

# Activist briefing: Climate justice for women

## Focus area: Access to justice for women living in mining affected communities

### The issue:

Australia has the second largest global mining footprint in the world, with more extractive companies operating in Africa than any other country.

Australia has 150 coal, oil and gas projects that are either being operated or planned by 58 ASX listed companies in low income countries. Of these projects, 35 are operational, meaning that ASX listed companies are intending to increase the number of fossil fuel projects operating in low income countries fourfold.

The potential carbon emissions are enormous equating to almost five years' worth of Australia's current annual greenhouse gas emissions, or 17 years of operation of Adani's proposed Carmichael mine. These projects would blow our global carbon budget and would be inconsistent with our efforts to limit global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees.

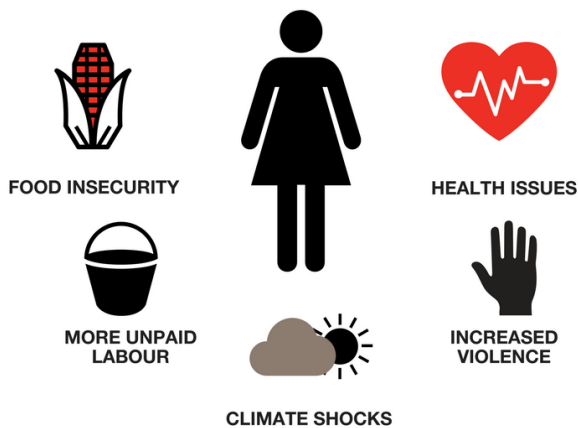
For more information on Australia's global fossil fuels footprint read our report here:

<https://actionaid.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/UNDERMINING-WOMENS-RIGHTSPRINTFILE-WEB.pdf>

The potential carbon emissions of Australia's proposed mining projects are enormous – however fossil fuel extraction transcends beyond being a significant threat to climate change as it is also a feminist issue.

### The impact of mining on women:

#### MINING IMPACTS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS



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Women are adversely impacted in mining affected communities. This occurs for a number of reasons including:

- **Increased food insecurity** - a lot of women rely on subsistence farming - when mining companies displace communities, land use patterns change and this method of farming is affected.
- **Increase water insecurity** - Mines also may pollute water supply or disrupt access to water, with women having to walk further to collect water.
- **Increased gender based violence** – when new mines are built this brings an influx of male mine

workers to a community. This can lead to an increase in gender-based violence and also increases the demand for sex work.

- **Increased unpaid care** – from contaminated water supplies to black lung disease – mines have a large effect on the health of mine workers as well as the surrounding communities. Women are the ones who carry the burden when family members fall sick, as they are the primary carers in many communities.

- **Increased marginalisation and loss of power** – women are often excluded from the negotiations with mining companies about use of land, compensation or benefit sharing.-

- **Increased climate shocks** - The flow on effects from these mines are massive. The increase of carbon in the atmosphere fuels dangerous climate change and increases the amount of natural disasters. We know that when emergencies strike, women are disproportionately affected due to their care burden in food production, water collection and family care.

*For more information on the impact of mining on women's rights read our full report here:*

<https://actionaid.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/MINING-CORP-ACCT-REPORT-v4.pdf>

## Case study: Yvonne Sampear - member of the Greater Phola Ogies Women Forum in Mpumalanga, South Africa

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We are asking  
Australians to

**support us.**

**Be in solidarity**

with what is  
going on in our  
communities.

-Yvonne Sampear, Greater  
Phola Ogies Women's Forum



Yvonne is a member of the Greater Phola Ogies Women's Forum, which is an organisation led by women in Mpumalanga province, South Africa. Australian mining company South32 operates a coal mine just 10km away from her community of Phola.

ActionAid Australia has been working in partnership with the Phola Women's Forum to conduct a community-led social audit. These women have uncovered extremely serious concerns through this

process. 85% of 144 respondents to a survey said that gender-based violence has increased as a result of the mine. They are reporting cracks in their houses due to blasting from the mine, serious health issues, and 99% of women interviewed said that South32's responsiveness to their concerns was poor or very poor.

Here in Australia we are campaigning in solidarity with Yvonne and the women of Phola to target South32, but we also know that to create systemic change the Australian government must introduce stronger corporate accountability laws, like an independent human rights watchdog that would ensure that communities like Yvonne's can have access to justice.

### **The solution**

We want to see a world where we have stronger corporate accountability laws to ensure that mining companies are responsible, no matter where they operate.

We are currently campaigning on one piece of the puzzle which is access to justice for mining affected communities.

Right now women don't have access to justice. Our solution to this problem is based on what women's groups from mining-affected communities are already asking for. We're advocating for increased access to justice through an effective human rights watchdog.

### **What is a human rights watchdog?**

A human rights watchdog is a body independent from government that can investigate the impacts of mining on women's rights and individual cases of abuse. If an injustice has occurred the watchdog can recommend a remedy, such as compensation, apology, stopping particular activities, corporation policy changes and government sanctions.

A watchdog would address the barriers that women currently face in accessing justice by having the capacity and resourcing to investigate specific instances of human rights abuses by Australian companies as well as systemic issues driving human rights abuses.

### **How will we win?**

To achieve our vision we need Australian parliamentarians to see the value of a human rights watchdog in delivering justice for mining affected communities so that they include it in their party platform.

We know that our politicians are there to represent us, so we need to make our voices heard. With a big enough movement we can show that Australians want a human rights watchdog and are standing in solidarity with the incredible work already being done by women at the coalface around the world.

This is our opportunity in Australia to show our government that the community is calling on them to stop Australian mining companies from violating women's rights overseas and fuelling dangerous climate change.

Groups have already been active meeting with their MPs and raising the issue in their local community, but we are yet to see the major Australian political parties include a human rights watchdog into their party platform.

We need to keep up the pressure by mobilising members of the public in our communities around Australia on the issue to put this front and centre on the political agenda.

## **Tactics**

Below are some tactics that you can plan with your local group for any time during this campaign. We will also be planning some big moments for everyone to take action together, and will be in touch about those separately.

### Petition blitzes

We need to make petitioning a focus for this campaign to demonstrate to politicians that voters care about this issue. Make sure at every event you hold you are asking people to sign the petition!

Ways of getting petition signatures:

1. Attend a local festival or community event with clipboards.
2. Book a stall at a market near you and talk to people about the campaign and ask them to sign the petition.
3. Sign people up at a local march

You can find a downloadable petition available online on our activist toolkit here:

<https://actionaid.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Fossil-fuels-petition.pdf>

### Adopt your MP/Senator

We need parliamentarians to hear our message loud and clear, and so we are encouraging all groups to engage their local MP or Senator asking them to endorse the principles of an effective watchdog.

To do this you will need to write to your MP and ask for a meeting. We have templates available to do this and can support you through the process. It's pretty easy but just reach out to either Liz or Siri for the meeting request template.

Many of our activists already have existing relationships with their local MP and Senator. For activists who've already built a relationship, this is your chance to get in touch again.

### Growing your group

At the same time as we are gathering petition signatures and engaging our MPs, we need to also be bringing new people into our movement. Petitioning is a great way of finding interested people but always make sure you have a follow-up event to invite them to.

Some ideas for events that will attract people to your group and promote the campaign are:

1. A film screening of 'The Shore Break' - we have the rights to use this documentary that highlights the experiences of a local community fighting an Australian coal mine. This is a great local event to get people involved.

2. An activism over dinner event – book a table at a local restaurant and get people talking about this issue.

### Solidarity with South African women

As we grow this campaign there will be opportunities to show solidarity with women directly affected in South Africa by:

1. Sharing content from women affected by Australian mining corporations in South Africa. Keep an eye out for this content as we develop it on the ActionAid Facebook page.
2. Solidarity messages: Why not combine an event with writing solidarity messages to local women's rights activists in South Africa? Get in touch if you are keen to do this.