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Debate - Woman in Mining Group 1-Dec-2008

Stacy:

We are joined by four ladies from the International Women in Mining Network. It consists of women from around the world who have been affected by, or are interested in mining.

Thank you for joining us.

Why did you decide to specifically come to South Africa?

Seema Mundoli:

We came to attend the AWID Forum held in Cape Town and decided that this would be a good opportunity for our Network to link with local groups here. We contacted Nonhle and John Clarke.

Stacy:

What are the challenges in your country that are similar to this area?

Bhanumathi Kalluri:

Our governments are not being honest with the communities and not consulting the women and not giving proper information when they give licences to mining companies. They're selling the people's [lives] and natural resources.

Although we have laws, there is no true consultation taking place. The information given to communities and women is usually false, inaccurate and misleading. This is not the democratic consultative process that we desire.

Stacy:

Some people may say that mining is a necessary activity in the economy particularly when you see people in the rural areas who don't have jobs.

Mining won't make them wealthy at grass roots level, but one might argue that some job is better than no job at all.

Onga Nufuk:

In Papua New Guinea the land is dear to us. When land is taken from the people they become poor. That's how we see it.

Having land gives the person status more than if he has a job and no land.

Stacy:

You say you will take back knowledge to Canada. What is it that you have learnt during your trip to South Africa and particularly this area?

Tanya Roberts-Davis

It is clear that people here are mobilising and don't want the mining to continue. It is important to hear directly from the people and get a sense of how people are living off the land, fishing, the kind of farming, cattle herding. To see that and to take it back.

Stacy:

Do you think that mining has a place in society and economic activities of a country?

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Bhanumathi Kalluri:

Extraction of minerals is required for humankind to exist. The greed and unsustainable manner in which it is taking place, we feel, will not result in a positive and healthy environment for future society.

Not just in South Africa, but most of the African countries where mining has been the mainstay of the economy, people in Africa should be the richest people in the world.

There is a direct relationship between mining and the economic situation of people but we don't see that happening.

The future society and especially with global warming, climate change and ecological issues directly linked to the lives of women and children, we see that this plundering will not help society.

Stacy:

What advice would you give the people of Pondoland in terms of moving forward?

The people of Pondoland are ready and working together to figure out how to mobilise against the companies.

Tanya Roberts-Davis:

My advice is, don't give up. They must keep to their convictions. They are not poor people. They have a livelihood, they have strong traditions that are important to keep and to ensure that their land is preserved in a sustainable way.

That they are able to keep the diversity along with the rest of South Africa.

That it is a treasure for all of South Africa and the rest of the world and that needs to be recognised.

To the people of Pondoland: keep up the struggle!

Stacy:

Thank you for joining us. Good luck and keep up the good work.

We invited a representative of the Australian mining company to join us but they were not available.