Renewable energy technologies, including solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries, rely on minerals, like lithium, cobalt, copper and manganese, making these commodities central to accelerating the energy transition. Yet, the mining sector, is one of the most toxic and pervasive abusers of human rights.

On behalf of Confederation members, Oxfam International is pleased to submit the following inputs regarding the intersections of mining, toxics, and human rights to the Special Rapporteur’s thematic report on detoxification and decarbonization.

Attachments

1. Summary Report of Findings of a Gender Impact Assessment in the Extractive Industries in Vietnam (‘Summary report EI Vietnam.docx’)
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In 2020, Oxfam in Vietnam, in partnership with the Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED) conducted a Gender Impact Assessment of mining activities on the communities in Dai Tu, Thai Nguyen, Vietnam, famous for tungsten mining. Findings relevant to the links between decarbonization and chemical waste include:

***Health impacts are clear, yet no information is available to communities on the chemicals used in the mining as well as the kind of waste***. All the interviewees said that their lives and their families are greatly affected by mining activities due to noise, dust and affected groundwater. Main kinds of pollutions include dust pollution in the mining process, selection and transportation, smoke pollution during manufacturing process, noise pollution due to blasting, exploded rocks during mining and water pollution. Pollution happens because most of the enterprises of mining, processing and trading of mineral violate environmental protection laws in many different ways and across levels. In particular, water pollution seriously affects livelihoods (agriculture), daily life and health. Environmental pollution affects men and women in different ways in which women often suffer more difficulties, miserableness in their lives. People also do not know exactly what substances discharged from ore mines include.

Some recommendations include:

* Comprehensive regulations should be developed that ensure community safety in the extractive industry, including regulations relating to chemicals and other relevant potential harms. Exposure limit values should protect the most vulnerable populations, especially women and women of child-bearing age, and should provide equal protection in the workplace and the community.
* The collection and reporting of pollutant release and transfer data should be required for the extractives industry and the information should be publicly available. Extractive industry companies should be required to disclose all chemicals used in operations to workers and communities, upholding their right to information.
* Public awareness should be improved by providing media and the public with information about chemical safety, evidence of harms in other countries, and SAICM recommendations on electronics, including those from the Vienna 2011 expert group meeting. The SAICM national focal point, trade unions, public interest NGOs, and other stakeholders should be encouraged to contribute to this process.
* Studies should identify if environmentally unsound technologies, processes, and chemicals, that are prohibited, cause environmental degradation, or found to be harmful to human health in other countries have been transferred to Vietnam. No double standards should be allowed.

CGFED used these findings and recommendation to advocate in various UN’s conventions on waste management and chemical use including, SAICM, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (these conventions are multilateral environmental agreements, which share the common objective of protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes) together with other IPEN’s CSO members. Moreover, CGFED attended the 2023 UN Environment Programme’s Science-Policy Panel on the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution (OWEG 1.2). Their statement to the Panel is featured here (<https://www.unep.org/oewg1.2-ssp-chemicals-waste-pollution>) and directly accessible here: https://owncloud.unog.ch/s/r9xcJOQaPTdu9DC

The attachment is the summary of the findings and recommendations taken from GIA.