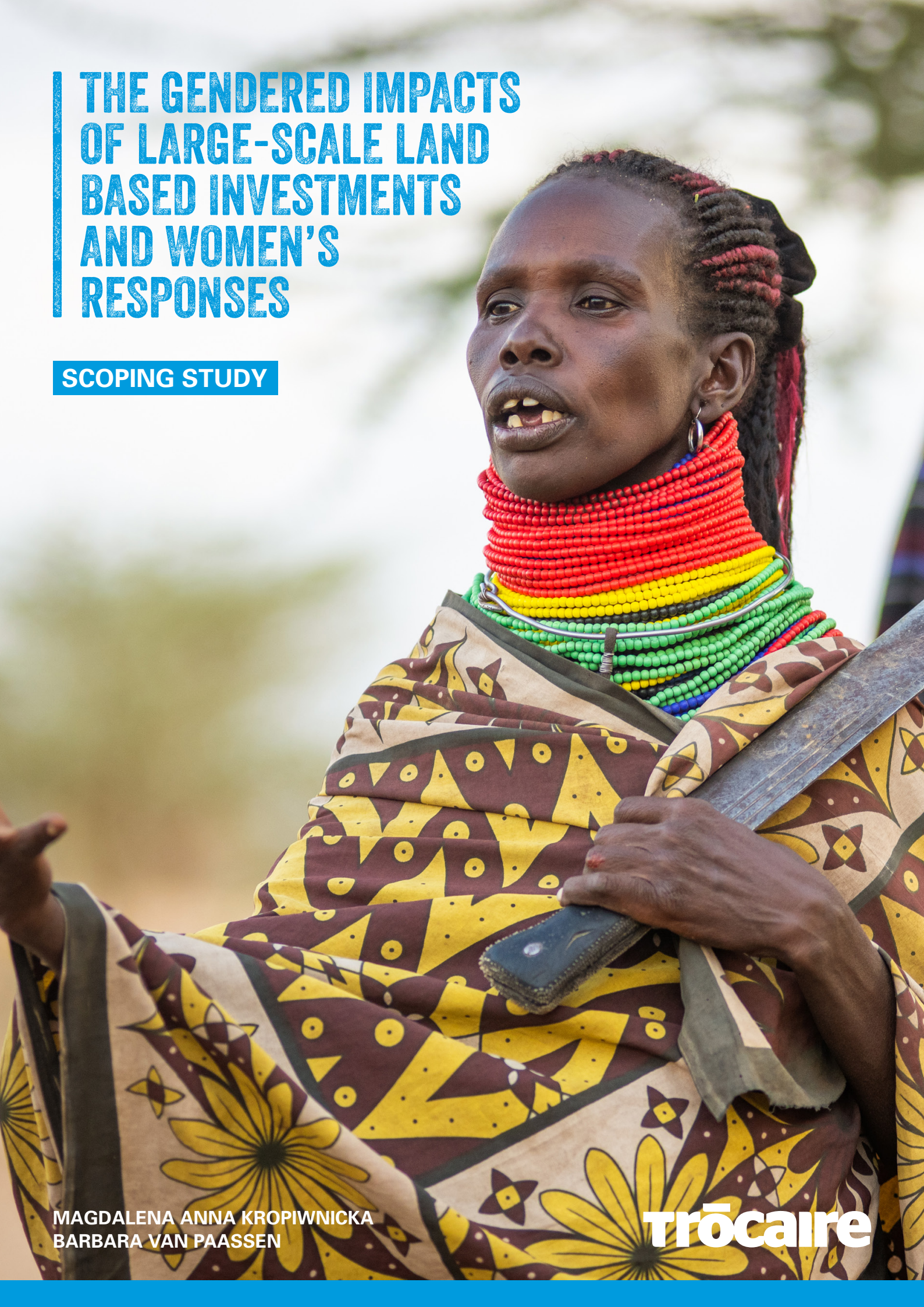


THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF LARGE-SCALE LAND BASED INVESTMENTS AND WOMEN'S RESPONSES

SCOPING STUDY

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Cover Photo: Nadiko Lopei Alim a pastoralist from Kapese in Turkana, Northern Kenya. Trocaire is working on resource rights and community engagement to mitigate the risk of conflict related to the extractives industry in Turkana. (Photo by Garry Walsh)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EI	Extractive Industry
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
JASS	Just Associates, NGO working with women's rights defenders networks
GAGGA	Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HRD	Human Rights Defenders
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
WEHRD	Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defenders
WOLTS	Mokoro's action-oriented strategic research project on Women's Land Tenure Security
WOMIN	African gender and extractives alliance of women, mining-impacted communities and peasants

I. SUMMARY



Juana Zuniga, whose husband is one of the 8 Guapinol Human Rights Defenders in pretrial detention in Honduras, raising awareness about the case. (Photo taken by Giulia Vuillemoz)

This scoping study analyses gendered impacts of large-scale extractives, hydropower and agribusiness investments that result in communities' changed access to and control over land, water and other natural resources. Large-scale commercial pressures on natural resources have been on the rise over the course of the past decade leading to growing concerns on their costs, benefits and human rights impacts. Through wide-ranging review of academic and civil society literature enriched by twenty interviews with international experts and practitioners, this study confirms that women are differently and disproportionately negatively impacted by these industries. Moreover, this study shed lights on the various gendered manifestations of the impacts of large-scale land based investments and women's and civil society responses that are still under represented.

The study starts with a brief introduction to the general context in which these investments take place, including legal and customary discriminations many women face in access to land and natural resources and related decision-making processes. The results of the literature review as well as of the interviews are analysed through assessment of gendered impacts on three areas: women's voice and agency (i.e. political participation), socio-economic and environmental impacts as well as impacts on physical and psychological wellbeing and bodily integrity. The study has also analysed responses to the investments of the women themselves as well as of the civil society organizations gathering best practices and trying to identify gaps so as to inform future strategies for work on women's rights and natural resources.

The study found that existing discriminations such as women's lack of political voice, insecure access to and control over economic and natural resources, vulnerability to gender based violence and disproportionate burden of reproductive and care work tend to be exacerbated when combined with extractive, gender-blind development and investment policies and lack of participatory approaches or proper gender and environmental cost/benefit assessments. As the extractives and hydropower industry tend to be highly male dominated and increase pressure on resources that women are particularly dependent on, they also leave women with few economic benefits while their vulnerabilities are likely to increase. Sexual and gender-based violence both adds to and reinforces women's political and economic marginalization and is often exacerbated by factors such as displacement, militarization and influx or out-migration of male workers. This study has found that addressing and documenting sexual and gender-based violence and their (hidden) psychological impacts needs more prioritization.

While the perceptions and descriptions of the responses by the affected women themselves are under-represented in most of the literature, women play major roles in defending resource rights, enacting policy changes and strengthening human rights frameworks across the globe. The role of civil society organizations in providing safe spaces and supporting women's networks in their analysis and response, as well as identifying male champions and jointly addressing root causes, norms, masculinities and power relations is of utmost importance in the context of growing pressures on natural resources and rising global violence against Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD).

II. BACKGROUND, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This study has been commissioned by Trócaire with the aim to increase understanding of the gendered impacts, including the more 'hidden' impacts, of large-scale land based investments as well as the responses of women and civil society. It aims to help strengthen the evidence base, as well as integrated and gender transformative approaches, for Trócaire, partners and others working to promote women's rights and gender equality in the context of natural resources and large scale investments. The research focuses on the following questions:

- i. *If & how the extractives, hydroelectric and agribusiness industries are further exacerbating gender inequality and widening the power gap between men and women?*
- ii. *What are more hidden, less documented aspects of the gendered impacts of the extractives, hydroelectric and agribusiness industries?*

- iii. *What responses do women have to these investments and how are they supported by others?*
- iv. *What are gaps, lessons and ways forward to address negative impacts of large-scale land based investments on women and support them in their responses?*

The extractive, agribusiness and hydropower industries can vary greatly in terms of employment characteristics and impacts and while these differences will be addressed the main thrust of this report is on their common cross-sectoral issues and their respective gendered impacts. This report will focus on larger scale often foreign led investments in developing countries with distinct land use and water use changes, often involving displacement of affected communities and of their primary activities. This study will purposefully leave out artisanal mining or small-scale and/or contract farming as such unless they are directly linked with the dynamics of another large-scale extractives, hydroelectric or agribusiness project.

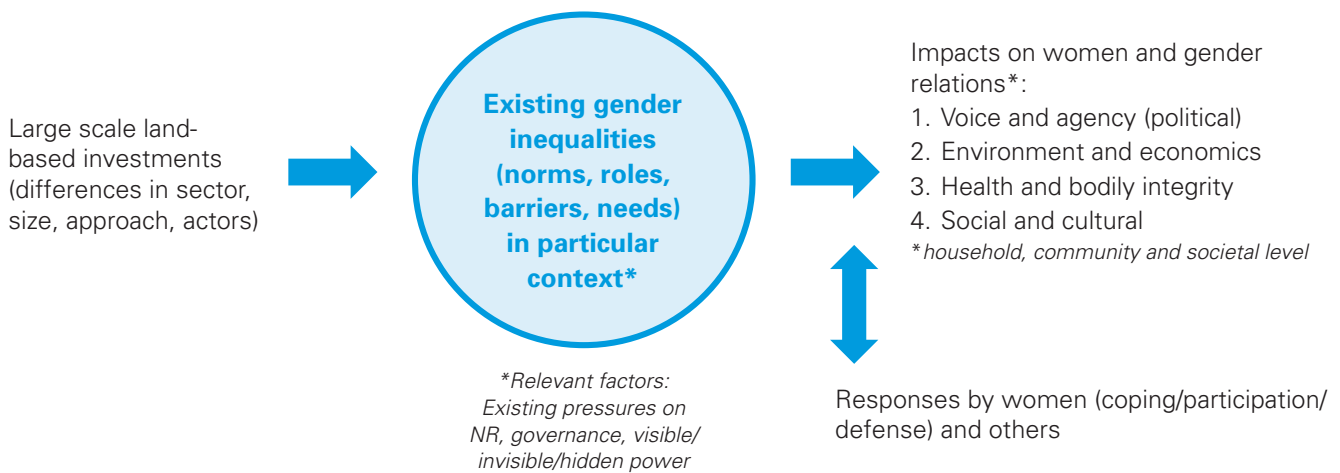


Esther Chegem and son in Central Turkana, Kenya. (Photo taken by Aidan O'Neill)

Methodology

This scoping study is a desk research based on literature review and semi-structured interviews. The approach is qualitative and interdisciplinary, drawing from different academic disciplines as well as practice. The study aims to take a power and systems approach¹ by looking at the investments and their outcomes in the context of wider systems and existing inequalities. Where possible, different dimensions of power (e.g. visible, invisible, hidden²) are considered. It is intersectionally feminist in the sense that it will not only look at gender but where possible consider interrelated characteristics (e.g. age, geographical location, ethnicity). Based on the literature we identify different key factors and potential categories of impacts and responses to be analysed. This results in the following conceptual framework:

The literature review is based on an initially agreed bibliography that was further expanded and enriched through interviews and additional research to fill the gaps. Semi-structured interviews were held with 20 experts, mostly women, from academia and civil society with different areas of expertise, organisational involvement and geographical location. All respondents were interviewed via skype following a pre-developed questionnaire, which was informed by the key questions of the research as well as the initial literature review. Extensive notes were taken during the interviews and jointly analysed. Any personally attributed quotes and statements were checked before publication.



1. Such as proposed by Green (2016) in How Change Happens. Oxford University Press. Available at: <http://how-change-happens.com/>
 2. Building on <https://justassociates.org/en/resources/new-weave-power-people-politics-action-guide-advocacy-and-citizen-participation>

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Explaining context of gender inequality in the extractives and large land based investments.

There is an increasingly growing recognition within the academia, the larger development community (including the United Nations Agencies and International Financial Institutions), non-governmental organizations and civil society that women are both differently and disproportionately negatively impacted by the extractives industry and large land based investments and infrastructure projects (ActionAid, EITI, IUCN, Oxfam, WOMIN)³. We are currently witnessing the global process of intensification of the use of land, minerals and natural resources, especially water, due to increasing scarcity, commercial investment pressures and ongoing promotion of the extractive development model in spite of the ramifications of the climate crisis and the actions needed to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Gender inequality is the most pervasive form of discrimination in the world with women representing majority of the world poor (Oxfam, 2017) and gender acts as the main barrier to access, use, control and receiving benefits related to land and natural resources (IUCN, 2020). Women are not a homogenous group and their experiences will vary depending on their ethnic background, class, education and status within their families, clans and communities, yet their socioeconomic and political position remains largely determined by gender prejudiced norms and stereotypes. While "gender is the main predictor of who will be poor and who will have power in the world today" (Oxfam, 2017:2) different studies demonstrate that increasing women's control over assets such as land, physical assets and financial assets is linked to improved children's health, nutrition and educational outcomes (Behrman et al, 2011). Achieving gender justice is fundamentally linked to any and all global poverty alleviation efforts.

In many developing countries women's land rights are subjected to discriminatory laws and customs despite women's critical contribution to agriculture and family food security. There are still laws that prevent women from owning, managing

and inheriting property and land. According to 2018 World Bank study⁴ of 189 countries, 40 percent of these countries have at least one legal constraint. In many countries there are legal and customary provisions limiting women's land inheritance rights in their status as widows and daughters (IUCN, 2020:27). In countries where there exists gender just land legislation, persistence of certain customary practices, women's lack of knowledge about their own rights, lack of written documentation of land titles and lack of implementation of laws continue to be a huge barrier to women's equitable land tenure rights (Behrman et al, 2011). In most customary systems, women's access to land is dependent on their relationship to men as wives, mothers and daughters. To complicate matters further, in some states both statutory written laws and customary norms coexist, and often legal frameworks can recognize customary practices in land tenure. "At one extreme, statutory legislation may prevent women from holding land rights independently of their husbands or male relatives, more commonly, customary practices may override women's equal land rights – even where they are enshrined in constitution – if protective statutory laws are not fully enforced." (Daley and Pallas, 2014:183). Simultaneously, customary practices can also transform and change in response to growing pressure on land and natural resources. This is particularly evident in the well documented growth of **property grabbing** from widows in South Eastern Africa where the custom requiring that male members of the family of the deceased take care of the widow is being now interpreted as the male relatives' right to often violently take over land and property of the widow and her children. The occurrence of **property grabbing**⁵ from widows has been a rising challenge in many parts of Africa due to a number of factors including the spread of HIV AIDS killing men in their prime age and increasingly limited community land access amid escalating commercial pressure on land and growing populations (Izumi, 2007; IJM, 2014).

3. The reviewed publications authored by these organizations share in the conclusion that women are differently and disproportionately negatively affected by large scale land-based investments by the extractives and/or agribusiness and hydropower sectors.

4. World Bank. *Women, Business and the Law 2018* as cited in the IUCN study p. 27

5. **Property Grabbing** consists of forcibly evicting an individual from their home and land by other family members, traditional leaders or neighbors, often being prevented from taking their possessions with them. Evidence shows that women are disproportionately affected by this practice after the death of their husbands, which is often accompanied by other forms of violence. (Izumi, 2001 and IUCN, 2020:28).

The past decade's intensification of foreign investors' commercial interest in developing countries' land referred to as **"large-scale land based acquisitions"** or **"land grabs"**⁶ have generated a range of studies which highlight that women are especially vulnerable to dispossession through land grabs (ActionAid International, 2012; Behrman et al, 2011; Daley and Pallas, 2014; Doss et al, 2014). Daley and Pallas (2014) identify four sources of vulnerabilities: (1) women's limited access to and control of land under both customary and statutory laws; (2) systemic gender discrimination in sociocultural and political relations, particularly in decision making on livelihoods issues, which lead to women being bypassed in consultations and decisions about proposed land deals; (3) women's relative cash income poverty, which is perpetuated by poor access to the wage employment generated by large scale land deals; and (4) women's vulnerability to domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and practices such as widow inheritance and sexual cleansing. "Using these as a grid, Daley and Pallas show that in most land acquisitions, women experience the effects of at least two of these disadvantages." (Doss et al, 2014:12).

Women's vulnerability to dispossession from access to and control over natural resources happens within the context where large majority of indigenous and customary lands remain unprotected. "Despite the history of customary use and ownership of over 50 percent of the world's land area, the world's indigenous peoples and local communities- up to 2.5 billion women and men – possess ownership rights to just one-fifth of the land that is rightfully theirs." (Land Rights Now, 2016:8).

Large scale land based investments have also exposed the particular importance to women of the so called "marginal" land that has been often targeted by investors. Such common or "marginal" lands are often used for purposes such as collecting firewood, water and medicinal plants, grazing and other uses often not counted in official statistics and reflect the traditional gendered divisions of labour (Behrman et al, 2011). Women are also traditionally responsible within many cultures for water collection and any land deals that impact on the distance travelled

to get the water or on its quality will impact them disproportionately. The importance of the common pool of resources to women is also emphasising **women's unpaid social and reproductive care work** where women are largely responsible for family's water and food security including food preparation and for caring for the children and the elderly.

"Unpaid care forms an essential part of social reproduction which refers to the process involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the labouring population and their labour power on a daily and generational basis. It involves the provision of food, clothing, shelter, basic safety and health care, along with the development and transmission of knowledge, social values and cultural practices and the construction of individual and collective identities." (WOMIN, 2013a:2)

The time that women spend on the care work can often result on women having less time for political participation which means less power to influence community decisions and consultations on investor projects when such occur. In addition, existing community cultural norms and power relations as well as negligence on behalf of government and investors may also prevent women's participation in the consultation processes. "Women are also more vulnerable to land grabs because they often lack power and influence within economic and political decision-making fora, denying them their ability to exercise freely both 'voice' and 'choice' in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods." (ActionAid, 2014:29)

Gender based violence (GBV) both adds to and reinforces women's political and economic marginalization. Around the world it is estimated that one in three women and girls will experience gender-based violence during her lifetime (IUCN, 2020:xi). According to the substantial recent study by International Union for Conservation of Nature, expression of GBV in relation to land tenure and productive resources are often employed to maintain the status quo and used as a means of control. The linkages between gender-based violence and land rights have been observed globally, showing that **"unequal power relations between men and women are among the strongest predictors of domestic violence"** (IUCN, 2020:32).

6. **Land Grabbing or Land Grabs** Land grabbing has been defined as "acquisitions or concessions that are one or more of the following: (i) in violation of human rights, particularly the equal rights of women; (ii) not based on free, prior and informed consent of the affected land-users; (iii) not based on a thorough assessment, or are in disregard of social, economic and environmental impacts, including the way they are gendered; (iv) not based on transparent contracts that specify clear and binding commitments about activities, employment and benefits sharing, and; (v) not based on effective democratic planning, independent oversight and meaningful participation" See the 2011 Tirana Declaration of International Land Coalition as defined by D'Odorico P. and Rull C. (2014) "International Land Grabbing" Oxford University.

2. Gendered impacts of extractives and large-scale land based investments.

Extractive Industry (EI) and agribusiness have a lot in common in terms of their large-scale impacts on natural resources, especially land and water, and the disruption of local communities ecological, social and economic systems. They are also often either accompanied by or lead to displacement of local project affected communities. Women and men experience these impacts differently and each individual investment case should be analysed within its own specific context. Notwithstanding, there is a generally increasing understanding that “extractivism” and large agribusiness monoculture model are often exacerbating existing gender inequalities rather than levelling off the gender playing field (Oxfam, 2017; IUCN, 2020; WOMIN, 2013a; WOMIN, 2013b).

A. Impacts on Women's Voice and Agency.

EI and agribusiness investments often take place in indigenous and community managed lands, which include forests and water bodies that often lack documentation and clear boundaries despite many recent efforts to register and strengthen legal protection of such lands⁷. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli Corpuz, noted that the increased vulnerability of customary rights can lead to further discrimination against women and especially indigenous women:

“Land grabs are not gender neutral since they result in indigenous women losing their traditional livelihoods, such as food gathering, agricultural production and herding (...). Some indigenous communities whose land rights are threatened have further subjugated the rights of women (which) have been considered “external values” or “Western values” and therefore divisive to the indigenous struggle.” (Land Rights Now, 2016:34)

Despite international legal standards requiring **Free Prior and Informed Consent**⁸, many projects commence with little or no consultation and where consultations

7. See Land Rights Now Campaign <https://www.landrightsnow.org/>

8. **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)** is a specific right that pertains to indigenous peoples and is recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It allows them to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories. Once they have given their consent, they can withdraw it at any stage. Furthermore, FPIC enables them to negotiate the conditions under which the project will be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. This is also embedded within the universal right to self-determination. FPIC is also mentioned as a condition of good land tenure governance in the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Right to Food. See FAO FPIC guide <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3496e.pdf>

do take place women are often largely left out from these processes. **Women's general absence from consultations and decision making processes about their own livelihoods is well documented and “can both reflect and reinforce women's lack of political voice”** (Oxfam, 2017:8). Women's lack of meaningful or any participation in consultation processes means that they are also usually bypassed in determination and reception of any compensation or other economic benefits that can be offered to the community by investors and/or the government. When compensation is awarded, recipients are typically male heads of households or male representatives of clans and villages as is often the case in many parts of Africa⁹. Many blame the extractives industry and large scale monoculture agribusiness for further marginalization of women by increasing their economic dependence on men, devaluing their status in the community, stunting social reproduction and exacerbating patriarchal norms (Oxfam, 2017; IUCN, 2020; Waliani, 2015).

“Transforming an economic model that damages the environment and causes pollution is not a technical issue. It's about power. It's about who makes decisions about the type of development and whether or not that involves extractive industries at a large scale, about who is consulted before any investment and whether those people have the power to say no, and about how those people are resettled and/or compensated if a project goes ahead.” Sabine Pallas, International Land Coalition

B. Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts

Men are far more likely to profit in terms of compensations and jobs from the extractive industry while women's unpaid labour is often increased due to barriers in access to fundamental resources such as water and fuel accompanied by loss of land for either grazing, growing subsistence crops or fishing for family's food consumption. While some authors try to acknowledge women's important role in the mining and gas industry throughout history (Macdonald, 2018), **it is a generally accepted fact that the modern day large scale extractive and mining industries are highly male dominated throughout their labour chain while largely relying on migrant male workers**¹⁰. Encouraging women

9. Oxfam 2017 and recent Oxfam blog on Turkana Oil ><https://kenya.oxfam.org/latest/blogs/black-gold>

10. Noting that this study does not cover artisanal mining which is governed by distinct gender dynamics.



Juana Esquivel (in red), Coordinator of Fundacion San Alonso Rodriguez, outside the Honduras courts after one of the hearings of the 8 water Human Rights Defenders from Guapinol in pretrial detention. (Photo taken by Giulia Vuillermoz)

employment in the mines and extractive industry without addressing the issues of health and the risks of gender-based violence in the predominantly masculine work culture can produce additional negative impact on women's welfare. Women in mining are also typically paid less than their male counterparts and without access or opportunities to gain technical skills they are often relegated to some of the most dangerous or menial jobs. For example, the cobbing work in the asbestos industry or dealing with the most treacherous part of the salt mining process i.e. winning the salt or separating salt from the host of other chemicals and gases without protective gear.¹¹ It is also generally recognized that the large influx of male workers associated with the mining and extractives industry, creates demand for sex work and prostitution. Macdonald acknowledges that: "Much of the work available for women in mining areas involves sexual aspects, but not all of it." (McDonald, 2018:448)

11. See Waliani (2015:8) and Hamilton, P. and Hargreaves, S. (2004) *Women Miners: Navigating Difficult Terrain Underground*. Paper 2 in Women, Gender and Extractivism in Africa <https://womin.org.za/images/papers/paper-two.pdf>

Agribusiness differs from the extractive sector in as far as women's opportunities for employment are concerned where they fill roles throughout the value chains. Case studies analysed by IUCN suggest that when companies invest in women workers, they increase innovation and lower turnover costs although women's labour participation leads to increased burden for women themselves due to the gendered nature of household responsibilities. Furthermore, similarly to extractive industry, labour conditions are often bad and "managerial and supervisory roles are typically held by men, who have the ability to exert power and control over lower-ranking employees, who are disproportionately women." (IUCN, 2020:115).

While the concept of **women's unpaid social and reproductive care** is attracting a lot of research, it is still largely invisible from the perspective of the mainstream economic assessments of viability of the extractive and agribusiness development model. Numerous studies point out to women's increased unpaid labour and care work as a result of longer time spend providing for family water and food security. As women are the ones mostly responsible for collecting water, cooking and engaging in family farming, they are

also most directly affected by any pollution arising from extractives or agribusiness projects (i.e. pesticides) and from increasing water scarcity (IUCN, 2020; Macdonald, 2018; Oxfam, 2017).

“Mining and extractives are huge consumers of water and yet the total effect on its consumption and pollution are rarely captured by environmental assessments. In Africa the increasing draughts demonstrate that we are at the tipping point of water availability. Will states be starving populations out of water in order to keep running mining companies?” Samantha Hargreaves, Director WOMIN

WOMIN's analysis of unpaid care goes further by making connections between erosion of state provided health and care services, mining related illnesses such as lung disease arising from asbestos and HIV AIDS and reliance on women's (and children's) provision of home care and caring of the sick. In many instances documented in South Africa and Tanzania, many women caregivers provide care instead of earning income through wage employment or investing in subsistence agriculture and their foregone income is an additional financial strain adding to the cost of caring for sick family members (WOMIN, 2013a).

Sadly, there is little if any systematic gender disaggregated research on the economic costs of the impacts of water and soil pollution and the loss of subsistence crops in terms of the deterioration of women's and men's health and productivity. There is some emerging evidence of how women's loss of access to subsistence crops leads to deterioration of family's nutritional status.¹² Engendering macroeconomic analysis with such data could shift states' views in terms of the long term costs on human capital and the economy vis-à-vis short term profitability of many mining and large scale infrastructure projects.

C. Impacts on Physical and Psychological Well-being and Bodily Integrity.

Alongside the visible effects of pollution, loss of ancestral or community land due to displacement of communities that often accompanies large scale extractives and agribusiness projects, severe psychological impacts are also gaining light. For example, Trócaire's own study on the land and human

rights conflicts in Bajo Aguan region of Honduras and the Polochic Valley in Guatemala documents that “Throughout the interviews, the women referred frequently to the trauma of the multiple evictions experienced.” (Trócaire, 2016:8) Even where there are no evictions, the arrival of large numbers of workers foreign in the community, the “militarization” of mining operations due to the presence of armed security forces and rising community conflict produces a number of psychological impacts including anxiety and depression.¹³ Living in the state of fear, whether it is fear of physical violence or fear of repression on the loved ones, has been cited in numerous interviews as the main hidden psychological impact on women and engaged in defending indigenous land and water rights. Due to the widespread existence of sexual and gender-based violence, women's experience of the state of fear and anxiety is much higher than that of the men (IUCN, 2020).

Different aspects of sex work, prostitution and gender-based violence linked to the mining and extractives have been investigated by researchers and academics. It is clear that the large influx of mostly single, migrant workers associated with these industries creates a huge demand for prostitution while the “militarization” due to presence of security personnel often increases conflict and tension within communities which in turn is often accompanied by greater incidence of gender based violence.

The vast IUCN study documents and links various forms of gender-based violence with both the extractives and the agribusiness investments. Extractives and mining culture of “hyper masculinity” and militarization due to presence of armed guards, especially in the indigenous lands, can result in creation of culture of fear, human rights violations, torture as well as violence against women, including rape. There are documented incidents of gang rapes by security guards in Papua New Guinea, Tanzania and Guatemala among others while minors are particularly vulnerable to forced prostitution and sex trafficking (IUCN, 2020). Recent studies of agribusiness in palm oil, rubber, coffee, tea, flowers, tropical fruit and sugar cane plantations by World Rainforest Movement have also exposed GBV and other vulnerabilities of poor female agricultural workers without formal contracts:

12. See Trócaire (2016) in discussing land conflicts and loss of land by indigenous groups in Bajo Aguan, Honduras and general understanding of food security challenges of smallholder farmers underpinning large scale land acquisitions by ActionAid (2014), Doss et al. (2014) and Oxfam (2017).

13. See the detailed description of psychological impacts on the communities affected by the Escobal mine in Santa Rosa and San Rafael in Guatemala in the study commissioned by Oxfam: <https://desigualdadextractivismoydesarrollo.com/2019/03/04/presentacion-nacional-estudio-de-caso/>

“Rape, physical and psychological abuse, harassment, persecution, work in exchange of sex, beatings, violated pregnancies, the presence of armed guards in and around their homes, lower wages and longer work days, unpaid work, continuous use of toxic products without protection, deplorable working conditions, impacts on their reproductive and sexual health, the inability to make decisions on issues related to land, loss of access to the land, deprivation of their livelihoods and sustenance (...) are just some of the termed “differentiated” impacts (...).” (IUCN, 2020:111)

Experiences of GBV, whether domestic or external, are particularly hard to document due to the associated feeling of shame, psychological trauma, coping mechanisms, cultural barriers, power dynamics and fear of community ostracization. In highly patriarchal cultures, whether in Africa or in Central America, many women fear that exposure can lead to them being blamed and losing status within their communities.

“Violence within families and sexual violence as a result of increased conflict in communities is a largely hidden impact of extractives because women are ashamed to talk about this. WomIn has documented it in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe but due to shame and trauma it is a very challenging, very slow process that takes a lot of time, commitment and a lot of trust from the women. There’s also a clear need of more education on trauma support.” Samantha Hargreaves, Director WOMIN.

3. Gendered impacts of large-scale hydropower projects.

Large scale hydropower projects and building of dams have profound and often irreversible impacts on entire ecosystems and result in major changes in access to natural resources for millions of effected people worldwide. The particular characteristics of the hydropower industry combined with the scale of most hydropower projects necessitate its separate treatment apart from the extractives and agribusiness. The hydropower construction industry is characterized by temporary influx of primarily male workers including foreign male workers and by large scale displacements of project affected communities. The workers leave

once the dam is completed which can take several years. Already back in 2014, International Rivers estimated that dams have displaced 80 million people and negatively impacted about 500 million people living downstream.¹⁴ Dams are also responsible for major livelihood changes for fishing communities since they block migration of fish while dam building and other factors have resulted in the loss of 76 percent of freshwater species since 1970.¹⁵ Large dams’ contribution to climate change is similar to that of the aviation industry (about 4 percent) while in turn the climate crisis induced increasing occurrence of floods and draughts in combination with dams’ high maintenance costs makes them hazardous and expensive. “Due to planning errors, technical problems and corruption, dams experience average delays of 44 percent and cost overruns of 96 percent”¹⁶ turning them into some of the most expensive or indebting government investments. As many of the recent dam construction plans and ongoing projects in the developing countries have been pushed by Chinese companies, the accusation of debt trap diplomacy has resurfaced from Laos¹⁷ to Ecuador¹⁸. The scale of impact of such projects on a given low income country’s macroeconomic performance alone will have major gender ramifications likely resulting in leaving little if any financial resources for budgetary allocations to health and education.

Oxfam has long argued that hydropower projects that do not incorporate carefully designed and implemented gender assessment plans exacerbate existing gender inequalities and biases and have negative impact on women’s position within the home and community. Women’s livelihoods are negatively affected by the often traumatic displacement and loss of community identity in addition to general impoverishment and negative health impacts (Simon, 2013).

14. See Peter Bosshard “10 Things You Should Know about Dams.” Published in 2014 at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dams-environmental-issues_b_5399264

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-11-07/troubles-mekong>

18. Nicholas Casey and Clifford Krauss. “It Doesn’t Matter if Ecuador Can Afford This Dam. China Still Gets Paid.” *The New York Times*. December 24, 2018.

“It’s very rare to see inclusive consultation or compensation processes with fair and effective gender outcomes in large hydropower deals. Normally it is forgotten, or tokenistic. The hydropower industry still lags behind even the extractives industry in terms of trying to understand or alleviate its gendered impacts. Project after project women lose out in terms of negative impacts on their livelihoods and access to resources, and rarely do we see meaningfully response to their interests and rights.” Michael Simon, International Rivers

The recent IUCN study on *Gender Based Violence and Environment* documents the link between influx of male workers associated with large scale infrastructure projects such as dams and rise in prostitution and GBV. For example, the construction of the A Luoi Hydropower Plant and Srepok Dam in Vietnam have forced displacement of many communities and destruction of their traditional economy. The subsequent social re-organization has created household tensions around debt management, rise in men’s alcohol consumption and domestic violence (IUCN, 2020: 107). In Uganda, the construction of the Karuma Hydropower Dam has established a typical dam construction landscape of male workers from all over Uganda and from China creating massive demand for sex workers often made up of vulnerable women.¹⁹ In addition to the risks of fast spread of HIV AIDS, the general lack of reproductive health care has led to the rise of a new phenomenon of fatherless children of half foreign/Chinese identity left to care by the women in the community once the dam workers have left the construction site²⁰. The narrative of the influx of male workers in the dam construction is somewhat similar in its effects to extractive industries but it is more time bound as the workers leave once the dam is completed.

Oxfam Australia and some development finance institutions have been trying to mitigate the negative impacts of large dam construction projects through development and advocacy for the inclusion of gender impact assessments in evaluating financing decisions. Properly carried out Gender Impact Assessments could modify, postpone or even stop a project because of their findings and should be seen as risk management tool. “When used to its fullest potential,

(such) assessment can help a project contribute to a transformative agenda for affected communities which will inform more sustainable outcomes.” (Simon, 2013:11)

Recently there has been an intensification of social movements’ resistance to planned dams and in response growing prosecution and violence against Environmental Human Rights Defenders and against Women Human Rights Defenders in particular. The killing of Berta Cáceres, a year after winning the prestigious Goldman Prize for leading a campaign against the Agua Zarca dam on the Gualcarque river considered sacred by the indigenous Lenca community, has received vast international media attention²¹. Her death is sadly symptomatic of the increasing violence and criminalization of human rights defenders in Central America and globally. In the case of Cáceres, the court ruled that the executives of the Agua Zarca hydropower dam company Desa had ordered Cáceres’ killing because of long delays and financial losses as a result of the protests she led but the process of bringing all responsible to justice continues while the plans for the dam on Gualcarque have not been completely and officially abandoned (Global Witness, 2019).

Women’s resistance to large hydropower projects has also emerged in the form of a campaign against the planned construction of the Inga Dam in the Democratic Republic of Congo including electricity transmitters waiting to be built across the continent all the way down to South Africa. WOMIN and International Rivers have teamed up in campaigning South African government to withdraw support for this project²². In 2018 GAGGA has launched a campaign “We women are water” aimed to build awareness and make visible the role of women in the sustainable management of water in Latin America and to empower women water defenders.

Despite specific characteristics of the hydropower industries, the women’s experience of the impacts on their voice and agency and economic well-being is similar to that of the extractive and agribusiness industries. Women are rarely consulted and yet bear the brunt of the weight from the loss of access to water and related natural resources while their vulnerability to GBV increases dramatically in the context of the large-scale infrastructure project and community displacement. Notwithstanding, women begin to organize in response to dam construction and

19. The Observer. “Prostitution, heartbreak and disease at Karuma dam.” November 24, 2017.

20. <https://nairobineews.nation.co.ke/life/ugandan-women-stranded-with-babies-fathered-by-chinese-workers>

21. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/02/bertha-caceres-death-murder-ex-honduran-military-intelligence-officer-arrested>

22. <https://womin.org.za/our-work/campaigns/stop-inga-project.html>

in protection of water in similar ways as in response to the large-scale land based investments discussed in the following chapter.

“We are not just a few drops. We are an immense river demanding freedom.”²³ We Women Are Water, GAGGA Latin American Campaign

4. Responses to large scale land based investments

Bearing in mind the impacts women face, this section looks at their responses: what do we know about how women perceive the investments, what strategies have they adopted to cope, adapt and/or resist the new reality and what roles they play in movements and organisations. We also look at responses of civil society in support of their claims and efforts. While the speed and spread with which the large-scale land based investments have manifested over the past years has brought significant new challenges to women and communities, the pressures and struggles around land and natural resources are not new. Neither is the role of women within these struggles or the consequences they face as a result.

“Long before the term environmental human rights defenders was coined, women’s grassroots organisations have been defending and protecting the environment and natural resources. From historically iconic movements to the most recent movement against extractives and large-scale plantations worldwide, it has been demonstrated that women who defend their land and resources have suffered varying forms of violence including gender-based violence – from domestic violence to psychological, cyber, political and community-based violence.” (IUCN, 2020:163)

A. Responses of Women

The study finds that perceptions and descriptions of the responses by the affected women themselves are under-represented in most of the literature. This could stem from the way findings are represented, from how the research is set up (i.e. gender blind), as well as from constraints researchers face in hearing from the women themselves. In fact, Daley and Pallas (2014) find some real obstacles for women’s inclusion

23. Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action. <https://gaggaalliance.org/resources/water-management-and-agro-commodities/we-women-are-water/>

in research, such as for example the need for chief’s permission in Eastern Africa. The fact that women face barriers to their participation in consultation processes also means their views and issues are often missing in Environmental Impacts Assessments and other project documents²⁴. Notwithstanding, within the existing literature on impacts, particularly on specific cases, we can find examples of how women cope and respond. Much relevant literature is also the result of women’s work, such as women’s participatory action research and publication of feminist policy critiques. When looking at community organising and best practices, women play a clear role in setting up, leading or sustaining movements despite or because of the impacts they face themselves. This is beginning to be captured in the emerging literature on the Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders (WEHRD).

Women’s coping and adaptation strategies

Loss of access to natural resources has dramatic impacts on women’s livelihoods: from skipping meals²⁵ to walking further for water or firewood and generally spending more time on unpaid care work. Whilst this means there is less time for paid labour, women are often creative in finding new opportunities for income generation. However, in looking for new income generation opportunities they face tough choices and trade-offs due to the pressures of domestic work and childcare (CIFOR, 2017). Women can also end up engaging in more risky and precarious work, such as artisanal mining or sex work (DEGI, 2015; WOMIN, 2013b) or resort to strategies such as sextortion (Mathot, 2019) and migration²⁶, with young women being particularly vulnerable.

Women’s defending their resource rights in the face of investments

Women play major roles in defending resource rights, enacting policy changes and strengthening human rights frameworks across the globe, whilst

24. Oxfam for example finds that in the case of Tullow Oil in Turkana, Kenya, women’s voices were very little represented in the FPIC process, particularly those from smaller, remote pastoralist villages. <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/research-publications/testing-community-consent/>

25. Women are often particularly hit by food insecurity. A study in Ethiopia found *“Because women in the community generally take responsibility for providing food for their households, women “often eat less, or skip meals altogether” when faced with food shortages. This results in women being most affected by malnutrition, which contributes to a host of problems, such as complications during childbirth.”* <https://rightsandresources.org/en/blog/effects-large-scale-land-acquisitions-women/#.XnyvTErSLb0>

26. Whilst systematic research on migratory patterns in the face of land investments is still limited, various case studies show not only (young) men but also young women opting for migration as a response strategy. E.g. in Mali <https://www.ied.org/climate-change-conflict-migration-land-grabs-35-years-village-life-mali>.

challenging gender norms in household, community, society and governance. These same traditional gender norms form important barriers for women's political participation. Even when defending rights of others, women are defying cultural norms and roles by speaking out. The uncertainties, double workload and weakening of social structures that we see as a result of large-scale investments also affect the capacities of women to organise and resist. Furthermore, Wisborg (2014) argues that achieving gender equity in land deals is so challenging precisely because those who are most discriminated also have the least power to defend themselves. These barriers are often higher for indigenous women who face intersecting discrimination building on a long history of (institutionalized) marginalisation based on race, ethnicity and gender (JASS, 2014). *"They are battling to be treated as equals within their community while also defending their customary land rights to protect their communities and identities"* (Land Rights Now, 2016:34).

As women are not expected to speak out in many societies, they face stigmatization, criminalization and even violence when they do. *"Gender-based discrimination in social, cultural, legal, economic and institutional frameworks affects the ability of women and girls to equally and safely participate and lead in environment-related activism and organisational work."* (IUCN, 2020:XV) Despite this, women are actively responding and resisting threats to their rights and women's involvement in activism in the defence of the environment is on the rise globally.



Quelvin Jimenez Villalta (CODIDENA's Lawyer) and Aleisar Arana (Legal representative of the Xinka Parliament), accompanying the Xinka Parliament at the Public Hearing on the Supreme Court of Justice, Guatemala.

From a study commissioned by Trócaire (2016) on women's responses to the land struggle in Honduras and Guatemala it is clear why: most women felt they had no other choice but to take action. In this case, women were the ones refusing to leave, acting as a first line of defence and often stayed behind when the men fled or left to find other opportunities, and how they act as human rights observers, set up women's councils, march and pressure the government. Whilst indigenous women are particularly dependent on collective rights of their community, they also voiced gender specific demands. *"The Q'eqchi women called on municipal and national authorities to respect and fulfil their rights as women; to respect and care for Mother Earth; and for local and national authorities to facilitate the right of women to own land."* (Trócaire, 2016: 27).

Response strategies of women: from participation to collective action

The strategies women embrace and their effectiveness depend on a range of factors including specific context and dynamics of the land deal (Doss et al, 2014). According to DEGI (2015:28) *"Power relations in society determine strategies for building women's agency and active citizenship"* and their capacity to act collectively depends not only on shared interests and values but also on a common understanding of the problem and possible solutions. The examples of women organising to stand up for their rights and the rights of their communities are many. In Peru, the role of women as 'guardians of nature' as anti-mining activists and the great personal sacrifices they make is well documented. In the USA, the resistance of "Women Eco Warriors" to shale energy shows women are also driven by motherhood linked concerns (Macdonald, 2018). In Zimbabwe, associations of Women in Mining set up in response to the investments - whilst often lacking resources and facing institutional challenges - provide a platform for women to raise their issues, train women as community monitors and do outreach (DEGI, 2015). In South-Africa, WOMIN promotes women-led participatory action research and calls for recognition and action on unpaid care work and GBV. Women of the association for Mining Affected Communities in Action (MACUA) set up their own women-only chapter to make sure they had the space to discuss and prepare before acting as one community²⁷. African feminists have developed a feminist critique to Africa's Mining Vision requesting greater participation and reflection of their priorities (Waliani, 2015). We have also seen an increasing amount of women-led campaigns going global over

27. https://www.osf.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/sar-5.3_online.pdf
WAMUA is the women chapter of WAKUA in South-Africa.

the past few years. Women2Kilimanjaro, for example, was a major successful campaign of African women organising from local to global and marching across the continent to call on governments to put their commitments on women's land rights into practice²⁸. Outside support is often a crucial factor in kickstarting or sustaining women's grassroots responses.

A study of The Huairou Commission and UNDP (2014:8) finds that grassroots women's groups aiming to improve access to justice in relation to land and property rights used a range of strategies (see graph) to help women educate members of their communities, assist with land claims, and work with local leaders to bring about change in relation to land disputes. Most women opted for customary and informal justice systems over formal and statutory systems.



Despite facing a lot of resistance, women engaging in defending their land and resource rights often report how much they have learned from the process and how it helped them build confidence. ActionAid (2013) finds that land can be an opportunity for women to empower, organise and provide a platform for citizenship. Social capital, knowledge and confidence are crucial in that. As one woman in the Trócaire study reported "Since I started volunteering [with the OPDHA] I have learned to value myself as a woman" (Trócaire, 2016:11). Organizing generated feeling of solidarity and strength and standing together helps to mitigate the feeling of fear.

28. Combining local organizing, development of charters and mass caravans across the continent, culminating with women climbing the Kilimanjaro, the campaign has had significant media coverage and got a seat at relevant government level discussions including at the African Union and the UN. <https://actionaid.org/publications/2017/charter-demands-actualizing-womens-land-rights-africa>

Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders

"The work of women human rights defenders can be seen as challenging social norms and gender roles in society, which can lead to hostility by the general population and the authorities. These defenders face the added layers of institutionalised sexism when trying to access justice." (Trócaire, 2019:24)

With the ongoing rise in reported global murders of Human Rights Defenders (Global Witness, 2019) the risks for women human rights defenders have also grown exponentially. While women's movements and women human rights defenders became stronger and more outspoken in the face of natural resource pressures, the response is ever more violent. This is most visible in contexts that are historically characterised by high rates of violence and oppression and where governments fail to protect or can even be the actors responsible for perpetuation of violence. Latin-America has persistently shocking rates of violence and killing of the human and environmental rights defenders (Global Witness, 2019). There is a general lack of gender differentiated data in the reporting on violence, but it is well established that WEHRDs are facing distinct risks (IUCN, 2020).

There are other ways in which the violence and fear can manifest. Trócaire research (2016) shows women facing violence and (death) threats to themselves as well as their families. They find police working against them and are limited in their freedom of movement and work (e.g. due to pending arrest warrant). This in turn impacts on their access to education and health. They face psychological distress for their own safety as well as that of their families and especially children. There are many reports of sexual violence and stigmatization of WEHRD, both by outside actors and within their homes and communities, such as documented by JASS (2014; 2017) and IUCN (2020). These studies also report serious impacts on health, psychological well-being and livelihoods of entire communities and call for urgent and very specific action to support women based on careful attention to their needs and capacities, as well as women's empowerment interventions and tools (IUCN, 2020; JASS, 2017).

B. Civil Society Responses

With growing awareness on the scale of human rights violations and gendered impacts of large-scale land based investments, civil society support to women's responses seems to be a crucial factor determining potential of success. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) often build on longer term programming experience in natural resources, governance or women's empowerment and can play an important role in raising awareness on gendered dimensions while providing women with tools and resources to act (Gender Resource Facility, 2016). Strategies include research and documentation, community and women empowerment (awareness raising, building capacities and organization), supporting alternative livelihoods and women's economic empowerment, development of tools for communities to prepare, monitor or respond, (para-) legal support, strategic litigation, advocating and campaigning on behalf, with or by women and communities affected and engaging in the development of (gender sensitive or feminist) international frameworks and strengthening regulation of investments²⁹. CSOs' initiatives on transparency and accountability such as Publish What You Pay have also acknowledged the importance of addressing gender and are currently assessing how to best address this³⁰. Increasingly CSOs are adopting specific strategies to support and protect WEHRD and addressing issues of shrinking civic space, ranging from emergency response protection programmes to supporting women to identify and address power imbalances more structurally (JASS, 2017). There are relevant lessons and best practices documented in literature that can help to further strengthen responses of CSOs and communities. The following best practices are often emphasised:

- Strengthening women's long-term tenure security³¹ not only increases protection from dispossession and exclusion in case of land investments but leads to improved confidence and income resulting in economic and political empowerment (Pallas and Daley, 2014; ActionAid, 2013; Oxfam, 2011).
- Supporting women's collective action and solidarity by using joint (power) analysis, organising, continuing human rights education and monitoring human rights mechanisms, laws and contexts (JASS, 2013; 2017).
- Building evidence and addressing issues together with women and men in the communities through participatory action research is considered particularly effective (Daley, 2020)
- Specifically supporting women's forums, groups and safe spaces but also engaging men and the wider community in order to address both individually held and collective norms and values that can undermine gender equality (Pallas and Daley, 2014; Delgado et al, 2016³²).
- The need for integrated approaches (e.g. integrating women's rights and gender equality considerations into environmental programming and vice versa) and building strategic alliances across issues (IUCN, 2020).
- Gender-sensitive tools and procedures are important but they carry the risk of oversimplification. Locally appropriate and specific approaches (Daley and Pallas, 2014), as well as thorough gender impact assessments based on gender differentiated data and attention to women's different needs, priorities, strengths, barriers and opportunities (Oxfam, 2017) are recommended.
- In terms of supporting and protecting WEHRDs, JASS (2017) emphasises the importance of analysing and addressing power and narratives, ensuring intersectional gender perspectives and supporting local organising and movements (including promotion of self-care and wellbeing). They find that investing in networks and leadership can help save lives.

29. An important example of this is the call for a feminist binding UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights <https://womenalliance.org/feminists-4-binding-treaty>

30. <https://www.pwyp.org/pwyp-resources/in-it-together-gender-report/>

31. Supporting collective and women's land rights and approaches can go hand in hand, similarly for informal, customary as well as statutory rights (Gender Resource Facility 2016).

32. This evaluation of ActionAid's women's rights programming with a power lense (individual/collective and visible/ invisible power) that more intentional work in 'the invisible' and 'collective' sphere (ie community norms and values) is needed, with women as both rights-holders and rights-builders.

BOX 1: GENDER, LAND AND INVESTMENT RELATED TOOLS AND GUIDELINES

- IISD and Oxfam (2017) *Enabling voices, demanding rights. A guide to gender sensitive community engagement in large scale land based investments in agriculture.*
 - Oxfam Australia (2017) *A guide to gender impact assessment for the extractive industries*
 - Oxfam (2017) *Training the trainer module for gender sensitive community engagement in large scale land based investment*
 - Oxfam (2013) *Balancing The Scales. Using gender impact assessment in hydropower development.*
 - Resource Equity *overview of guides on women's land tenure.*
 - ActionAid (2017) *Assessment Toolkit: Assessing gender-sensitive implementation and country-level monitoring of the Tenure Governance and Africa Land Policy Guidelines.*
 - Landesa *Responsible Investment in Property and Land Playbooks*
 - Rights and Resources: *Legislative Best Practices for Securing Women's Rights to Community Lands* (2018) and *Strengthening Indigenous and Rural Women's Rights to Govern Community Lands: Ten Factors Contributing to Successful Initiatives.*
 - JASS (2011) *Power framework for visible, hidden and invisible power analysis*
 - UN HABITAT/ Global Land Tool Network (2008) *Gendering Land Tools: Achieving Secure Tenure for Women and Men.*
 - Wang and Burris (1992) *Photovoice Community Research Tool*
 - WECF and Women 2030 (2018) *Gender Impact Assessment and Monitoring tool.*
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IV. ANALYSIS OF EXPERT INTERVIEWS

1. Gendered impacts of large scale land based investments

In order to complement and deepen the literature review of (hidden) gendered impacts of and responses to extractives and large-scale land based investments, 20 international experts were interviewed from a range of civil society organisations and academia (Annex 1). The interviews have also provided insight into how different individuals define “hidden impacts” and what they consider as research gaps. The interviews show a clear consensus that there is plenty of evidence that women are impacted differently and more negatively than men. Respondents generally refer to similar categories of impacts as identified in the literature review: political, environmental and economic (considered to be most visible), but also health, safety and bodily integrity (considered as less visible). In addition, there is strong emphasis on issues that are much less addressed in literature such as psychological impacts, power and social relations (between women and men, within communities, between communities), status, self-confidence, intersectionalities and working within different cultural settings. While there are strong geographical and sector differences, such as particular challenges for WEHRDs in Latin America, most findings presented below seem to cut across all regions and are relevant to different sectors.

A. Defining hidden impacts

The interviews demonstrate different perspectives on the extent to which specific impacts can be considered visible or hidden and how the latter is defined. Hidden issues are considered as those less visible, rarely documented, ignored or a cultural and social taboo. In general, respondents emphasise that it also much depends on who you ask and in what setting. The most important question here is what women themselves identify as key impacts of large-scale land based investments on their lives. As the literature review showed there is still a general lack of understanding of this in terms of the very voices of those directly impacted. The interviews give several reasons as to why that is, in particular the lack of impacted women's direct involvement in research and impact assessments and the fact that many women are socialized to think from a communal perspective, i.e. their household, children, community rather than identifying as an individual

woman or group facing different (intersectional) discriminations. The same socialization often holds for the wider community and influences the awareness and acceptance of women's differentiated impacts and experiences.

Despite growing awareness, it is said many industry and government actors driving the investments still have limited recognition and will to address gender impacts, which would require stronger efforts to uncover and analyse impacts along the value chain.

“Much of these impacts are hidden because there is seldom a cost-benefit analysis, before and after, from the perspective of women, and within that, looking at the most marginalised groups. This means important questions are never asked: To what extent are the investments locally relevant and beneficial in the first place? And what role do women have in that?” Danny Wijnhoud, ActionAid Netherlands

The lenses with which impacts are assessed also determine what becomes visible or not. Zephania Repollo (JASS) recommends a feminist, holistic and ecosystem approach to extractivism in order to bring out issues that affect women and women's bodies as part of their community and ecosystem. ***“It is important not only to look at women's resources (land, water, air) but also their relationship to nature and to each other, the social fabric that builds community. That is often overlooked and not well documented.”***

B. Impacts on Voice and Agency.

“If you look at any of the literature, including of NGOs, you tend to see a picture of men when talking about decision-making, but when talking about impacts, poverty etcetera, you see women and children. This says a lot about issues of participation.” Ikal Angelei, Friends of Lake Turkana

All respondents agree that most women affected by large scale investments are not in a position to take decisions over what happens with the land and resources, nor what compensation or alternative

measures can or should be taken. This issue is two-fold: many communities are not informed or consulted in the first place, or only in a very limited ways, for example through a local chief who is usually male. But even when there is some form of consultation, women are usually the last to find out, remain largely excluded from these processes or are not supposed to speak up because decision-making over land and resources is considered men's domain. Women's lack of participation in decision-making in turn has major consequences on all the other ways in which they are impacted: their access to resources, livelihoods, benefits sharing, health and any practical and strategic gender needs. Notably, some respondents point out that it is not only that the status quo affects women's participation in decision-making but that their voice and agency are also further reduced due to the nature of many of these investments and industries.

“The biggest ‘hidden’ impact I see is a shift in gender relations, of power away from women. These externalities are not taken into account. It is mainly because women are excluded from consultation processes, which exacerbates gender impacts – i.e. their strategic and practical gender needs are not taken into account in the plans. This results in an increasing inequality in terms of voice, agency and local influence with very long-lasting effects. Structural barriers for women to access these spaces are actually increased” Maria Ezpeleta, Oxfam

Ezpeleta also mentions challenges for rural women who often face limited access to decision-making processes due to long distances where the meetings take place. The fact that the industries under study are particularly male biased does not help.

“Mining could be an opportunity to increase gender equality, but often the opposite happens because it [the potential shifts in power relations] is not taken into account. In fact, even in matrilineal societies we see that when extractives come in the power is inverted, because they [governments and companies] are used to negotiating with men, they do not do a robust analysis of local governance systems, and society gets undermined by going in with a standard approach that focuses local engagement on men.” Maria Ezpeleta, Oxfam

Nevertheless, others point out that it can also work the other way around, with women building their collective voice in response to investments and consider it as one of few potential positive impacts.

“Sometimes the negative impacts of projects are an opportunity to come out of exclusion on political participation, because of the anger projects generate, new spaces for participation and voice open up. More women are present that would have otherwise been in background. It is an opportunity for communities to agitate and then for women to stand up. But if no one is holding their hand to see how they are differently affected, their specific issues are lost. So it depends on how civil society is supporting, either in advance or at the time the investor comes.” Catherine Gatundu, ActionAid International

C. Socio-economic and environmental impacts.

The lack of tenure security for women and their large dependence on communal and natural resources are important determinants for gendered impacts of large-scale land based investments. Within a context of growing pressure on natural resources and climate change one respondent refers to the *“feminisation of the climate crisis, in which these investments mean women are double affected.”* (Danny Wijnhoud, ActionAid Netherlands). Loss of access to and control over fertile land and clean water clearly came up as the most direct and visible impact, often resulting in food insecurity, livelihood challenges, increased time spent on unpaid care work and less opportunities and time for paid activities. Where there are paid labour opportunities, for example in agriculture, these are often on poor terms- *“doing dirty work in bad conditions”* (Barbara Codispoti, Oxfam Novib). The respondents emphasise how a lack of compensation and opportunities, combined with the economic and care costs, means most women end up worse off from an economic perspective. It also means having to combine double unpaid workload with finding an alternative and often precarious form of livelihood.

“If families are uprooted the impacts are very much felt by women. Men are often more mobile than women, also due to reproductive labour, making them more tied to the place they are in. Women have less access to communal and natural resources, whilst they tend to rely on them most. Water itself is one of the ways all three sectors (i.e. extractives, hydropower and agribusiness) have an impact on women, because of impacts on reproductive labour, domestic chores overwhelmingly done by women.” Duncan Pruett, Oxfam



Heinda Tin Mine, Dawei, Myanmar. (Photo Garry Walsh)

In fact, out-migration of men comes up as a key alternative livelihood strategy with gendered implications as women who stay behind end up taking different roles while often not being recognized as heads of household.³³ Women also face increased care burden when they have to take care of sick family members due to pollution or injuries from hazardous working conditions which some refer to as “*women subsidizing the industry with their unpaid work*” (Samantha Hargreaves, WOMIN). Several respondents refer to the increase in (men’s) use of narcotics and alcohol as a hidden issue and an additional women’s burden with serious economic, community cohesion and health costs implications. The wider economic and social transformation affecting women’s and communities livelihoods’ insecurity as a result of environmental destruction and dispossession of natural resources is likely to have further long term, multigenerational implications that still need to be better understood.

D. Impacts on Physical and Psychological Wellbeing and Bodily Integrity.

The impact of large-scale land based investments on women’s health and bodily integrity is one of the more recently recognized areas. Loss of traditional livelihoods, social fabric and cohesion in combination with economic uncertainty due to relocation and migration carries heavy psychological pressures.

33. For example in the case of the Heinda tin mine in Myanmar where respondents report many men migrated to Thailand.

“The burden of care that women face could lead to psychological issues. The expectation from society that they take care of anybody, and the psychological impacts that has in these kind of situations of distress, might not be documented or brought out. This is still often anecdotal evidence so more hidden, it is an issue that needs further study.” Catherine Gatundu, ActionAid International

In addition, the effect of mental distress as a result of general state of permanent fear of violence should not be underestimated. For example, Breaking the Silence in Guatemala notes that main difference between having the Escobal mine in operation and not in operation is that of women experiencing less fear of violence, also sexual violence, from the militarized mine security personnel. Respondents also mention that increased occurrence of sex work, sextortion and sexual violence also leads to particular psychological and physical impacts on women that remain under documented and under addressed.

“The issue of sextortion needs much more attention. Victims don’t talk about it. It is a taboo. It is also hidden because people often think it is normal that women have to offer sexual services in exchange for access to land and mining sites. Legally it is difficult to combat sextortion as it often falls between the cracks; neither human rights nor corruption frameworks explicitly address it. Also, it is not always considered as violence, especially in cases of ‘consent’. But both the physical and the psychological impacts on women in precarious situations are huge. And this in turn also has hidden impacts on society more widely – such as trust between people and trust in government institutions - and hampers economic development, peace and stability.” Nicole Mathot, Independent Expert / CNV

2. Responses to large scale land based investments

A. Responses of women.

How women respond to large-scale land based investments is dependent on many factors including existing gender inequalities and the way they are exacerbated by the investment. They might have even less time, social network or confidence to find coping strategies or stand up for their rights due to the impacts described above. At the same time, respondents find women being particularly motivated

to support their family and community and to find solutions to address negative impacts due to their urgency. Yet, much depends on their awareness, access to information and socialization.

“When you ask women, often the first thing they will list is the impact on children’s education and food availability for the family. This is problematic because it is still adding to their burden, it is not about them. They are rarely able to look at how it affects them first. This is how they have been socialised. The result is that their issues are not addressed. It is important to ask them very specifically: how does it affect you personally, as a woman. And to raise awareness on their rights.”

Catherine Gatundu, ActionAid International

In fact, several respondents refer to the fact that gender socialization and gender-blind questionnaires may be to blame for similar answers between women and men. The way in which projects are ‘sold’ as saving the economy and providing jobs are also said to influence the perspectives and make women – and the community more widely – more reluctant to voice criticism.

Coping strategies found in the literature were largely confirmed through the interviews with particular mention of the more dangerous coping strategies such as sex work and sextortion in order to gain access to economic and natural resources, services and opportunities. Experts see clear differences in how different women can cope and respond, based on literacy and knowledge, skills, marital status and age. Some refer to the fact that young women are more likely to migrate to the city or get involved in sexual exploitation. There are also differences in power dynamics and capabilities within communities.

“Women bear most of the impacts, but amongst them there are differences. What is always a factor is the access to resources. Even among indigenous peoples there are some who have more access to power and economic resources, which helps them find a way out even in times of displacement. But those that have nothing need to start from the beginning with nothing.” Zephania Repollo, JASS

As we have also seen in the literature, in many cultural contexts women are not supposed to speak out or stand up and they face serious repercussions for doing so. Respondents refer to stigmatization, silencing,

intimidation and violence that women can face even from within the household, family or clan to the wider community and society. This is compounded in the environment of militarisation and criminalisation of human rights defenders.

“Women human rights defenders are being attacked and are facing the added burden of social harassment. It is a common practice to label women defenders as ignorant, bad mothers, or even witches by those whose vested interests are offended. When you are an organizer and a human rights defender you are often outside the house due to the nature of the work. Traditional culture would dictate that you are neglecting the home, the children and the domestic responsibilities. This narrative will be used against you to discredit and destroy you. You are harassed and insulted as a failure for neglecting your responsibilities as a woman.” Zephania Repollo, JASS

The barriers that women generally face also define the limited space they have as women human rights defenders, including their protection measures. Relocating or going into hiding is often not that easy for women as they have children and a family to care for.

B. Civil society responses

Most experts emphasise the importance of civil society’s presence supporting women and their communities in responding to large scale investments and natural resource pressures more widely. In the past 15 years many organisations have expanded their work on women’s land rights generating many compelling examples of best practice. Simultaneously, respondents acknowledge that there is still a considerable need for strengthening attention and effective approaches to gender and women’s rights in the natural resources sector with opportunities to build on experience from other areas of work such as women’s leadership and political empowerment programmes. In line with the findings from the literature review, respondents mention the importance of a long-term approach to structural transformation, including strengthening tenure security, alternative livelihoods and other areas of political and economic empowerment. They stress the importance of working with the affected communities before investors arrive and after they pull out which is particularly challenging in the current funding climate. A structural approach also means raising broad awareness on women’s rights and the need to address root causes of discrimination

and power dynamics within the community as well as beyond (e.g. the often intertwined power of government and business). Changing norms and values is a long-term process that requires bringing out the issues in a way that people can engage with and relate to them. Bottom-up approaches to making the issues visible, including gender assessments and training, are considered important.

“We find it most effective to encourage partners and communities they work with to do their own gender analysis in their own way. To use methodologies to stimulate conversations about gender at community level. We have good experiences with Photovoice, where women and men are given cameras and training and given the assignment to take pictures, for instance, on the subject of land and agriculture, and asked then to discuss differences in what women take pictures of vis a vis men. They often come up with the same conclusions, but it is more empowering and effective.” Duncan Pruett, Oxfam

Uncovering more sensitive issues requires careful approaches combined with psychological support. WOMIN research, for example, aims to show how GBV is systematically used against women.

“It is very challenging, very slow process through which stories come out and there’s a lot of trauma. Psychological support offered is not always attentive to women’s need of time to work through their trauma. There’s still a lot of education needed on trauma support. Women are beginning to speak more but how we capture their stories and what we do with them matters and requires responsibility and commitment.” Samantha Hargreaves, WOMIN

The importance of organising is considered key. Having both mixed and women-only spaces and networks helps women to learn, build confidence, participate, act, persevere and protect themselves. Providing a safe space to articulate the issues and find common ground, while being aware of differences (e.g. between age groups), also helps strengthen women’s resilience and protection.

“Creating a system of having others help so they don’t take all the burden on their shoulders. It is important to create connections to other communities to enable them to be stronger in their own community. Less isolation of brave women makes them feel less threatened.” Barbara Codispoti, Oxfam Novib

Working with and supporting women’s rights organizations is considered particularly important. *“Women’s rights promotion has historically been most successful when led by women’s rights organisations themselves, partnering with them and creating spaces for them to play leadership roles is therefore key”* (Maria Ezpeleta, Oxfam). At the same time, several respondents emphasise that it should go beyond a women’s focus by having a layered approach looking at issues of gender, diversity and intersectionality. This includes the need to avoid over-generalization of seeing women as a single group and losing sight of the specific issues facing them due to their ethnicity, marital status (e.g. widows) or age. One respondent raised the importance of being aware of class issues when inviting rural women into ‘fancy’ spaces and expecting them to share their views. *“Ensure spaces that work for the women we are engaging, that enable them to meaningfully participate and amplify their voices.”* (Ikal Angelei, Friends of Lake Turkana). Others highlight the need to engage men and build networks of champions in overcoming cultural resistance and encourage transformation of gender prejudice. *“Gender is not just about women, it is a two-way thing that affects roles designated for both men and women. So you need to work with both women and men.”* (Denis Kioko, Trócaire Kenya). Broadening the alliances also requires changing the narratives on what it means to address gender inequality.

“We need to change that perspective that this work on inequalities is super sophisticated; it is actually the starting point. In fact, the development system itself needs to be questioned, the way it is conceived that it is not easy; gender justice at the core and not as add-on. The arguments for this are simple: women make up for more than half of the world and there is plenty of evidence that gender justice helps the whole of society.” Barbara Codispoti, Oxfam Novib

This is not only an external matter. Transformations within civil society organisations are considered key. One respondent refers to the challenges in engaging men from within CSOs in gender discussion, with one partner recently asking “could you explain to me why this would be important to men?”.

In general, it is felt many organisations have become less gender blind, but only very few can be considered gender transformational. More in depth work is needed to move from select gender strategies to really change mindsets and cultures, whilst making women and gender central to programming and adopting clear change indicators. Oxfam has good experiences with a gender action learning method, including a strong focus on personal transformation to address attitudes and norms.

“The personal is political, what happens at the household level dictates politics. All areas need change: individual consciousness, legal policies and structures, social norms, and women’s access to resources, their practical and strategic needs.”

Maria Ezpeleta, Oxfam America



Ni Ni Htwe (left), 37, lives in Heinda village, right next to a polluting tin mine. She is active on her village’s mining monitoring group, which gets access to observe the company’s mine, and is seeking compensation for damages with the support of lawyer Aye Mon Thu from Dawei Probono Lawyer Network. (Photo Garry Walsh)

V. CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Both literature and experts' interviews building on research and practice confirm **that women face disproportionately negative impacts as a result of large-scale land based investments, including extractives, hydroelectric and agribusiness industries.** Due to existing social and cultural norms and neglect of their practical and strategic gender needs, women generally have less opportunities to benefit and experience greater fallout than men in terms of socio-economic, environmental, health and safety impacts. As a cumulative result, gender inequalities are often exacerbated and the power gap between men and women is likely to increase.

Initially, **women loose out by being traditionally or institutionally bypassed in consultation processes or by relying on the limited information provided to them through male community representatives or male heads of households.** This does not only lead to women often being more negatively impacted economically through loosing access to land and other natural resources, but also lacking voice in determination of any compensation or in addressing practical concerns for the community such as access to water. As a result, **women tend to experience increase in their social and reproductive unpaid care work while being directly affected by any environmental fallout such as, for example, pollution of water or soil.** Nevertheless, it is important to underline that there are large differences in the impacts women face depending on their position in the household, community and society. Intersections of gender with ethnicity, age, literacy, geography, marital status, health, resources and connections are particularly relevant but there is still limited data on this. While the concept of **women's unpaid social and reproductive care is recently attracting more research, it is still largely invisible from the perspective of mainstream economic assessments of viability of the large-scale extractive and agribusiness development model.** There is a notable lack of adequate, gender-differentiated social and environmental impact studies of investments, including a cost benefit analysis of the many ways in which women's lives risk being affected.

One of the key findings of this study is the general lack of women's own perspectives and voices in the existing literature despite a few good initiatives³⁴. The perceptions and descriptions of the responses by the affected women themselves are under-represented in most of the reviewed and available literature. This could stem from the way findings are represented, from how the research is set up (i.e. gender blind, not participatory), as well as from constraints researchers face in hearing from the women themselves. The interviewees have noted that **the way many women are socialised to focus on the household and community** needs means they are often not aware of how they are personally affected and don't express their needs and opinions unless explicitly supported to do so. This shows the importance of **invisible power**, the believes and norms we all hold.

In terms of **hidden impacts**, this study has found that **psychological impacts, including long lasting impacts of GBV**, remain most hidden and least addressed. **Social, gender and power relations** are another area largely under-analyzed in terms of their (hidden) impacts, which could be a result of the lack of a feminist and ecosystem approaches, including to understanding more hidden and invisible forms of power. **The impacts on women's voice and agency are mixed** as on one hand women loose out in terms of participation in the critical consultation processes and related (formal and informal) decision making but on the other hand women's response to the livelihoods' threats actually necessities their increased political activism. In most cases it is likely that women's voice and agency deteriorates under gender blind and male biased approaches, but there are also opportunities for women's increased political activism which is often supported by other women, women's networks or civil society organizations. The study has confirmed that the more sensitive issues around **sexual and gender based violence against women, sex work and women's specific health impacts** are still often overlooked and underrepresented despite emergence of important new documentation (e.g. IUCN, 2020).

34. The work of WOLTS, WOMIN and JASS are notable exceptions as they are largely informed by participatory approaches directly involving women and affected communities in research, analysis and documentation.

GBV both adds to and reinforces women's political and economic marginalization. Experiences of GBV, whether domestic or external, are particularly hard to document due to the associated feeling of shame, psychological trauma, coping mechanisms, cultural barriers, power dynamics and fear of community ostracization. There is an emerging sense of urgency in gaining improved understanding and visibility of these sensitive issues in order to address them. All these impacts are considered **long term and even inter-generational**, going hand in hand with **wider economic and social transformations that are still largely unknown**. How different groups of women (e.g. indigenous, more or less educated, young or old) are affected also often remains hidden, partly due to over-generalization of women as a single group.

Despite of or in reaction to the increasing pressures on their livelihoods, **women play major roles in defending resource rights, enacting policy changes and strengthening human rights frameworks across the globe**. From community empowerment and organising to calling for greater political participation and recognition of women's rights, from setting precedents for non-violent protests to more recently building a so-called 'ecofeminist movement'. All such engagements require reshaping of traditional views on gender roles and can come at great personal cost as women continue to face discrimination, threats, violence and criminalization. While women adapt context and case specific strategies, the focus on awareness building around their rights and reliance on support networks are key to their resilience and sense of protection.

Ways forward

The study shows a **clear need to address gendered impacts of large-scale land based investments** in urgent and explicit manner and **a key role for CSOs in supporting women and communities in rising their own voices**. Building on existing research, best practices and tools developed by a growing number of organisations, there are important opportunities to learn from each other and develop more joint **women-led, gender transformative approaches**.

This starts with placing women and gender as central in both analysis and strategy. In terms of **research and analysis**, this includes adopting (women-led) participatory action research approaches, as well as pushing for strong and gender differentiated data and impact assessments based on women's active and meaningful participation. It also means moving

beyond a single, illustrative woman featured cases study by enriching such approach with an analysis of what women's strategic and practical needs actually are. In documenting experiences, we need to pay **more attention to the hidden, more sensitive and 'non-material' issues such as psychological pressures, power dynamics as well as risks of and experiences of gender-based violence**. Adopting feminist human rights approaches, using tools for power and gender economic analysis, whilst taking into account how different women are affected differently can add a lot of meaning to this process.

CSOs have a particularly important role in **supporting women's safe spaces and in advocating** for the best strategies to eliminate discrimination and violence against women. Civil society needs to embrace structural approaches to gender justice **by exposing hidden power relations** and root causes of inequality while supporting women to organise themselves and their communities. In doing this, CSO's face the increasing burden of addressing the dramatic rise in violence against WEHRDs which need urgent practical and advocacy support. It is important to remember that all the work done in **exposing GBV and structural discrimination** also helps WEHRD in their ability to continue to rise their voices and define development solutions for their communities and countries. As summarized by Professor Balakrishana: ***"I don't think you can train away patriarchy. You have to first expose and then deal with its structural issues and causes"***.

For civil society, possibly the greatest challenge lies not in generating more research but in finding more effective ways in assuring that the already existing knowledge about the negative gendered impacts is translated into narratives, strategies, policies and decisions that can mitigate and reverse them. As Elizabeth Daley, a researcher long involved in the issue of gender and land rights has put it: ***"Perhaps the real gap is finding a way to disseminate the research better so that governments and companies understand our meaning when we talk about needed changes in governance processes and structures."***

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ANNEX 1. LIST OF INTERVIEWED EXPERTS

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

1. **Ikal Angelei**, Founder and Programme Director, Friends of Lake Turkana, Kenya.
2. **Patricia Ardon**, Co-Director Mesoamerica, JASS, Guatemala.
3. **Radhika Balakrishnan**, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University, USA.
4. **Carmen Clave**, Co-Director Mesoamerica, JASS, Mexico.
5. **Barbara Codisotti**, Global Land Programme Lead, Oxfam Novib, Netherlands.
6. **Elizabeth Daley**, Women's Land Rights Expert, Team Leader WOLTS Project, Australia.
7. **Maria Ezpeleta**, Senior Gender Extractives Advisor, Oxfam America.
8. **Catherine Gatundu**, International Policy Manager Land and Livelihoods, ActionAid International, Kenya.
9. **Samantha Hargreaves**, Director WOMIN, South Africa.
10. **Sophie Kwizera**, Policy Advisor Natural Resources and Just Transition, ActionAid, Netherlands.
11. **Arlen de Leon**, Programme Officer, Oxfam, Guatemala.
12. **Nicole Mathot**, Independent Expert on Land/ Gender Officer CNV (labour union), Netherlands.
13. **Sabine Pallas**, Gender and Communications Senior Officer, International Land Coalition, Italy.
14. **Duncan Pruett**, Manager Economic Justice Programme, Oxfam, Myanmar.
15. **Lisa Rankin**, Breaking the Silence, Guatemala.
16. **Zephania Repollo**, South-East Asia Co-director, JASS, Philippines.
17. **George Redman**, Country Director, Oxfam, Honduras
18. **Reina Rivera**, Country Director, Diakonia, Honduras
19. **Michael Simon**, Interim Director, International Rivers, Australia.
20. **Danny Wijnhoud**, Senior Researcher ActionAid, Netherlands.

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