**Summary of research report: Gender in the extractive industry in Vietnam**

**(Gender impact assessment in Dai Tu, Thai Nguyen, Vietnam)**

This is a study on the experience of community people in Dai Tu district (Thai Nguyen province, Vietnam), a report documents health and living conditions that are not guaranteed and seriously affected by the extractive industry. The community people’ experiences of headaches, dizziness, and respiratory illnesses caused by dust and gynecological problems due to water pollution are documented in a research report by Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED) and Oxfam in Vietnam.

The extractive industry was once the largest industry in Vietnam and it still holds an important place in the country's economic strategy. Thai Nguyen is one of the largest mining centers in Vietnam with significant reserves for industrial sector such as coal, iron, tungsten, tin, cement limestone, original ilmenite. Recent studies have barely addressed gender in the influence of the extractive industry. The negative impacts of mining have not been recognized in government laws and policies, with women being the most disadvantaged group.

The study, conducted in 2020, combines industrial sector research and qualitative narratives of 29 men and women of affected communities and four groups discussion with men and women in Dai Tu district, Thai Nguyen province, Viet Nam to better understand their experience on the living conditions as well as their difficulties and challenges they are facing with, and is the first of its kind in Vietnam to shed light on the experiences of the communities affected by mining activities, which have been neglected in policy analyses and decisions.

Dai Tu district is a mountainous area which is located in the north west of Thai Nguyen province. The district contains a large number of precious and rare mineral such as Tungsten, Coal, Titan, Cao flax, tin, iron. A study in 2009 by Chu Ngoc K. et al assessed the arsenic and heavy metal contaminations of agricultural soils around the tin and tungsten mining areas in Dai Tu district in northern Vietnam in Dai Tu, Thai Nguyen. It shows that As and Cu dispersion from their pollution

sources into farmlands is mainly via fluvial transportation of mine waste through streams that cross the paddy fields around the tin mining area, and soil erosion at the tea fields located at lower positions of the slope in the tungsten mining are among the examined elements, high total

contents of As and Cu were found in the agricultural fields at both tin and tungsten mining sites.

**Key Findings:**

***Women do not have a voice in matters related to mining*.** The voice of local authority is often passive in the decisions of licensing for mining in this area. Government consultation activities are not inclusive and often neglect citizens’ opinions. The environmental impact assessment, or consulting inhabitants are just for appearance. The local authority finds the situation “more harm than good” from mining activities in this area, but falls into a “dilemma”. Besides negotiating and mobilizing the enterprises to carry out commitments or solve problems arising and affecting the community, the local authority can just report outstanding issues to the higher levels and lacks full competence to decide.

***The decisions about gender sensitive are still faint, not integrated as well as being ignored****.* The rate of local key officials is currently low, particularly in remote areas. Therefore, even if the key position is a woman, it is hard to ensure the voice of women because the proportion of opinions or votes between men and women is not balanced. As a result, conceding the voice of women in the decision-making process of local authority is still limited. Moreover, as analyzed above, the needs and voice of the community members (male – female) are all overlooked and generalized without gender disaggregation, the desire, the needs towards as well as the impacts of mining activities on women are not mentioned certainly.

***Lack of knowledge of the law makes it hard for people and women to claim and exercise their rights****:* most of community members in general and women in particular have limited knowledge about the Mineral Law, The Law on Environmental Protection, the regulations on committing to protecting the environment, on responsibilities of mining enterprises, their own rights. In addition, they have limited understanding about how to make grievances, to express their own voice to protect the rights of individuals, community, to connect with a lawyer. Furthermore they could not afford to hire a lawyer. Because of failing in or inability to access to complaining to local authority and companies, people choose to do in their ways like spontaneous crowded gathering, blocking company’s transportation.

***The perception of gender in the actors involving with the mining sector is limited***. These people do not see any relationship between these two factors, in their opinions, gender is a category of social issues, mining relates to technique and nature. With respect to mining, the managers, specialists in this industry primarily mention environmental impacts, if any, in their analysis. They do not realize the importance of understanding about the differences in roles of women and men, in their demands, and in the impacts on them. It is in need of shifting in perception of gender equality to develop mining industry and promote justice of the community and society in general.

***Health impact and no information is available 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 law in many different ways/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.

***Gender mainstreaming in policy is not apparent***. There is a separation between policy and regulations regulating the mining sector and gender policy in general. In the policy and law on mining, the environmental impacts assessment only refers to a small part speaking of “community”, mainly in terms of ‘public consultation’. However, the level of community participation is also low in the decision relating to licensed activities, mining and post-mining operations. Not to talk about the splitting of the needs and specific characteristics, the differences of women and men in relevant policy and law are totally not mentioned. The absence of the role of civil society organizations including the Women Union, as the representing organization for benefits of women in general, in consultations on policies and regulations in the mining sector is attributed to the limitation of the improvement of the traditional gender notion. The legal framework is neutral, ignores the practices that lead to keeping women trapped in preconceptions. The failures to implement inclusive, comprehensive, and thorough consultations with the community, with representatives of women have strengthened the negative effects of mining operations exist in every community and every family.

***Some recommendations for changing partly the emerging problems in the mining operations as follows***.

* Come up with more coordination solutions, at different levels, different scales; however, to make gender more visible in the mining sector,
* Focus on the role of civil society organizations, mass organizations. take the needs, desires and aspirations of men and women toward gender equality into account.
* Pay attention to women group in the community for a reason that with the current gender role, together with men, women are primarily responsible for family life, from production to reproduction.
* Take perspective of gender equality in the implementation and monitoring the implementation of policies related to mining into account. Agency responsible for state management of minerals needs to listen to and respect the opinions of people, of women.
* All those involved to execution and supervision Mining Law, the Law on Environmental Protection must understand clearly about substantial Gender Equality and have knowledge of the basic regulations of the Law on Gender Equality.
* 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 be protective of the most vulnerable populations, which include women of child-bearing age, and should provide equal protection in the workplace and the community.
* Pollutant release and transfer data should be required for the electronics industry and the information should be publicly available. Extractive industry companies should be required to make public all chemicals used by them in order to ensure worker and community right to know.
* Producers and manufacturers should be required to provide ongoing understandable and free health and safety information to workers about all substances used by them in order to ensure the workers’ safety and health. The government has a critical role to enforce provision of health and safety information to workers.
* Independent in-depth research on health and safety in the Vietnamese extractive industry should be carried out to reveal impacts on community people and workers’ health. Gender disaggregated data should be a key part of study plans and reporting of results.
* 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.