



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN AND MINING NETWORK

'Mujer y Minería'

Newsletter

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(Should any of our members find information on campaigns that is inaccurate we apologise for the same and request you to write to us with the corrections)

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EDITORIAL

We apologise for this very delayed posting of the RIMM Newsletter 3. The news compiled here is of importance and the struggles continue in the subsequent months. We wish to bring an update shortly in the next newsletter which is also due.

RIMM CAMPAIGN UPDATES

India

Orissa-The Orissa Adibasi Manch protesting against any alterations to the Orissa Scheduled Area Transfer of Immovable Property (OSATIP) Regulation 1956 submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Orissa. The memorandum laid down the demands of the tribal people regarding their right to land and forest, regulations on sale and transfer of land and the rights of tribal people thereof, looking into illegal acquisition of land by non tribals, resettlement and rehabilitation of tribal people displaced by development projects, proper valuation of land and extending tribal predominant villages into Schedule V areas.

Andhra Pradesh-Samata continues its campaign against the proposed bauxite mining in the hills of the Eastern Ghats, home to a large tribal population that are now threatened as a result of the mining.

In June a Environmental Public Hearing (EPH) was to be held in S Kota where the proposed alumina refinery complex of Jindal South West Limited was to be set up. Letters under the RIMM letterhead were sent to various government departments asking for a cancellation of the EPH citing the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report that was severely flawed in its investigations and conclusions. In addition, for a month prior to the date of the EPH, the team from Samata went about in the villages in the area explaining to the villagers the need to oppose the refinery and garnered huge public support for against the refinery. As a result on the date of the EPH, which was attended by a large number of local villagers, 33 of the 35 speakers spoke

vehemently against the project. Some efforts were made by the minority pro mining lobby present to disrupt proceedings but fortunately these were quelled with the protestors being evicted. Samata representative also spoke against the refinery and in support of the people's right to their land. We also demanded that the entire EPH process be adhered to, and the minutes and video tapes be made available to the people at their local Panchayat offices.



South Africa

In June RIMM sent a letter demanding the immediate release of 18 community activists including nursing mothers and a pregnant woman in Maandagshoek, South Africa. These women had been wrongly detained in complete violation of their basic human rights. The women had prevented mining vehicles belonging to Nkwe Resources, a company prospecting for platinum from entering into their land by placing rocks across their community roads. The women were arrested for trying to protect their land from mining companies and were illegally detained.

RIMM MEMBER NOTES

Tina Gagnon, Canada

Tina works for Inco Limited, a Canadian based premier mining and minerals company with a presence in 40 countries. She has worked with young workers on health, safety and the environment and has been involved in human rights and workers rights. As a chair of the women's committee she is currently concentrating

on community aspects with women as the focus. She is also working on safety and health issues at the workplace and campaigning to get custom made equipment for work and protection. At present she is interacting with a supplier who can make smaller sizes. She has been instrumental in working out a collective agreement to agree that

women meet directly every quarter to discuss women's issues. She has also got a much better deal for women who have been away on maternity when they come back. The union has today requested her to set up a local human rights committee that will also look into hiring more women.

ABSTRACT-Hard rock mining and the evolution of roles for women

History has shown that the hardrock mining industry is not a typical workplace for women. Of course there have been the exceptions over the last century, mostly associated with women working in industry jobs while many of their male counterparts fought in war. The mining industry in Sudbury, in particular, has been the subject of various research efforts and publications detailing the roles of women in industrial labour positions during wartime. Other than this period in time, women have had few opportunities to work within the hardrock mining industry – and have been primarily restricted to administrative duties.

More recently, with government regulations on hiring practices and with the social emphasis on equal-opportunity efforts, the mining industry has shown a progressive attitude toward hiring women into the workforce. This paper examines the roles for women at Inco Limited. During the last decade, there have been various initiatives for equal opportunities to men and women. For instance, Inco has demonstrated affirmative action 1) in hiring women in technical roles, 2) in advancing women into supervisory positions, and
[Full paper can be accessed at <http://www.rimmrights.org/documents.htm>]

Tina has sent us a research paper that summarizes the history of affirmative action policies initiated in an attempt to address gender issues in the mining industry whereby both company's and governments policies for equity based workforces are reviewed using Inco as a case study.

3) in encouraging and offering opportunities for women to work in labour positions. In fact, the Company's statistics show an upward trend for women in these roles. One obvious reason for the increase, besides management philosophy, is the diminished requirement for extreme physical activity related to work and just a requirement for mental capacity.

Now, with some newly hired young women entering the workforce, the Company faces another exciting opportunity for establishing programs and policies related to career development, maternity leave and benefits. This challenging opportunity is a learning phase for Company management, co-workers and the women themselves. The upside of an equal-opportunity work environment is obvious with a balanced team for all roles and departments. It is the design and implementation of the plan that achieves this goal that is now of fundamental importance. Some thoughts on the possibilities and the opportunities for the industry are shared in this paper.



Leonardo da Vinci had the following to say about extractive industries 600 years ago:

That shall be brought forth from the dark and obscure caves, which will put the whole human race in great anxiety, peril and death. To many that seek them, after many sorrows they will give delight, and to those who are not in their company, death with want and misfortune. This will lead to the commission of endless crimes; this will persuade bad men to assassinations, robberies and enslavement, and by reason of it each will be suspicious of his partner. This will deprive cities of their happy condition; this will take away the lives of many; this will make men torment one another... For this the vast forests will be devastated of their trees; for this endless animals will lose their lives.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT-A NOTE

Women all over the world have been impacted adversely by mining be it as workers or as members of the community. Mining has largely been a masculine, women-unfriendly industry where women's work is invisible and rarely recognised. The formal large-scale mining industry has low participation of women workers due to family unfriendly working hours and locations, the discriminatory attitudes of those involved in the industry, unequal work and pay conditions and restrictive laws that unfairly inhibit the equal participation of women. The informal mining sector has a high participation of women workers who depend on this sector for their livelihood. These women form an unorganised workforce easily exploited and discriminated upon. Women living in communities around mine sites have had to deal with the problem of inaccessibility of resources on which they were earlier dependent, health and environmental problems, disruption to their social and cultural life and increasing exposure to exploitation and abuse.

To understand the gendered effects of mining on these different categories of women, RIMM has developed a series of GIAs that can be implemented to understand the same. These assessments cover the below:

- 1) GIA for women mine workers
- 2) GIA for Greenfield areas where mining is proposed
- 3) GIA for areas where mining activity exists
- 4) GIA for areas where mines have been closed or abandoned.

These assessments cover the issues of free and prior informed consent, social, cultural, environmental and health impacts, company's promises vis a vis actual delivery etc.

[Note: Anyone interested in these assessments can mail us at rimmrights@gmail.com and we can send you pdf files of the same]

RIMM OTTAWA MEETING UPDATE

On May 7, 2007 a meeting of some of the RIMM network members was held in Ottawa, Canada. The general areas of discussion during the course of the day were the efforts of the network till date,

future plans to strengthen the network and its effectiveness, bringing greater visibility to its activities, role of the coordination offices and the next conference of RIMM to be held in Africa.

SOME NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD (GENDER/MINING)

Australia

Women paid less than men in mining industry © ABC News (June 2007)

New statistics show Western Australia has the highest average gender pay gap in the country at 25 per cent. The Department of Consumer and Employment Protection has highlighted the mining industry as a primary example. The Department says for every dollar earned by a man in the mining industry, a woman earns 76 cents. Department spokeswoman Susan Barrera says that means women can expect to earn on average about \$420 a week less than men. She says the overall gender pay gap is unfair and can have

significant effects on an individual's career path. "If women don't get opportunities in the workplace that their male counterparts get, they may feel disadvantaged and discouraged and not pursue their careers with the same enthusiasm as their male counterparts might," she said.

[<http://abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/06/01/1939455.htm>]

India

Meghalaya in turmoil over uranium mining © Sanhati (June 2007)

Tribal groups blockaded highways in India's northeast Meghalaya state on Wednesday, the start

of a five-day campaign to protest government plans to mine uranium. Hundreds of trucks carrying food, medicines and other essential supplies were stranded, according to protesters and police. The protesters say that uranium mining could affect the health of villagers in the area, home to the largest deposits in the country. India plans to extract natural uranium in the tiny tribal state, close to the border with Bangladesh, as there is a shortfall of nuclear fuel in the country. Officials estimate there are up to 10,000 tonnes of uranium in and around Domiasiat, the area considered to have the largest and richest deposits in the country.

Locals opposed to mining said villagers around Domiasiat have reported an increase in the number of people suffering from cancer and women suffering from miscarriages in recent years after the state-run Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) started survey works. "All these are quite alarming to the lives of our people and livestock. How can we allow the mining to take place?" said Mebanker Lapang, a leader of the Khasi Students Union, which spearheads the movement against uranium exploration in the state. UCIL says it has the most modern technologies to extract minerals without affecting the environment and human lives.

[<http://sanhati.com/front-page/292/>]

Public hearing on Uranium mining amidst protests in Meghalaya © Sanhati (June 2007)

The Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board has called for a public hearing at village Nongbah Jynrin, about 135 km west of capital Shillong, to elicit local opinion on mining for the yellow cake. Security forces have been deployed in strength in the area with the powerful Khasi Students' Union (KSU) enforcing a 36-hour general strike from 5 a.m. Monday to prevent the public hearing from taking place, saying emission of radioactive uranium would pose serious health hazards.

"We shall continue with the fight and see to it that the Uranium Corporation of India is not able to take up exploration work. The health hazards and risks involved in such a mission is tremendous and we cannot allow our people to die," John F. Kharshiing, chairman of the Federation of Khasi States, a powerful tribal group, told IANS. "I

shall never allow my land to be used for uranium mining. I am prepared to die but never give up my fight," said Spillity Langrin Lyngdoh, an 80-year-old woman from Domiasiat area.

A small group of locals led by tribal elder Heas Dienglan are, however, supporting the mining. "We think the area surrounding Domiasiat would benefit a lot once uranium mining begins. We were told the UCIL would set up schools and colleges, hospitals and provide employment to the locals," said Dienglan.

[<http://sanhati.com/front-page/292/>]

Stop mining in Nalgonda, Vizag' © The Hindu (July 2007)

Andhra Pradesh Girijan Samakhya president has demanded immediate revoking of all permissions and alienation of lands to companies like Jindal in Visakhapatnam and Nalgonda districts to stop injustice towards tribals. Uranium mining in Nalgonda district and proposed bauxite mining in Visakhapatnam agency area, setting up of factory by Jindal group would lead to violation of 1/70 Act, and deprive the adivasis of their right over the local natural wealth.

"Even where projects are taken up with the consent of the tribals, the State Government must ensure compensation prior to beginning of the project work," the Samakhya president told reporters on the sidelines of their Guntur district level conference on Monday. "Let the Government ensure providing land for the extent of land lost by tribals," he said and added that many people from the plain areas were marrying tribal women for the sake of controlling large extents of land in the agency area. Law should be framed to stop this kind of fraud as majority of them were resorting to bigamy.

[<http://www.hindu.com/2007/07/03/stories/2007070359200500.htm>]

Mexico

Women defy taboos © El Universal (May 2007)

Chihuahua-Two hundred women have overcome male chauvinism and superstition to carve out a niche - albeit tiny - in Mexico's expanding mining industry. Resistance to females in mining springs

both from the sexism that remains rampant in Mexico and from miners' lore, which holds that mines entered by women will experience accidents or see their mineral deposits run out.

The president of the Mexican Mining Association, Xavier García de Quevedo, said the country's entire mining industry, with a workforce of 279,000, employs a maximum of 200 women. García de Quevedo said women had lower levels of absenteeism, alcoholism and accidents than men, leading the mining industry to welcome them "with enthusiasm."

One industry success story is Panamerican Silver's Alamo Dorado mine, also in Sonora, where 40 percent of the workers are female. The trade association executive said, moreover, that since 400,000 people emigrated from Mexico each year, the majority of them men looking for work in the United States, the mining industry provided an opportunity for women left behind to "improve their quality of life."

One example of this is El Sauzal, a mine in the northern state of Chihuahua owned by Canada's Goldcorp that employs 38 women. Denise Castro, who started out as an assistant in the tool room after having a baby, works at El Sauzal. The 23-year-old Castro drives cargo trucks and works as a welder, and she says no one in her family has criticized her for working at the mine because they know she is "courageous."

Montserrat, a woman who lives in the nearby town of Batopilas, said she traveled five hours on horseback to get to El Sauzal, where she works with explosives and drills, putting in 12-hour shifts like the rest of her co-workers. The gold mine's female employees, who work 14 days straight and then rest for seven, also drive huge US\$1 million trucks that can carry 100 tons. Flor Portillo, 26, has been driving one of these behemoths for four months, having previously worked in the mining complex's cafeteria. The young woman, who earns 4,000 pesos (US\$366) a month, said she found it easy to get along with the men and was happy because all the employees worked together and treated her well.

[<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/miami/24822.html>]

Philippines

Itogon, Benguet: Women fight for survival, ancestral Land ©Bulatlat (May 2007)

Nida Legaspi, Susan Domingo and Victoria Cayat are literally gold diggers in Itogon, Benguet. They do not live a lavish lifestyle though. In fact, only Nida wore a pair of small gold earrings. The three women started working in the small-scale mining industry during their teens. Nida is now 37, Susan, 32 and Victoria, 52. When they were smaller, they also helped in the processing of gold ores. The process is tedious. They get the naba or gold ore from the tunnels; pound the gold manually for at least four hours; use ball mill to crush it even more; wash it; and, cook it using clay pot until it has become powder gold.



Victoria said most of the families in Itogon are into small-scale mining, "Women, men, children are working in the mines. Since time immemorial, this is the main livelihood of our ancestors." They all agreed it is a hard and risky work. Victoria said, "We work like carabaos to earn a living."

Susan added, "It is dark in the tunnels. Dangerous, too." Susan related that some get locked up inside the tunnel, others inhale toxic gas. There are also some who died because of dynamite explosion.

Victoria said, "We do not have other sources of income. Even those who finished schooling return to Itogon for mining." Their struggle for survival is a continuous one.

Benguet Corporation is claiming their ancestral land and operates a large-scale mine. Benguet Corporation was established in 1903. According to its website, Benguet Corporation was known as the biggest gold mining company in the Philippines and the 16th largest in the world.

Nida said, "Our ancestors fought the Benguet Corporation then. We do so until now." Nida related there have been many attempts to drive them away from their ancestral land but they never stopped fighting. In 1992, Nida said they succeeded against the open-pit mining. "We put up barricades for nine months."

Today, they are up against the Bulk Water Supply Project (BWSP) of the Benguet Corporation. The giant company won the bid to deliver 50,000 cubic meters of water per day to Baguio City. It will source the raw water from a proposed seven million cubic meters capacity water reservoir to be converted from its mined out open pit in Antamok, Itogon.

[<http://www.bulatlat.com/news/4-12/4-12-cordillera1.html>]

Kalinga: Farmers refuse entry of mining firm ©Bulatlat (May 2007)

Juanito Bagingan, 75, is a farmer from Kalinga. He is a member of Magnauay Tawang Bassao Palong (MTBP) Farmers Association. Anglo-American subsidiary Cordillera Exploration, Inc. (CEXI) explored gold and copper in Kalinga for two months without permission from the local residents. Manong Juanito opposes the entry of CEXI. "Mining will destroy our land. The overwhelming majority are against mining." Farming, mat weaving, sewing and fishery are the main livelihood of the people of Kalinga. There are some who are also into small-scale mining. Mang Juanito said CEXI tried to get the approval of the residents. "They promised us employment, roads and school for the children."

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) of Kalinga and the Mines and Geo-Sciences Board (MGB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) are in favor of CEXI, Mang Juanito explained.

Even the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Mang Juanito said, sides with the mining corporation.

Mang Juanito said, "We warn them [the soldier] not to come again. We harass them also with our spears and bolos." The old farmer said, "The NCIP, through the instruction of Gloria Arroyo and the Mining Act of 1995 opened the mines of the Cordillera and of the whole Philippines to foreign businesses. Mining will not improve the lives of the Filipino people."

[<http://www.bulatlat.com/news/4-12/4-12-cordillera1.html>]

Tanzania

Gender discrimination hindering women mining entrepreneurs © Nasser Kigwangallah, Genderlinks (June 2007)

Women entrepreneurs in the small-scale mining sector in Tanzania are finding it hard to get what they need to grow and develop their businesses. Joyce Lyatabu, a Nyarugusu small-scale miner in Geita district, has been extracting gold from her Primary Mining Licence plot for the last five years. She said she has not been able to grow rapidly due to lack of financial resources and her efforts to get a bank loan has met with stiff resistance.

A majority of women miners questioned in Lwamgasa Village, Geita district in Mwanza region of Tanzania agreed with Lyatabu, saying that bureaucratic tendencies of financial institutions to refuse to loan them money prevents them from advancing and growing their scale of operations. Unlike their male colleagues, who are able to access such financing, this means that their businesses do not reach their full potential. The women are appealing to the government to come to the rescue, to ensure that financial institutions will also give loans to women. They say that gender should not be an obstacle to doing good business.

Theresa Samuel, another small-scale miner is vocal about attributing her failure to advance to financial institutions denying women loans. She said she was deeply concerned with the way financial institutions behaved towards women entrepreneurs. "They accuse women of not being able to return the loans given to them, saying that their financial status was not that good as compared to men," she noted.

[http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article.php?a_id=728]

Zimbabwe

HIV/Aids Policy Launch Important Step © The Herald, Harare (June 2007)

The recent launch of the HIV and AIDS policy for the mining sector in Zimbabwe is an important step in the fight against the pandemic that is wrecking havoc in one of the country's major economic sectors resulting in loss of skilled labour, falling productivity and reduced profit and investments due to illnesses and absenteeism.

The policy, that was formulated after extensive consultation between tripartite partners in the mining sector and other stakeholders aims to guide and direct the process of dealing with HIV and AIDS in the workplace at all levels of the mining sector. In essence, the policy provides the framework in which the mining sector employers, employees and their representatives should formulate HIV and AIDS policies at enterprise level and design, implement, monitor and evaluate HIV and AIDS programmes at the workplace. This policy also applies to both the formal and informal workplace.

The mining sector workplace HIV and AIDS policy is guided by key principles that, among other things, include recognizing that HIV/AIDS is a workplace issue, prevention of the disease, non discrimination on the basis of HIV status and respecting confidentiality of the affected.

Key implementation strategies require that each enterprise puts in place its own workplace HIV and AIDS policy and programmes, allocate time, human and financial resources to the programmes. Workers should be involved in programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

[<http://allafrica.com/stories/200706070545.html>]

Zimbabwe reveals proposed takeover of foreign-owned mining operations © Mineweb (June 2007)

A dark cloud hangs over foreign mining companies in Zimbabwe following the publication

Monday by the government of proposed legislation that will force foreign-owned firms to cede controlling shareholding to indigenous Zimbabweans. Multi-national mining firms that may be affected once the proposed legislation becomes law are Implats-owned Zimplats, Anglo Zimbabwe, Mwana Africa-owned Bindura Nickel Corporation, Rio Tinto's Rio Zim and Halogen, formerly Falgold.

The proposed law seeks to ensure that at least 51 percent of shares in every public company or any other business are owned by indigenous Zimbabweans. It describes an indigenous Zimbabwean as a person who was disadvantaged by "unfair discrimination on the grounds of his or her race" before the country's independence from Britain in 1980. Government departments will be asked to procure 51% of their goods and services from businesses in which controlling interest is held by indigenous Zimbabweans. The bill also states that no projected or proposed investment, shall be approved unless a controlling interest is reserved for indigenous Zimbabweans.

[<http://www.mineweb.com/mineweb/view/mineweb/en/page34?oid=22600&sn=Detail>]

Zimbabwe: Women in Mining Initiative Launched in Masvingo © The Herald (July 2007)

Government has launched a programme in Masvingo that will see women forming mining co-operatives to revive closed mines in the province. The programme, known as Women in Mining Initiative, has already started to bear fruit in the Mhandamabwe and Boss Mine areas of Chivi where scores of women have been licenced to venture into mining. It is hoped that more women in other parts of the province would join the programme whose other objective is to curb illegal mining.

[<http://allafrica.com/stories/200707240377.html>]

NIYAMGIRI -WAITING FOR JUSTICE BY PRAFULLA SAMANTARA

[The author is the President of the Lok Shakti Abhiyan, Orissa , an organization that is campaigning for alternative politics and sustainable development against globalisation and communalisation . He is also one of the three petitioners to the Central Empowered Committee constituted by the Supreme Court to protect Nyamgiri and its rich biodiversity. This brief update is from a booklet prepared by the author.]

The Vedanta and Nyamgiri case is a prime example of how powerful multinationals have been able to subvert democracy and the rule of the law in India in pursuit of profits. The Nyamgiri Hills in Kalahandi district, Orissa have some of the most pristine forests in Orissa with a rich variety of flora and fauna some of which are extremely endangered and listed in the IUCN Red list. These hills are also the birth place of many perennial rivers and streams. In addition bauxite deposits found on the hill 'caps' serve as sponges sucking and retaining rainwater. The Lanjigarh area in Kalahandi is primarily inhabited by Kondh tribals and dalits. The Kondhs are simple tribal people totally dependent on agriculture and forest produce.

Another unique primate tribal group the Dongaria Kondhs are found only in the Nymagiri hills.

Vedanta Alumina Ltd a part of Vedanta Resources Plc, planned to exploit bauxite from the reserves on top of Nyamgiri Hill jointly with the Orissa Mining Corporation Limited. For this purpose the company had signed MoUs with the government. Vedanta Group has a record of poor environmental and social responsibility often holding in contempt the laws of the land in pursuit of earning profits. The political and bureaucratic class in Orissa have entered into an alliance with companies to loot the state of its mineral resources.

An area of 721.323 ha required for bauxite mining was to be acquired on top of Nyamgiri Hill and most of this was forest land. In addition to mining the company was also to set up a alumina refinery at Lanjigarh for which a total of 723.343 hectares of land was acquired by Vedanta. Of this 232.75 land was private land, mostly belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. These lands were acquired under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 for "public purposes". In its hurry to start the refinery, Vedanta broke many environment and forest conservation laws in which it was aided by the state and central governments. The violations were:

Violation of Forest Conservation Act 1980 where the company felled and cleared about 58 acres of forest land for setting up the refinery by deliberately concealing facts, not obtaining the required clearance and starting construction.

Violation of Environmental Protection Act 1972 where construction started prior to obtaining environmental clearance.

Violation of Ministry of environment and Forests guidelines where the government rules state that in case of projects that involve forest and non forest land, work can begin on non forest land only when clearance is obtained for forest land. The company divided its project into two projects and obtained clearance for setting up the refinery, went ahead with construction even before forest clearance for bauxite was received.



Dongaria Kondhs rally in Bhubaneswar © EPGOrissa

Violation of Schedule V for protection of tribal land and rights where the company in collusion with the state government forcibly evicted tribal people from land cultivated by them for generations without any rehabilitation.

Protests by the tribal people against the project have been met brutally suppressed by physical attacks on protestors, including women and children by hired goons of the company leading to death of three protestors and destruction of houses and crops. The police bear a silent witness to these acts and contribute to the reign of terror unleashed.

Activists and environmentalists filed a petition in the Supreme Court which in turn sent a fact finding mission to the area. The report submitted by the CEC was scathing about the manner in which laws were violated by the Vedanta and the Orissa government and strongly recommended that mining should not be allowed in such an

ecologically sensitive area and to stop work at the refinery. Ignoring the CECs unambiguous recommendations the Supreme Court in an interim order asked the MoEF to constitute a committee to study the environmental aspects of the project, thus favoring the company that continued with its rapid pace of refinery construction.

The environmental and social costs do not justify going ahead with the project. And as dissent and opposition is crushed by brutal force in violation of the countries democratic principles, the people of Nyamgiri continue to wait for justice and in the hope that their struggle will bring victory.

[Note: One of the organizations that MoEF appointed to do the study, the Wildlife Institute of India, has also reiterated that mining will cause irreversible changes in the ecological characteristics of the area.]

WOMEN LEADERS IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR

[This section profiles women who have made it to the top in the largely male dominated corporate sectors. While this is an indication of the empowerment of women across the globe, at the same time it presents an opportunity for us and other groups to try and enlist their support by bringing to their notice the violations that the companies they head are guilty of.]

Bridgette Radebe



Africa, with investments in coal, platinum and mining services.

Mining magnate Bridgette Radebe founded and heads Mmakau Mining – she's the only woman to head a deep- level, hard-rock mining company in South Africa. Mmakau Mining is the leading mining companies in

Georgina "Gina" Rinehart



Australia at a cost of \$1.3 billion.

Iron ore mining magnate Gina Rinehart is the Chairman of Hancock Prospecting. She has been described as "Australia's richest woman". Ms Rinehart, signed a deal last year with global miner Rio Tinto to develop her Hope Downs iron ore mine in Western

ARCHIVES

Bal maidens of Cornwall and Devon

Who were bal maidens?

Women and children were probably working at or in the mines in Devon and Cornwall from the days of antiquity, but the earliest written records date from the Middle Ages. They were employed throughout the mining industry; at tin, copper, lead, manganese, uranium, antimony, arsenic and zinc mines, as well as at the clay works and smelters. In Cornwall and West Devon they were often referred to as 'Bal Maidens'. 'Bal' is a Cornish word for mine.



Bal maiden with Cornish shovel

Before about 1720, mining operations in Cornwall were very simple. Where mining was a family concern, the men and older boys would be involved in the heavier work. The women, girls and younger boys may have been involved in washing, panning, sorting ore from waste, or grinding or breaking down rock-bearing ore. From about 1720 onwards, with more reliable water

pumps, ore could be raised from deeper levels. Mines began to employ in much larger numbers, including the workers needed to dress the copper and tin ores being raised. It was mainly women and children who were taken on for these tasks. Girls generally started work between the ages of 10 and 15 years, but some were only 6 or 7. They would usually continue at the mine until they were married. Older single women and widows were also employed.



Bal maidens spalling and loading ore wagon at Carn Breu 1880

By 1800, there were 2,000 or more females employed in the Cornish mines, and at least 6,000 by 1851. Between 1720 and 1920, there were probably more than 80,000 females working in mine related industries in Devon and Cornwall. From then their numbers declined; the last being laid off in the early 1920's.

Work done by bal maidens

The bal-maidens worked at the mine head, while their menfolk went below ground - but life wasn't much easier for the women. Their jobs included separating and sorting the ore-containing rocks, manually breaking them up, and washing the fine ore material. As ore stuff was brought to the surface at the tin mines, it was initially broken by male labourers, and then 'spalled' (broken) by older women or girls, using a long handled hammer. This was then stamped and the resulting

finest material sent for separation at the buddles (usually attended by boys). It then went for further separation at the trunks and kieves, until the finest slimes of all were separated at the tin frames. Girls or boys attended the first of these two operations. Framing was a highly delicate task, and was allocated to younger women and girls. The jigging (sieving) of the heavier particles was a task done by stronger boys or women (when done by hand), or by boys or girls when using the semi-mechanised jigging boxes.

At the copper mines the tasks differed slightly. After spalling the youngest girls (7-11 years) washed and sorted (picked) the different ores. This was a highly skilled (but wet and dirty) job. Next, 'cobbers' used a short handled hammer to break the picked ore into hazel nut sized pieces, and then 'buckers' used a flat faced hammer to grind the cobbed ore into a fine powder. Both of these tasks were demanding; only the most robust women and girls were able to do the latter. Buddling and jigging were carried out as for tin. Teams of women and girls were also employed in griddling or barrowing. They would work in pairs using hand barrows, carrying over 1.5 cwt between them.

Girls or women were sometimes employed at the calciner, where they fed arsenical tin or copper ore into the furnace via the hopper, in order to separate out the arsenic

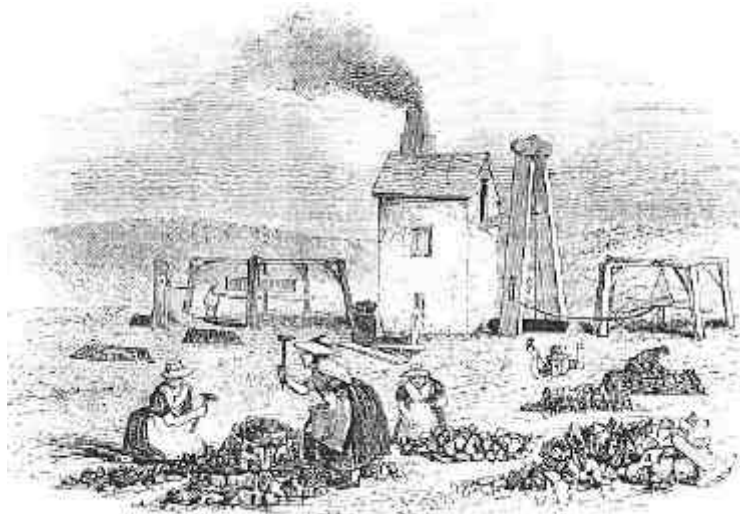
Ore dressing was by no means the only task that females undertook at the mines in the South West. On most mines there was also at least one 'counthouse woman' who was responsible for the cleaning, cooking and laundry at the mine counthouse (office). There were also some female waggoners, assayers assistants, whim horse attendants and even one 'kibble' (ore bucket) lander. In the mid 19th century a few even became mine or clay works managers. Some women also took over 'mens' jobs' at the clay works in World War 1.

Working conditions

As well as being physically hard work, the women were exposed to the worst of Cornwall's weather. Seated at low tables in open sheds or even outside, the piles of wet, broken rocks piled up over their feet and legs as the day wore on. And the days were long - often 10 hours, 6 days a week. These surface workers too were not immune to the

effects of mineral dust, particularly the bal maidens who crushed up copper ore into small fragments on anvils with large hammers. As lots of water was used in the dressing of ores, surface workers' shoes and clothing were often wet and stained red from the iron oxide in the ore. Bal maidens wore large

hats called 'gooks' to protect their head and face from flying stones and the elements, a coarse hessian apron and wrapped their legs in strips of material to protect them from the cold and damp.



Women at copper mines circa 1840