

# Iroco Declaration

## 2nd International Conference: Women and Mining, Iroco-Oruro, Bolivia, 16 - 25 September 2000

### Principles and Commitments

From Baguio, the Philippines to Oruro, Bolivia. We knew we would meet again. The rich experience of the First Conference is still alive and we started from there. We joined our forces to be heard, to defend our labour rights, our territorial and cultural rights, our economic rights and our right to live in a healthy environment. We came together to meet from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of September to be heard and to demand that governments, mining companies, international organisations, national, regional and local institutions respect our rights and adopt concrete measures to fulfil these. We accept this challenge with dignity, being aware that this task is part of the struggle of hundreds of women in all the world defending life and justice.

We are everywhere, we came from everywhere. We are working women, indigenous women, unionists, defenders of life and the environment. Representatives of non-governmental organisations, researchers related to mining and the effects of transnational corporations. We came from 20 countries, from four continents: America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

The II INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND MINING was the decisive step to consolidate our network, a specific space to shelter for 10 days our dreams of a healthier and just world for all women affected by mining.

We come from different parts of the world, with different identities, social practices and theoretical concepts. We have come despite all the adversities we suffer as women who work and live around the mines, to commit ourselves beyond our occupations, sympathies and friendships. In our different ways of taking action in our countries, we are taking a stance against globalisation and all oppressions we experience as women in relation to mining.

### *HOW WE WORKED FOR THE CONFERENCE AND DURING THE CONFERENCE:*

We oriented our work starting from the definitions made after a long process of consultations, interchange and definitions with the sisters of the network and agreed on four principal themes:

- Making visible the work of women in mining
- Women, mining, environment, contamination and health
- Transnational corporations and their impact on the lives of women and their families in mining areas.
- Rights to land and natural resources, rights of indigenous peoples and women

It was a long process: looking for people around the world, knowing our realities, listening to our problems, sharing our experiences, and forwarding proposals. All this was done with the tenderness and intensity that only we women can express. Thus, we all came with ideas, experiences, positions and contributions related to regional aspects with regard to the diversity of problems affecting women. We organised this conference, knowing and respecting our languages and diversities, maintaining our freedom to give our opinions, complying with our mission and knowing our responsibilities.

We have seen that the work of women is still invisible, in spite of women contributing considerably to the economy of their countries, from reproduction to labour, in the recuperation of minerals in tailings and working in collective production units.

Mining has caused large scale displacement of several communities, especially indigenous, whose basic life systems depend on land, forest and other natural resources. Women affected and displaced by mining are forced out of their social, economic and cultural environments leading to serious degradation in their quality of life.

Discrimination of women is still a constant factor in our daily life. Women have difficulties to get jobs, they do not receive equal salaries, they have limited access to concessions and credit. They are often ill-treated by employers and their husbands.

Productive activities of women in their families are often unpaid and unrecognised. Women help their husbands in mining and other productive activities, prepare food and care for their homes. The model is still based on oppression and discrimination.

We have seen that the earth, rivers and air are contaminated with toxic waste, which seriously affects the health condition of miners and the rest of the population and causing malformations in children.

Human rights are still being violated.

Employment risks of women working in mining are high. Women in tradition, small scale, artisanal and independent mining are subject to unacceptable working conditions, affecting their health, life and human condition.

The neo-liberal policy of the global economy allows mining exploitation by companies which cause growing unemployment and loss of traditional means of livelihood. The exploitation of women is growing alarmingly. For the subsistence of themselves and their families, women accept any type of employment and even resort to the extremes of survival like prostitution. At the same time, children are less cared for and health problems are increasing. Family relations and cultural values are deteriorating.

Forced labour of children in mining due to the increasing poverty of our communities is denying them the possibilities of a fair and free life and future.

The increase in domestic violence, sexual abuse and alcoholism in mining areas is alarming, as well as the growing incidence of sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS.

Laws and international agreements related to human rights including ancestral and cultural rights of indigenous peoples, social and economic rights and workers rights are not complied with, and sometimes not even ratified, by our governments and transnational companies.

Some governments allow the use of their natural resources like water in an irrational manner not guaranteeing access of communities to these resources.

Increasingly, land is taken away from indigenous peoples, by government who give their land to transnational companies, resulting in the loss of means of livelihood and the loss of access of local populations – who are the legitimate owners of this richness – to natural resources.

We face our problems and injustices as challenges, in a positive way. We are willing to take on challenges involved in professional and technical training, activities within the mine, women leadership and in taking private and public decisions.

Our communities are fighting against displacement by mining corporations.

Some countries have laws regarding ancestral land rights and cultures. A few countries recognise the culture and right to self-determination of native peoples.

There is environmental legislation in some countries. There are also precedents of people winning cases against transnationals because they failed to comply with the regulations.

### ***THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON WOMEN AND MINING:***

We consolidated the International Network on Women and Mining which unifies us through construction, participation and solidarity which makes it possible to grow together and advance in our search for social justice. Therefore, the Network is an organisation that is perfectly adequate within the framework of these objectives.

The NETWORK WOMEN AND MINING will strive together with the communities to search for solutions and listen to the silent and patient cry of nature and the environment. The force and energy around us will protect and shelter us from the aggressive and predatory activities of mankind that with its irresponsible globalisation vision destroys everything in its way.

A NETWORK that allows us to listen to the voices of those directly affected by the deterioration caused by voracious mining exploitation, an exploitation which provokes more and more atrocious and unpunished consequences. A network that channels these voices towards a transformation.

A NETWORK in solidarity with the demands of the people for a fair and just world for everyone and respecting the rights of women and men to live together in a world that is unique and has no equal.

### ***THE PACT FOR LIFE***

We subscribe to a PACT FOR LIFE to participate in the struggle for a healthy, clean and cared-for earth. We are committed to live in the space that is ours, with the energy and vitality that inspired our dreams.

*AS A COMMITMENT OF THE NETWORK, WE ASSUME THE "PACT FOR LIFE"*, because the earth is our mother and the rivers are our mother's milk. The earth is our life and death. Therefore we demand water for all, protected wells, rivers free from contamination and waste, an earth free from degradation.

*WE WANT TO TAKE CARE* of life in all its aspects, primary health care for all, the cleaning of toxic substances and pollutants, substitution of the use of toxic materials, and recycling of metal products. We need to raise the awareness of people on the care and maintenance of the environment and life.

*WE COMMIT OURSELVES* to break the silence and tell the world that "we are angry because we are robbed. Because our poverty is increasing and we are abused, as well as our children and the environment".

*WE DEMAND* monitoring of mining companies, the rehabilitation of damaged resources, compensation for community rights that have been violated, for the diseases and accidents and loss of lives that we have suffered.

*WE WILL WATCH OVER* the respect of protected areas and the exclusion of mining from environmentally fragile areas, compliance with and respect of territorial rights and the exclusion of children from mine labour.

*WE WILL WORK* to make sure economic investments are used in sustainable alternative projects, respecting cultures and the right to self-determination of peoples, with equal opportunities for women in all productive areas, incorporating the problems of women in labour laws, just salaries and benefits for women to improve their situation, and access to credit.

*WE WILL DEMAND* the establishment of environment bonds, the ratification of legal provisions of countries that have progressed in this field, establishing drastic sanctions for those who infringe these laws and supporting simultaneous actions against multinational companies.

*WE WILL FOCUS ON* alternative ways of living for women in mining and women affected by mining. We will raise women's technological knowledge and disseminate information on the contribution of women to the national economy, considering the development of cooperative mining and other kinds of organisations as an alternative.

*WE RESOLVE* for ourselves and our organisations to:

1. Send Conference Resolutions to National Governments, the Organisation of the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation, World Health Organisation and other national and international organisations.
2. Establish alliances with existing National and International networks working on mining, women, environment, indigenous people and health.
3. Promote and strengthen the organisation of local associations of women in mining-affected areas.
4. Promote social and economic alternatives which would increase the family's income and eradicate child labour in mines.
5. Research and exchange information on actions and expansion policies of transnational mining companies, as well as on the impact of the expansion policies of large mining companies.
6. Support simultaneous actions against the same MNCs by network members and organisations.
7. Conduct international campaigns against MNCs particularly around their annual shareholders meetings.
8. Promote contact with and search support from legal groups who can forward legal demands at national and international levels.
9. Carry out international campaigns on particular cases of women seriously affected by mining to include the Kelian case in Indonesia, Palliri women in Bolivia, women displaced by mining operations, mining housewives and other cases.
10. Form regional networks which will respond to emerging issues and conduct fact-finding investigations and organise participatory actions with the sectors involved.
11. Promote and disseminate socio-economic alternatives for mining.
12. Promote the exclusion of mining activities in ecological fragile areas.
13. Disseminate information on the Conference, the Network Women and Mining in the countries involved

14. Expand the NETWORK.
15. Conduct reciprocal visits to learn about experiences of other organisations.
16. Prepare an inventory of skills and capacities of network members for sharing and mutual benefit.
17. Establish a communication system among network members to form a united front on emerging issues.