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Women and Afghanistan's extractive industries



Recommendations and Findings of socio-economic baselines in Aynak¹, Ajigak and Qara Zaghan Gold Mine Area



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¹ Findings drawn from Socio-economic Baseline Study of Qara Zaghan Gold Mine in Afghanistan, 2013, and Baseline Study of coal mine in Afghanistan, 2013, and Mes Aynak FGDs, conducted 2012-2013.

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WOMEN AND AFGHANISTAN'S EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

Summary of Key issues

Women's development outcomes are likely to be significantly impacted by extractive activities.

Development outcomes for women in Afghanistan have improved significantly in the past decade. As well as being constitutionally recognized as equals, women have been integrated into national development strategies. The result has been an improvement in key development indicators such as in women's educational participation, health status and literacy rates. Continued progress on these fronts, however, is not a given, but will depend on sustained efforts by the Afghan government and effective design of development interventions. With the continuing change in sources and levels of financing for achieving development aims, extractive industries are being looked to post-2014 as providing significant government revenues for development activities, and as an engine of growth for the economy. Mineral extraction, however, may also pose challenges for achieving development aims, particularly for women. There is evidence from around the world that women are differently, and often more negatively, impacted than are men by extractive industries operating in or close to their communities. Findings from the socio-economic surveys conducted in three mining areas in Afghanistan highlight the ways in which women may be impacted by mining operations. Managing negative impacts, and ensuring equitable distribution of opportunities and benefits for both women and men will help consolidate development gains, not only for women, but for the communities more broadly.

Women are differently impacted by extractive industries than men, both negative impacts and potential benefits.

Impacts differentiated by gender are often a reflection of existing roles of women and men in society, and of gender inequalities such as division of labor and cultural norms, which govern the status and authority of women relative to men. Existing gender differences in men and women's roles and social status could also be exacerbated by the social, environmental and economic pressures that mining activities often generate. Women may feel negative impacts to which men are not at risk. Impacts may also be felt more directly or more intensely for women than they are for men. Changes to the security situation- for example the use of dedicated security militias to protect mining facilities and property, or the presence of workers from outside the communities- can also have attendant consequences for women which are not felt, or not experienced in the same way by male members of the community. Some environmental impacts, while felt by the entire household and community, are often felt more deeply by women. Reduced availability of clean drinking water, for example, affects women more than other members of the household as they are not only consumers, but also primarily responsible for household water collection. The benefits that extraction brings are also not usually spread evenly across a community and between men and women. Different and more ample employment opportunities may also be open to men than to women. Jobs in the security sector, artisanal mining, and commercial extraction may be assumed by men, but are not employment opportunities that women may commonly participate in Afghanistan.

Similarly, women are not well positioned, because of social restrictions or lack of access to assets, compared with men, to take advantage of other income-generating opportunities spurred by mining activities.

Women’s socio-economic development and political participation is still a key need in areas with extractive industries.

The findings from the three mining areas echo trends in development outcomes for women across Afghanistan- such as the increase in literacy rates amongst younger women, and greater access to maternal health care. Communities in each of the three areas however, lag behind national averages in a number of development indicators. There is also a critical need for further development interventions to facilitate the economic empowerment of women, as their participation in income-generating activities, and ownership and control over assets remains weak. Women in the three areas included in the research perform mainly household-oriented tasks, with few opportunities for economic advancement. Participation of women in civic life and in decision-making in the household also remains weak. Restrictions on mobility, including attending school and participation in social events, are linked to security concerns, and may be exacerbated by the introduction of mining activities and the social changes these bring to effected communities.

There is a need to ensure that Afghanistan does not experience a retrograde on the gains of dedicated government action and international support over the past decade on gender issues. The extractive industries, if monitored and managed well, could build on the gains already made, and as such contribute towards furthering Afghanistan’s gender development goals.

Findings of the socio-economic baselines

Background

Integrity Watch Afghanistan, with support from the United States Institute of Peace, has been assisting communities in three mining areas in Afghanistan, monitoring mining activities, their impacts on the social and economic situation of these communities, and their effects on the local environment. This paper presents the findings of the socio-economic baseline surveys that were conducted in Ajigak iron ore mine in Bamiyan and Maidan Wardak provinces and Qara Zaghan Gold Mine Area (QGMA) in Baghlan province, as well as focus groups discussions held with communities in the Mes Aynak copper mine area. They highlight the existing socio-economic situation of women, constituting a reference point for determining, as mining activities progress in each of the areas, whether and how women are being impacted by or benefiting from the extraction activities. Exploration has been taking place in Qara Zaghan Gold Mine Area since 2011. At the Mes Aynak copper mine site, a mining facility has already been constructed and is being protected by the Mines Protection Unit, but actual exploitation has not yet commenced due to delays. The resettlement of households from villages from the immediate vicinity of the mine has started, but has experienced some problems.

The following is a summary of some of the gender disaggregated and gender-relevant data collected from the baseline surveys and the focus group discussions at the three mining areas researched. The findings of the baselines also provide, more generally, a current snapshot of women’s social status and economic development in these areas, allowing future comparison and the early identification

of concerns/issues to watch where development gains may be threatened. The full baseline reports for each area can be found at the Integrity Watch Afghanistan website³.

Human development indicators

Food security and nutritional intake: Food security is a major issue in both QGMA and Ajigak. A majority of household expenditure went to food purchases (44% in Ajigak and 38% in QGMA), the second greatest expenditure being weddings (at 12% and 28% of household income for Ajigak and QGMA respectively). Many households reported borrowing money, and the most common reason for borrowing was for additional food expenditures. While food insecurity does not impact only women, because of the way in which household resources- including food- are allocated, lowered household resources are likely to result in lowered caloric intake for women and girl-children, and that this will have implications for women's health status. The communities surveyed in QGMA have a relatively varied diet due to access to a range of food items grown in the region, such as rice and wheat. Households in Ajigak, and in particular women and children, are more affected by malnutrition, as the range of food items grown is smaller, with the only common food sources grown indigenously being potatoes and apples, with little protein commonly found in the diet.

Access to water: Significant challenges in collecting potable water are faced by all the mining communities surveyed. Access to safe drinking water remains a major challenge to Afghanistan achieving several of the Millennium Development Goals⁴. Data collected from the Focus Group Discussions conducted at Mes Aynak found that women from villages around Mes Aynak find difficulties in accessing water; most households must pay for water. The surveys there also found that communities believed the water table had been lowered by drilling that had been conducted by the mining company, making water collection even more difficult. In Ajigak, access to drinking water is a major concern, despite the existence of ground water sources in the region. The surveyed communities in Ajigak draw 39% of their potable water from the existing rivers, lakes and water channels. Women are mostly responsible for bringing water to the household (73.6% of women, 14.6% of girls, as opposed to 4.8% of men and 6.9% of boys). Women in each of the mining areas collected water at least twice a day, making water collection an arduous and time-consuming activity. The situation in QGMA is different as there is access to water year-round through gravity pipes or surface water, with the average round trip for water collection taking approximately 28 minutes. As well as access, a decline in the quality of water may become an issue at each of the mining sites. Mining can put heavy burden on water resources, depending on the quality of the mineral being extracted. Extraction can also create contamination of water by pollutants- both surface and ground water, particularly through coal sludge and cyanide. Changes in quality and access will directly affect women, placing additional burden on them to travel back and forth between safe water sources and to purify water collected. Lowered quality of water could also have health impacts. Many of the health problems already experienced in the three mining areas (described below) can be attributed, at least in part, to lack of access to safe drinking water.

³ www.iwaweb.org

⁴ See the full 2012 MDG report on Afghanistan, available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202012.pdf>

Access to health care: Access to health facilities and health services is not only complicated by a lack of availability of facilities in the region and the distance and accessibility of facilities, but also by travel time, the cost of seeking treatment and cultural factors. In QGMA, as in Ajigak, the provision of accessible and affordable health-care is poor, although the Agha Khan Foundation has established a clinic in the region. In Ajigak the situation is worse because poor road conditions and a lack of transportation options make accessing health care problematic. To have access to advanced treatment, people have to go to Kabul, which takes several hours of travel across highly insecure areas. Women are far less likely than men to access preventative healthcare and treatment. The reasons behind this are their restricted mobility- often women depend on the male member of the household to accompany them, the time-consuming roles performed within the home, and the strategies they employ for managing household resources. Such strategies often include limiting the use of scarce resources for themselves and for girl-children.

Maternal Health: Maternal health is an area that has seen improvement in the past decade. The majority of female respondents who had given birth in the past 12 months reported receiving antenatal treatment, and official midwives attended the majority of births in the communities surveyed. In Ajigak, 56% of those women who had given birth in the past 12 months had an official mid-wife in attendance. This figure was higher in QGMA, with 74% of the births attended by an official mid-wife. The majority of births in QGMA took place at a government clinic or clinic set up by an NGO, while in 20% of women reported having given birth at home. This trend will be interesting to follow as mining activities progress. An improvement in road conditions may increase expectant mothers' access to health care. On the other hand social changes brought by mining activities –such as influx of migrant workers- may limit women's mobility to the effect that they are less likely, due to security and safety concerns, to seek regular antenatal care and attend clinics for births.

Other health: Animal dung is still one of the main fuels used by households in Ajigak While used for all household purposes- such as heating, the use of dung for cooking has been identified as a cause of respiratory and other pervasive health problems for women⁵.

Education and Literacy: In QGMA – the percentage of heads of households who can read and write is 45% men and 40% women. This represents a major achievement when compared with results of the NRVA survey of 2007-2008 (39% men and 12 % women). Short reading and comprehension tests conducted by interviewers however found that 64% of men (from the sample) and only 35% of women had these skills.⁶ Literacy is higher for the 7-17 age group, and the same for both men and women (76%). School enrollment levels were quite high in QGMA- 85% and 81% for women. School enrolment rates in Ajigak are lower; around 80% of boys in the age group of 7-17 and 68.4% of their female counterparts were enrolled in school. Attendance and retention of female students, as elsewhere in Afghanistan, may be lower than enrolment rates suggest. Further, higher rates of education enrollment and literacy are only slowly giving way to empowerment of women in other forms.

Happiness perceptions: When asked how happy they were with their own life, men and women answered differently. 21% of men compared with only 6% of women in QGMA reported being 'very

⁵ NRVA, p97

⁶i.e. self-reporting may have been much higher than actual literacy rates

happy'. For the two top categories (very happy and happy) the combined responses were 72% of men, compared with 61% of women. In Ajigak, the situation was somewhat different, with more women (27%) than men (18%) responding that they are 'very happy' with their life. For the top two categories ('very happy' and 'happy'), the responses however were 74% for men, and 65% for women.

Social and economic indicators

Demographics: The population of the three mining areas surveyed is young. In Ajigak, the age average is only 16 years. The ratio of men-to-women is fairly high in both Ajigak and QGMA, with 108 men to every 100 women (QGMA). In the surveyed areas, the ratio of men to women was especially high after the age of 50. This shows some divergence from national life expectancy rates, which are higher for women (51.5 years) than for men (48.9 years). The fewer number of females may represent methodological difficulties with the survey⁷, or may be due to large gender differences in living conditions in the survey areas. Women have poorer nutritional intake than men, the average age of first live births is young, and they are not easily able to access to health care services; these, and other factors, can have detrimental effects on women's health. Repeated movements due to civil unrest can also have a greater impact on women's health than on that of men, as they tend to be more susceptible to shocks, with fewer options for adaptation.

Out-migration: Out migration is current in Afghanistan but affects more male members of the family than women. Out migration is most common for those seeking jobs. In Ajigak more than half of the households report that there has been male migration from the region during the previous twelve months.⁸ While women generally cannot migrate without male member of the family, being left behind with greater responsibilities makes them more vulnerable to shocks, with fewer opportunities to change their environment and fewer coping strategies.

Property ownership: Women own assets- such as jewelry, livestock and chickens, and land to a much lesser extent, in each of the areas surveyed. Fewer women exercised decision making over the more valuable assets such as land and jewelry than those of lower value- such as the chickens. The origin of the assets does not correlate with the degree of control women have over them. In QGMA 14% of women owned land- the majority of which was purchased by their husbands (more than 60%) or inherited from their families (28%). Women were also likely to own livestock (13%), and make decisions about selling it, and, potentially, any income derived from it. 11 % of women also owned jewelry – most often given by their husbands, and reported jointly deciding with their husbands whether or when to sell. In Ajigak, little over a quarter of women owning livestock reported taking decisions on spending income generated from their animals only after seeking approval from their husbands. 11% of livestock owned by women were purchased by their husbands as mahar (bride price). Women also have some control over poultry and eggs that they yield; these are often sources of income for women, which they spend without consulting other household members. A small percentage of married men (less than 5% of those surveyed in Ajigak) reported that they would be happy to decide collectively how to spend the overall household income. Increasing

⁷ such as under-reporting of the number of females in the household by those who completed the survey

⁸NRVA, p. 19

women's ownership of assets -either gifted or earned by them- and their control over such resources is a key area for women's empowerment efforts.

Women's income earning opportunities: The main (reported) income earning activities in each of the mining areas researched were crop farming and animal husbandry. Women were not involved in any income earning activities in QGMA, other than animal husbandry. Herb-gathering and opium cultivation are also income-earning activities (performed by men). Rug -making -which had been reported in the 2002 socio-economic baseline- was reportedly no longer practiced in QGMA, but is still a common income-earning activity for women in Ajigak.

Economic Outlook: Women held views concerning their economic future that were different from men. The most frequent response by women in QGMA was that the economic situation had deteriorated (46% of women) while the majority of men (61%) actually reported that it stayed the same. At the same time, double the percentage of women compared with men reported that it had improved (16% of women). This may indicate differences in availability of information about the security of household resource flows and differences in the use of coping strategies.⁹ Women have been found to take the burden of buffering shocks to household resources through their own coping strategies.

Mobility, Voice and Participation

Access to information: Nearly 99% of women (compared with 79% of men) in QGMA were unaware of development activities –such as the clinic and school- that the mining company is establishing . Far fewer women than men were aware of the actual mining activities. Most women in QGMA received information about happenings from neighbors, then, in order of importance, friends, family, radio, and Mosque. In Ajigak, women's access to information was strong, likely due to the consultations with women that had been conducted by IWA and Ministry of Mines and Petroleum officials. There,, 85% of women, compared with only 54% of men knew the mining activities through the consultative process.

Dispute resolution: Few disputes were reported by survey respondents as having occurred in the past 12 months. The majority of the disputes that did occur in both QGMA and in Ajigak were related to land boundaries, with marriage disputes also being significant. Marriage disputes were usually resolved by tribal leaders and elders (56% in QGMA), or the Malek or Arbab ¹⁰ (20% in the QGMA), or district government (20% in QGMA). The continued heavy reliance on tribal elders has been found to result in bias against women's desired outcomes when seeking mediation or arbitration for family disputes.

⁹Women have been found to take on a large role in absorbing shocks to household resources through their own coping strategies. These include lowering their own nutritional intake, curbing personal expenditure or use of scarce resources and, saving money by not sending girl-children to school (saving on fees, transport, cost of books etc.).

¹⁰ A *Malek* is the head or representative of a village , and an *Arbab* is a wealthy man (often a landlord). Both play a large role in community affairs.

Women's voice and participation: In Ajigak, in the consultation process conducted by central government, women were able to identify different needs for the development projects than did men. Interestingly, in both Ajigak and in QGMA the percentage of women who do not want women to be involved in monitoring of the impact of mining activities is higher than the percentage of men who don't want them involved in monitoring. This illustrates that the maintenance of gender roles involves conformity to expectations and self-regulation by women themselves.

Women's mobility: In Aynak, communities that have been displaced have experienced significant changes in their social relationships due to the changes in routes within villages and between settlements. Women find it more difficult to attend social gatherings and events, or walk in the village. There is no mosque and no cemetery. The limited mobility that they had prior to the establishment of the copper mine has been further curtailed. In the QGMA, despite being a relatively peaceful province, concerns about safety and security affected attitudes towards schooling girls. The majority of women in QGMA (61%) had not left their homes in the past 12 months. When women do leave the house or travel they were most likely to go fetch water (close to 50% of the occasions for leaving the home), attend a wedding or funeral (8%), or visit neighbors. Family and other social structures are fairly rigid, with women being assigned mainly to household work. In Ajigak, 52% of the females interviewed reported that there has been a deterioration in the security situation for women ¹¹ compared to the last two years. While this change in perception of the security situation may not be related to mining operations, extraction activities are likely to impact security dynamics. Safety concerns may also limit the potential for women to use opportunities that arise with mining operations – such as engaging in income generating activities.

Looking forward

Entry points for progress

The baseline findings illustrate the development gains that have already been made for women in the past decade. The analysis reveals significant prospects for further development targeting women in the three mining areas, if benefits from the mining activities are channeled effectively. The data analysis found a relatively young population (the largest age groups are 0-6 and 6-18 year olds) along with rising literacy rates and a balancing out of the literacy rate between men and women.¹² 85% of men, and 81% of women in this age group are actually enrolled in school. As such, the surveyed areas have a large, young, workforce which is better-educated than the previous generation, potentially with higher levels of employable skills that can be beneficial to the private sector. Mining companies should, as such, prioritize hiring of staff and workers from the mining-affected communities themselves. Due to the specialized nature of many jobs in the mining industry, mining companies and government may need to support women in developing skills for the mining industry

¹¹ The survey asked whether respondents felt that the security of teenage girls when traveling to and from school or when socializing with other girls had changed in the past 24 months.

¹² The literacy rates for men and women in 6-18 yr group is approximately the same in each of the three areas - at 76% in QGMA. The methodology used to conduct the surveys revealed however that literacy rates may be over-estimated.

and for engagement in economic activities related to mining operations. Women's income –earning capacity could be boosted significantly if they were able to respond to opportunities in the local economy generated by mining activities. These opportunities could be best responded to if women owned their own assets and exercised control over decisions related to these assets. Freeing up women's time for engaging in consultation processes and other civic events and even in income-earning activities should be considered, as should improving women's health- and as such productivity- by enhancing nutritional intake and access to health care. Addressing the challenges in accessing safe drinking water is an obvious entry point for enhancing both women's political participation and income-generation, not to mention improving their health.

The movement of people in search of economic opportunities whether related to mining or not- is a significant social dynamic. While placing a burden on women of the household, out-migration can also open up opportunities for change. Research from a comparable context- Tajikistan- shows that areas experiencing significant and sustained out migration, had, over the short-term, created opportunities for women to engage in income-earning activities that were not open to them previously. Logar Province in particular has experienced significant out-migration over the past decade. In-migration related to mining has already been experienced in QGMA in particular, and to some extent in Bamiyan Province, where workers, mainly from within the provincial center have been brought in to work on the mining activities. Economic opportunities in responding to the needs of migrant workers can be a source of income-generation for women, but also carry risks for women.

Investment by mining companies in infrastructure, either to support mining operations or as community investments, can facilitate improvements in the lives of women. Building of new roads or repairing existing road surfaces can ease transport and security concerns, allowing women greater mobility to engage in social and political events and allowing improved access to health-facilities. Community infrastructure- such as meeting places, or halls for holding weddings, can also help improve the quality of life for women. All infrastructure investments however, do not necessarily respond to the specific needs of women and some may actually limit their mobility or increase their work-loads; consultation is key in determining what kinds of investments are needed to respond to women's needs.

Risks to women's development outcomes

In addition to the opportunities brought by some aspects of mineral extraction, women may experience a host of changes that heighten their vulnerability. Out-migration of men from areas proximate to mines in search of employment can create additional burdens on women, including reduced resources into the household.

Negative environment impacts-from mining activities, such as a reduction in irrigated land and pollution can change agricultural systems or lower food security, putting strains on household resources managed by women and increasing their workloads. Health, already poorer for women than for men, may be compromised further through negative impacts, and increased workloads. Women may be expected to perform multiple roles such as income earning, in addition to their usual household activities.

Both in and out migration can fuel safety and insecurity concerns, effectively limiting women's

mobility and therefore participation in social life, access to information, and participation in decision-making at the extra-household level. Limited participation in social events is already happening for those who have been resettled as a result of mining at Mes Aynak, and from the re-zoning of land-use and changes to walking routes in the Qara Zaghan Gold Mine Area.

The findings of the baseline show that despite higher rates of school enrollment and even in some cases literacy rates for women, these have not yet translated into strong economic empowerment, or given women greater voice in their households. While data is not available for Afghanistan, evidence from other countries also points to an increased vulnerability to gender-based violence, stemming from social changes including economic empowerment.

Recommendations

- i) **Ex ante social and environmental impact assessments and monitoring** can help identify how women may be impacted (both negatively and in ways that open possibilities for positive change) by potential mining activities and options for site location, resettlement etc. While not currently mandated by law, tendering may specify that companies bidding who have or intend to conduct gender disaggregated social and environmental impact assessments will score additional points in the tender evaluation.
- ii) **Continue to collect gender disaggregated data** and monitor development outcomes for women in mining-area communities, to identify changes resulting from the impact of mining activities.
- iii) **Gender sensitive consultation is important** to ensure information flows effectively to women, as the baseline finding illustrate that this is often not the case with general targeting of 'communities'. Ensuring women are part of regular consultation and feedback mechanisms means creating additional fora where women may communicate freely outside of social constraints, while also ensuring that these do not heighten their risk to gender-based violence, including targeting by insurgents.
- iv) **Undertake needs-assessments which identify women's needs** as separate from those of men, recognizing that interventions to help address the specific needs of women often have a beneficial impact on the broader community. Ensure women are consulted separately with regard to their needs to be fulfilled through community or social benefits provided by mining companies.
- v) **Build in risk/social protection and safety nets into programs** that are likely to result in social changes that can heighten women's vulnerability. Program design should include mitigation of risks faced by women- such as domestic violence awareness, women's support and counseling services. Adding security provisions- such as community infrastructure that is to be used only by women, secure walking routes, or additional transport for female children and female mine workers, can also help manage safety and security risks.

- vi) **Identify specific jobs that women could be employed in at mining sites**, taking into account existing roles that women play, social restrictions and security concerns. Consider a quota scheme for mining companies to implement concerning employment of women. In other countries, women have been found to make excellent mining employees (for example in operating and maintaining machinery and other technical roles), performing their roles at least as well as their male counter parts.

- vii) **Identify opportunities for women's income generating activities** related to mining operations based on supply chain as well as parallel economies generated by investments and influx of migrants.

- viii) **Companies should offer skills training for women-** specifically for jobs identified that women would be able to assume, and for enabling income-earning activities that can be performed within the home. Seed investment for women's income-earning activities would also be necessary as women find it difficult to access to capital and initial resources to start a small business.

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