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Rontina Alesi Muke, 66, (C) sits inside a village church with other residents of Shinengene, or Southern Settlement, in Zambia's North Western province, 09 August, 2015. THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION/Magdalena Mis

## **Introduction**

Women are being negatively and disproportionately affected by the mining industries in Zambia as a growing body of evidence shows. Whilst communities of people living in poverty generally have been shown not to benefit from mining, women and children face specific challenges and are the most adversely impacted by mining extractives.

These impacts range from only having access to the lowest paid work, if any, to severe health issues caused by pollution. In addition there are several gaps in the legal framework leaving women's rights unprotected.

As part of ActionAid's Fair Green and Global project, participatory research was commissioned to develop an understanding and assess what interventions could be made to improve the lives of women in the affected mining communities. This summary highlights some of the main areas.

It is clear that urgent action is needed both by government and by the mining industry to address the issues faced by women.

## **Methodology**

The study was based on desk research of the available literature, interviews with key informants such as civil society organisations working directly with communities in the affected areas, field observations and focus group discussions with women in the communities. The two main locations where the research was conducted are Kankoyo and Kalumbila communities in Mufulira and Solwezi Districts respectively where the FGG programme is being implemented.

## **Key findings**

Zambia is the world's fourth largest producer of copper and is second only to the Democratic Republic of Congo on the continent. The country is known to have huge copper reserves of the highest grade in the world and will therefore continue to be an important source of copper in the foreseeable future. In 2011, the mining sector comprised of large-scale, small-scale and artisanal mining activities which contributed 9.5% to the GDP. Copper and cobalt are the predominant mineral resources extracted for various uses.

***Despite this, the benefits of the mining industry in Zambia are few and far between for women.***

## ***Environmental Impacts affecting Women***

The reported environmental impact that copper mining induces include air and water pollution through emissions, including emissions of sulphur-dioxide from smelter stacks, which also cause lead and cadmium poisoning. Other effects of mining include noise and vibrations, habitat loss and soil erosion. In addition, deforestation and increased land disputes were also found to be associated with mining activities. The highlighted environmental challenges adversely affect women and children more severely than men, as they degrade food and water sources. In Zambia, women are responsible for household food and water collection and the daily struggle to do so is exacerbated as a result of noise, air and water pollution.



A bucket of drinking water at the Shinengene Rural Health Center, Musele Community in Kalumbila - Musonda Kapena/ActionAid

Communities associated environmental pollution with higher levels of disease including respiratory diseases, skin diseases and ailments affecting women's sexual and reproductive health, Infrastructure, including housing and schools as evident in Kankoyo and Kansanshi, is slowly destroyed by the vibrations.

## ***Social/ Cultural Impacts affecting Women***

The presence of mines precipitates changes in the social and cultural fabric of the areas where they are found. Mines bring with them an increase in migrant workers and income for some men. This has been tied with heightened alcohol abuse leading to multiple concurrent relationships and temporal marriages, polygamy and/or abandonment of the family exuberated by migrant workers. These trends were also highlighted by communities interviewed, particularly in Kankoyo

Higher levels of alcohol consumption also precipitate marital instability and gender based violence, including psychological and physical abuse. Women are seldom employed in mines, but their unpaid household work often increases due to the changes in the family structure.

Women bear the brunt of the increased health problems associated with mines including accidents and human injuries, eye irritation, bronchial and other respiratory diseases affecting miners, children and women in communities. This is because women tend bear more of the burden for caring for the sick.

## ***Economic Impacts affecting Women***

The employment opportunities that there are in mining areas tend to taken by men rather than women because of entrenched social norms governing employment and educational opportunities for women.

One of the greatest impacts is the loss of land and livelihoods in many regions, which is particularly strongly felt in Kalumbila. Many women have lost access to land used for gardening and farming. They also no longer have access to forest resources which they depended on for wild food stuffs, medicinal herbs and for their livelihoods through using the materials for handicrafts.

Although compensation was provided in some areas, the community feel that consultation, consent and information sharing with women was inadequate. Compensation packages did not take into account the loss of access to common forest and water resources that women have depended on for food, medicines and income for many generations.

Compensation also tended to go to men and be based on the losses that men had incurred. Without women's losses being factored in and with no access or control over the money, women were thus doubly disadvantaged. The introduction of mines has also spelled a higher cost of living in these areas including of basic commodities and housing.

## ***Political Impacts affecting Women***

Political decisions concerning relocation and compensation rarely captures the needs, issues and concerns of women. This is partly because consultation processes do not provide for effective participation of women. The consequence of this is that decisions made by the community tend to favour men more than women including where to build infrastructure and the types of community programmes.



A focus group discussion with women in the new Northern Settlement area in Musele Community of Kalumbila - Musonda Kapena/Actionaid

## **Recommendations**

### ***For government***

- ◆ The Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection should expedite the land policy process in order to facilitate revision of the Lands Act of 1995 to ensure broad-based consultations that includes women on all land matters regarding conversions or acquisition of customary land by government or for investments and to make the Lands Tribunal more effective in addressing land disputes caused by mining extractives affecting women.
- ◆ The government should incorporate of the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and strong participation of women in the government's resettlement and compensation guidelines.
- ◆ The Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection should review the Environmental Impact Assessment and other relevant subsidiary environmental management legislation. This should be done with the aim of strengthening the legal authority and enforcement by Zambia Environmental Management Authority and compliance by mining firms through the update of penalties and strengthening the public consultation processes, including with women.
- ◆ The Ministry of Mines and Energy Development should strictly ensure that the mines pay into the Environmental Protection Fund and that the funds are used to support mitigation and conservation in affected environmental areas.
- ◆ There should be greater transparency and public scrutiny of the provisions of agreements between government and mining companies such as the Investor Protection Agreements (IPAs) to ensure that they do not disadvantage the ordinary Zambian citizens particularly women.

### ***Recommendation for Corporate Reforms***

- ◆ Mining investors should adopt gender-sensitive Environmental and Social Impact Assessments and international voluntary guidelines.
- ◆ Mining firms should adopt "open-door policies" to enhance women's engagement in corporate accountability on operational issues affecting women.
- ◆ Mining firms should devise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes that are responsive to the needs of women and effectively empower them socially and economically in order to mitigate the negative impacts they suffer from the operations of mining industries.



Margaret Chisanga stands besides her house in Kankoyo

Thomson Reuters Foundation/ Magdalena Mis, courtesy [TheLancet](#)

Margaret Chisanga is a 40 year old woman who has spent her life since birth in Kankoyo. Married with three children, she is a housewife and political leader in Langashi Ward in Konkoyo. Her husband is unemployed and therefore relies on various informal businesses to raise income for the household including selling of merchandise. Margaret lives in a cracked house located within 100m from the Mopani mine plant.

*“Since the new mine investor took over the Mopani Copper Mine, as an ordinary woman in Kankoyo, I have never benefited from it in any way unless women who work in the mine. As women we are not engaged with the mine investor in a more pro-active way unless we follow the mine management to lodge a complaint. There are no deliberate programmes or mechanism to engage us. Despite having many challenges such as poor water the mine does not help us in any way. The mine says it is only concerned with the mine operations and has nothing to do with the housing and other public infrastructure in the community.”*

*“Our house being within 100m from the mine plant, we have suffered a lot of disturbances ranging from frequent noise from rock blasting; air pollution from sulphur-dioxide emissions; spillage from the acid pipes; cracking of the walls of our house; to destruction of the aesthetic value of our surroundings following damage to our flowers and surrounding vegetation including corroding the roof top to our house. I have a 15-year child who always scratches his eyes continuously due to irritation once sulphur-dioxide is released from the mine. Since we are used to his situation we don't do anything whenever this happens.”*

*“Two years ago when I was coming from the market area around 11:00PM carrying a four month old baby boy when I reached near the mine area I experienced a heavy release of sulphur-dioxide which polluted the whole area. This affected my child who started coughing uncontrollably and had difficulties in breathing. This forced me to take my child to Ronald Ross Hospital located nearby. The Doctor quickly examined my child and recommended putting him on oxygen as his condition was acute. My child was on oxygen until 01:00AM when we were told his condition had worsened. He ended up dying in the hospital. This has been a very devastating experience. Us who do not have money cannot do anything to seek legal redress on the injustices caused by the mine.”*

*“The frequent air pollution we have been experiencing in Kankoyo has not changed in any way despite the mine having installed a new acid plant, which exploded in August last year (2014) when it was scheduled for commissioning. This was yet another disturbing experience we had as a community. When the acid plant exploded it caused a lot of disturbing noise and released toxic gases into the atmosphere. Our children were very disturbed and feared that they would die from the massive explosion and pollution. Following this, the young ones mobilized themselves and started throwing stones at the mine plant. This prompted other community members to join resulting in a riot. The police refused to grant a peaceful demonstration due to political interference in the matter. The explosions have continued to occur. Even two weeks ago we experienced a minor explosion but because of rains the disturbance caused was not much. We feel the problems caused by the mine will never end. As the community we are resolved to relocate from Kankoyo provided government can help secure alternative land for us and support our resettlement”.*