed a Resource Centre for Women and Children called the Dhaatri Resource Centre which is in the process of taking an independent role.

The Children’s Programme (for more details see [www.balamitra.org](http://www.balamitra.org)) involves providing education to first generation tribal children in 40 remote hill top villages in Visakhapatnam district, as well as running a model residential school cum teacher training centre in the Visakhapatnam city. Preserving traditional tribal cultures, documenting the same and including it to develop a creative and contextual curriculum are a part of the educational initiative. The Gender Programme exists to promote the rights of marginalised rural and tribal women with a strong focus on developing their capacities on social, economic and human rights concerns. One of the main activities is to support women’s struggles in the context of mining and displacement, and labour rights. This includes issues of indigenous women, women in unorganised sector, and women affected by development projects especially mining who are the last to be informed of decisions and policies affecting their lives and have little access to be heard or to have redressal. The programme specifically aims to address the issues of gender justice, access to decision making and informed choices, control over their resource and survival and livelihood in the context of mining.

### **mines, minerals and PEOPLE**

mm&P (mines, minerals & PEOPLE) is a growing national alliance in India of individuals, institutions and communities who are concerned and affected by mining. The isolated struggles of different groups led



to the formation of a broad national alliance for combating the destructive nature of mining. mm&P members are at present spread across 16 States particularly in adivasi regions in all three cycles of the mining activity and in all ranges of mining activities, and represents more than a 100 grassroot groups. The alliance supports local struggles, takes up media and legal advocacy, develops campaign strategies, provides technical and scientific expertise, conducts research, fact findings and skill shares to strengthen campaigns, undertakes documentation and information dissemination, and networks with other national and international groups. The National Secretariat of the alliance is based in Visakhapatnam, India, at the Samata office.

For more information see [www.mmpindia.org](http://www.mmpindia.org)

**International Women and Mining Network or Red Internacional ‘Mujeres y Minería’**

The International Women and Mining Network or Red Internacional “Mujeres y Minería” (RIMM) is the first and only platform that has brought women from different continents on the very serious issue of mining and gender justice. What started as an initiative to explore the gender concerns in mining, has today taken on the role of a global platform for women exploited by mining projects either as communities

displaced or as workers in highly exploitative working conditions.

The network, a global collective of communities, people’s movements, NGO’s and human rights organisations, is aimed at fighting for the rights of women and children who are displaced or proposed to be displaced by mining projects and for the women mine workers who face gross injustices and discrimination at the work place at all levels of the mining sector and for the elimination of child labour in the mining sector.

RIMM works through regional and thematic focus on developing the campaign on gender justice in mining. Through regional networking, we facilitate collective bargaining and achieving our demands for rights of women and children. An important campaign strategy for the network is to facilitate the sharing of information, experiences and campaign strategies through organising skill share workshops for women from communities and women mine workers. The network works through its regional and thematic coordinating offices across different countries. The International Secretariat of RIMM is currently based at the Dhatri Resource Centre for Women and Children in India.

For more information see [www.rimmrights.org](http://www.rimmrights.org)

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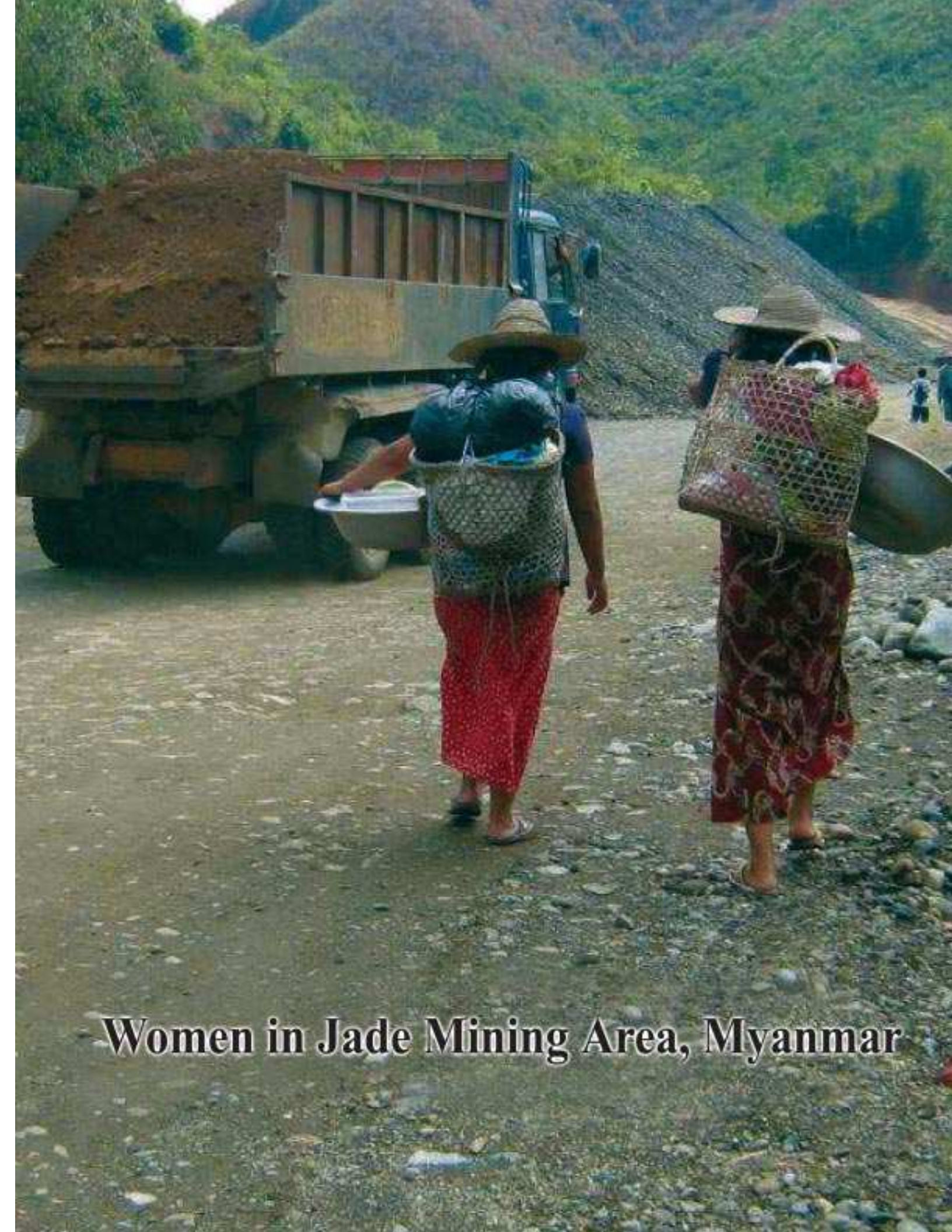
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**Women in Jade Mining Area, Myanmar**

*Co hosted by*  
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*Udon Thani 'Iron Women' campaign against potash mine, Thailand*

