



Mining for Development Conference 2013

Sydney, Australia

SESSION SUMMARY - KEYNOTE THREE Responding to fast changing community aspirations Ms Ume Wainetti

The relatively primitive nature of some local communities has meant that programs designed to share the benefits of mining are not having their intended benefits, and women in particular are missing out, said the Program Coordinator for Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee of Papua New Guinea, Ume Wainetti.

As a woman from PNG's western province, Ms Wainetti said she had direct experience with the Ok Tedi mine, and through her involvement with one of the local trusts.

"How do you ask men and women who were feeding on flesh what is their expectations and aspirations for development for mining their land?" Ms Wainetti asked. "That was in 1971/72, when they were brought down to Port Moresby.

"Such simple societies are now being targeted, because that's where resources are. They can't now live on their land, because the land is now taken up by the mine."

Ms Wainetti said one of the problems with mining was that often people had to be relocated into new regions and unfamiliar housing, with the expectation that they would change and develop in the blink of an eye.

She related another story of how men in one society had wanted to hide their women from foreigners, and thus immediately removed those women from discussions of the future of their community.

And she said that while money was being distributed, it was not always distributed to where it was needed, especially in Bougainville.

"It is a lot of money, but when it is shared among individuals it is not much to pay your school fees and do everything else," Ms Wainetti said. "And so many women on the island sell firewood, and husbands prostitute them when they don't make enough money. Many women do not live to be 21 years old - they die before that age."

Ms Wainetti also highlighted the Women in Mining Action Plan, which brought forward 12 basic topics of investigation for development for women, including strengthening women's networks, improving education and literacy, and to ensure information was distributed relating to health issues and family planning.

But she reiterated that it was critical that women be more involved in negotiations relating to the impact of mine activity on local communities.

International Mining for Development Centre

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“We do not have the skills or education to participate,” Ms Wainetti said. “All we see is outside people coming in being employed in our province. We in ourselves are not part of that.

“We have so much money now sitting there, but the life for women since 2007 has not changed - in fact I think it’s gotten worse. I hope this conference will help us all to find solutions to help our people. Instead of being empowered and their lives improved, these people have become the poorest people in Papua New Guinea.”

ENDS