

# WOMEN-*LORES* FROM INDIA'S PITS

A QUARTERLY E-NEWSLETTER



*Meeting with women in Panna District. Source: Dhaatri*

We are happy to launch a quarterly newsletter to share stories and news on women and children in the context of extractives and natural resources in India. In each issue, we will be reporting from the ground, the voices of women experiencing their daily struggles between mine pits and development discourses. In this issue, we bring you the interconnections of mineral and environment policies, special purpose funds and interventions at national and local levels in the global context of Covid 19 as well as COP26. A major focus of this newsletter are stories from the ground on the situation of communities facing environmental and livelihood degradation for mining, the status of District Mineral Funds (DMF) in restoring losses, and the link to some CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Management Programme Authority) projects implemented as compensation to forests diverted for mining operations.

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# News

## **Environment ministry relaxes expansion norms to certain mines**

Exemption of environment clearance through public hearing clause for certain mine expansion projects having 5 star rating for iron, manganese, bauxite, limestone mines up to 20 percent of their capacity. Despite civil society and community protests, this relaxes the public consultation process merely by obtaining written responses from community and other stakeholders. **Click here to view** the template for assessment of mining company compliance mechanisms to get 5-star rating. These can perhaps, be also used by affected communities to conduct community audits in their affected villages.

Hydro Carbons Energy Minerals) Concession Rules, 2016.

## **MMDR Amendment Act, 2021**

On March 15, 2021, the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2021 was introduced in Lok Sabha. Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha passed the said Bill on 19th March and 22nd March, 2021, respectively. The Amendment claims to be passed with an objective to abundantly utilise the potential and capacity of the mineral sector so as to intensify employment opportunities and investment in the mining sector including coal.

**“The latest notification dated 20-10-2021 on mining issued by your Ministry has conveniently done away with the primary requirement of a public hearing, a step that clearly violates the Constitutional mandate and the spirit underlying the EPA.” - E.A.S Sarma**

**The Ministry of Mines has prepared the Minerals** (Other than Atomic and Hydro Carbons Energy Minerals) Concession (Amendment) Rules, 2021 seeking to amend Minerals (Other than Atomic and

## **The Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Amendment Bill, 2021 Mineral Concession (Amendment) Rules, 2021**

In August 2021, three new amendments

were passed via The Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Amendment Bill, 2021. The law has been primarily meant for land acquisition for coal mining by Coal India Limited, a public sector understanding for India's energy production.

### **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), sends notice to Sundargarh District Collector on DMF spending**

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribe (NCST) sought explanation from Sundargarh District administration on huge spending of DMF funds in non-priority areas and projects including urban beautification. The NCST order was passed after allegations of huge expenditure in urban areas, health, livelihood and education across mining-affected areas thereby, jeopardising the interests of tribals.

### **MLAs question misuse of DMF funds in Sundargarh district, Odisha**

Birmitrapur MLA Shankar Oram and Rajgangpur MLA CS Rajen Ekka have raised the issue of diversion and misuse of District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds for non-priority areas, in Odisha Assembly. They sought a CAG audit into the DMF expenditures.

### **Illegal Mining**

[Ministry of Mines has created a digital app for tracking illegal mining and complaints mechanisms.](#)

### **Coal mine workers of SCCL are killed in Telangana**

In Srirampur of Mancherial district, four workers died as a roof collapsed in the underground mine. The collapsed roof was 6 metre long, three metre wide, two metre high and workers were under it who eventually died.

### **In 2021, India gets its first woman engineer to work in an underground mine**

India gets its first underground woman engineer in 2021 from the mining belt of Hazaribagh, Jharkhand. This is no small achievement considering India's poor labour statistics for women workers which stands at a low of 10.22% and where majority of female workers are in illegal or informal labour force

### **High Court of Chhattisgarh strikes down third party rights over non-coal mines**

In September 2021, the Chattisgarh High Court ordered a stay on third party leas-

-ing of non-coal mining blocks under Mines and Minerals Development (Amendment) Bill, 2021. The act proposes to open up 572 in active non-coal block for auction which was challenged by major industries like Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL), Jayaswal Neco and others, questioning the constitutionality of the act.

### **Centre takes control of the DMF from states due to alleged diversion but also orders for utilization of the funds for Covid-19 management**

The Centre has taken complete control over allocation and management of DMF funds allegedly claiming of their diversion by the states into projects that are do not fall under the purview of priority areas. However, it also proposes for utilization of the funds of Covid- 19 management and recovery drawing a lot of controversy.

### **Chhattisgarh proposes new rules under PESA**

Chhattisgarh Panchayat Ministry announced that the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act will be implemented in the state. Members of Adivasi communities and civil society have given their suggestions regarding empowering gram sabhas, natural resource protection and preservation of Adivasi cultures under PESA.

### **Bombay HC orders authorities to curb illegal sand mining in Goa**

In September 2021, the Bombay high court issued orders to police authorities to continuously monitor and seize trucks transporting sand illegally. The court identified two 'hotspots' and ordered the authorities to install CCTVs within 15 days.

### **Odisha's i3MS technology helps monitor illegal mining. Imposition of penalty on illegal mining in Keonjhar district.**

Through the Odisha Integrated Mines and Minerals Management System (i3MS) for end-to-end tracking of minerals produced, in February 2021, a whopping ₹2,056 crore penalty was imposed on Sarda mines in Keonjahr district.

### **Mine Closure and Repurposing of Mine sites in India:**

The Coal Ministry announced that it is seeking the guidance of the World Bank on developing a mine closure framework "on three major aspects of institutional governance; people and communities; and environmental reclamation and land re-purposing on the principles of just transition".

## Assets Accounts on Minerals and Non-Renewables

A wing of CAG, the GASAB has come up with recommendations on internal control systems for state governments to report on minerals extracted, royalties, taxes, etc in order to track illegal or stolen material. [Link to Recommendations](#)

## COP26-India News

### India sets 2070 as its net zero target. There's little risk for coal investors

Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared 2070 as the target year for India to have zero carbon emissions at COP 26 Summit in Glasgow. It clears the road for captive and commercial coal mines awarded so far, as their lifetime (30 years) ends before 2070 ensuring a secure future of India's coal industry.

### Indian women pay a higher price for climate crisis

Women have limited ability to overcome climate shocks compared to their male counterparts. 75% of the agricultural work is done by women. They are mostly responsible for household work which includes a ensu-

-ring water, fuel and fodder for their families. On the other hand, they face domestic violence, economic and sexual exploitation, abandonment, unemployment, among other things.

### India blamed for watering down the coal resolution in the Climate Agreement

India intervened at the last minute to change the language on "phasing out" coal to merely "phasing down". India's environment minister has stressed that "Fossil fuels and their use have enabled parts of the world to attain high levels of wealth and wellbeing, and targeting any particular sector is uncalled for, "and that "Developing countries have a right to their fair share of the global carbon budget."

### Adivasi protest against expansion of coal mining at Glasgow

Adivasi activists from India took part in protests at Glasgow and demanded a judicial enquiry into subversion of the Gram Sabha mechanism and implementation of PESA and Forest Rights Act. Protesting against the expansion of coal mining that the Indian government is planning, especially in the Hasdeo Arand region of Chattisgarh, where stage two clearanceance has been granted for mining projects, representatives of

India's Adivasi community have reached the streets of Glasgow to protest at the COP26 Summit.

### **In the midst of COP26 talks to phase down fossil fuels, SCCL gears up to increase production**

The Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) has rolled out an action plan to surpass the annual coal production using technologies like continuous miners to produce 330 lakh tonnes of coal the end of March 21, 2022. Against the stipulated target of 680 lakh tonnes for the year 2021-22, the company produced 352 lakh tonnes over the past seven month ending October 2021.



*Source: Hindustan Times*

the villagers' and Gram Sabha's land. Within few hours of the protest, the Sub Division Magistrate (SDM) of Pailani reached the site with police and took a memorandum of demands and ordered immediate stopping of illegal mining.

## **Community News**

### **Local women take lead in protest against illegal sand mining**

In June 2020, 12 women and few men began 'Jal Satyagraha' in Khapatiya Kala village in Pailani tehsil of Banda district of Uttar Pradesh. They were standing waist deep in river Ken protesting against the illegal sand mining and environmental impacts in the village as the miners were illegally digging from

### **Adivasis of Maliparbat protest against public hearing**

On November 22, 2021, despite strong public resistance, the Koraput district administration in Odisha organized the public hearing for environment issues regarding the bauxite mining lease granted to Hindalco Industries Ltd. Police force was deployed and 30 protesting activists and villages were taken into preventive custody. Activists and environmentalists call it a gross violation of fundamental rights.

## **Adivasi women challenge Coal India in Chhattisgarh**

Adivasi villagers of Kosampali, Chhattisgarh are protesting against the Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) and Coal India Ltd. operated Gare Pelma IV/2&3 coal block. They are demanding to stop mining in any new land, leveling of overburden dumps, compensation to the farmers and complete shutdown of the mines.

**Adivasis protest against proposed Deocha Pachami Coal mines in West Bengal**, anticipating huge losses to their food security, livelihood, biodiversity and health. The proposed coal mine has an estimated reserves of 2.1 billion tonnes of coal. The mine was proposed on December 28, 2020 and was claimed world's second largest coal mine which would occupy about 11,222 acres.

## **DMF and Women**

The DMF allocations have budgets for women, children and the disabled. Yet expenditures under these heads so far, largely remain confined to civil works and infrastructure repairs to schools and anganwadis. Some of the site visits made to understand women's complaints and demands in mining affected villages reveal the complete disconnect between key areas of restoration and rehabilitation demanded by women in order to survive the ill-effects of mining and the random manner in which funds were spent. Women and children's concerns are merely addressed under a broad umbrella of welfare outreach programmes, the main beneficiaries being civil works contractors. As Adivasi activist from Udaipur, Sadhana Meena says, *"most of the funds seem to be spent on city beautification and unaffected areas while women from villages surrounding the mines are suffering from serious health and livelihood losses."*



*Mine tailings dam expansion in Zawar mines, Rajasthan. Source: Dhaatri*

In Udaipur, Rajasthan, for example, women’s core complaints in directly affected villages, were related to mine tailings toxicity in their water bodies affecting their farming, women’s burden of collecting water and serious health problems for their community and cattle. Their core demands were, clean-up of their streams and agricultural lands, arresting the diversion of Tidi river for mining, to stop increasing the height of the mine tailings dam, recharge of their ground water, repairs to their houses damaged by mine blasting, pattas under FRA especially as mine expansion was threatening to grab more land, restoring their commons as even fodder for cattle has depleted, and proper health check-up and treatment for community and workers suffering from respiratory and reproductive health problems. They complained of drying up of all hand-pumps including those next to the schools, and the captive thermal power plant that was set up right in front of the anganwadi centre at Nevatalai village causing serious respiratory problems to their children. Yet, the DMF project was barely implemented so far in this panchayat and mostly confined to installing hand-pumps that are dysfunctional as ground water is depleted.



*In Darima of Surguja Dist., two infrastructure projects were sanctioned for the airport under the DMF. Source: Dhaatri*

In Surguja, we found that DMF projects implemented were far from the coal mining affected villages. In Bellary, drinking water plants, repairs to anganwadis, city beautification and road construction in Hospet, distribution of tri-cycles for the disabled, school sheds, additional facilities at the PHC and IAS coaching were some of the main heads of expenditure. We found most water plants dysfunctional, whereas women demanded for ground water recharge, adequate potable water systems and revival of irrigation tanks, reclamation of agricultural lands made unfit for cultivation by mining, assured daily wage labour through MGNREGS for 300 days per person per year as mining has devastated their livelihoods, firewood, toilet and electricity facilities and rehabilitation of Devadasi women. None of these have been addressed.



*Women submit a representation on MGNREGS in Hospet, Karnataka. Source: Sakhi Trust*

Students' demand for bus facility to travel to high school and college in Hospet remains unaddressed and many have dropped out of school after Covid for lack of public transport. Whereas the IAS coaching is grabbed by the more privileged.



*Students protest for a bus facility to go to high school and college from PBS Camp, Hospet, Karnataka. Source: Sakhi Trust*

For some states like Madhya Pradesh, there is no information publicly available on DMF expenditures, and the communities in the two mining affected areas- Panna and Vidisha, reported that they did not receive any benefits from DMF, so far. What the expenditures do not reveal is how supplementary are these special purpose funds, to the primary budgets for women and children, that these districts receive. It appears that the DMF is utilized to meet the shortages in budgets for basic infrastructure facilities of the women and child welfare departments rather than as additional grants to the repurposing of mining areas in order to address the losses and damages from mining to women and children. Women as farmers, with their core demands of restoring their food security destroyed by mining, have been completely ignored. Women walk longer distances to collect water, fodder and firewood as their resources remain destroyed by mining. They are treated as criminals for 'stealing' firewood or coal for their cooking. Neither have expenditures on children resulted in improving their nutrition or education.

The table below is an example of the huge discrepancies between women's complaints related to mining impacts and the DMF expenditures in most sites.

Location	Mining	Complaints by women	DMF implemented in 2018-19/19-20	Status from field visits
PK Halli, Hospet taluk, Bellary district, Karnataka	Iron-ore - illegal mines operated around the village, currently abandoned; mine labour partially employed in Jindal's; majority of men and women have no livelihood	Drinking water contaminated; mine workers not having work; agricultural land having dust; 29 devadasi women need rehabilitation; no agricultural labour available; MGNREGS inadequate; no toilets for -families; reproductive health problems like anemia, severe menstrual health issues; hysterectomies; anxiety and depression due to lack of work and domestic violence; students do not have transport for college; forest next to village depleted after many years of mining; women do not have firewood or medicinal plants now	No DMF project implemented here	-
Rishabdev, Udaipur district, Rajasthan	Marble, stone quarries -closed and operational	Drinking water and ground water severely contaminated; land conflicts, agricultural lands encroached for mine tailings without permission; grazing land access denied; loss of farming and income from livestock rearing for women; skin and stomach problems; accident prone due to mine pits left unrestored	Drinking water, school building repairs and anganwadi renovation	Site of DMF implementation is not near the mines. Hand pumps were not working due to depletion of groundwater. Most of the other DMF projects were either incomplete or dysfunctional.
Surguja, Chhattisgarh	Coal-Mahaan II	Land acquired against gram sabha consent; FRA not implemented; legal cases pending; women's agricultural land affected; mahua and other NTFP trees destroyed; dust pollution and water problems reported.	Drinking water, school building repairs, addition of classrooms, installation of pipelines for irrigation, vegetable seeds, infrastructure development like transit shed, training hall for SHG, Airport's boundary wall and watch towers etc.	DMF sites and mine sites are far apart-mining affected community not aware of DMF and none of the complaints addressed; DMF implemented sites not aware of mining impacts; Airport unrelated to Adivasi women's needs

State-wise DMF expenditures for the year 2020-21 under women and children, available so far:

State-wise DMF expenditures for the year 2020-21		
State	No. of Projects	Expenditure Amount (in Cr.)
All India	12543	615.82
Andhra Pradesh	-	-
Chhattisgarh	138	31.18
Goa	-	-
Gujarat	2146	85.8
Jharkhand	-	-
Karnataka	784	40.09
Maharashtra	-	-
Madhya Pradesh	-	-
Odisha	-	-
Rajasthan	-	-
Tamil Nadu	55	4.8
Telangana	-	-
Assam	-	-
Bihar	-	-
Himachal Pradesh	-	-
Jammu & Kashmir	-	-
Kerala	-	-
Meghalaya	-	-
Uttarakhand	-	-
Uttar Pradesh	-	-

Source: DMF State Portals

## Women and Mining in India – a round-up to Covid and Climate Change

Covid gave a good opportunity for justifying business urgency and privatization in mining sector laws and clearances in India. Our conversations with women across mining regions after Covid lockdown are starkly contrasting to these justifications. Women suffered the most during and after the lockdown in all types of mines. Mining operations had no restrictions but also had no monitoring. Women witnessed cutting down of forests, expansion of mines, evictions from their lands and police brutality. Universally, in all Adivasi areas, we heard the same story of non-implementation of the FRA but new mining leases in these lands. Coal mining auctions, particularly, forced Adivasi women to struggle between Covid and land loss threats and risk the virus as they protested in large numbers. While India promises phase down plans at Glasgow, it has expanded coal mines back home. It claims to rely on IUCN for toolkits

on Net-Zero and the World Bank for mine closure framework, while conversations with Adivasi women already throw up clear perspectives on how they envision clean up and sustainable eco-systems frameworks in their backyards. The DMFT expenditures show little correlation between losses and damages to women and their livelihoods against the DMFT projects implemented in their names. Women in India now face not only a resource curse but the Paris curse. India's tree cover target of 30% under the UNFCCC saw compensatory afforestation plantations increasingly fencing off Adivasis and local communities in lieu of forests diverted for mining. Women as small farmers and last mile energy users have started suffering the most from these global negotiations and investments for climate actions. Not only fortress conservation, but women face fortress plantations now. They shared their plight of being criminalized for their basic needs of firewood and wild-food gathering while many lost their land, and their food security of millets and food grains. Silicosis widows have suffered the most during Covid, yet diversion of DMFT funds for Covid medical emergencies remained outside their reach. Small quarries and mines came to a halt in most states, affecting women informal workers the most, who reported that they not only faced starvation but extensive domestic violence. Young girls among mine workers were hurriedly married off and some ill-fated to become Devadasis. School-drop rates in all mining areas, especially where protected areas and mining have together condemned communities



*Woman mineworker in stone quarry near Nahariya village, Vidisha district of Madhya Pradesh. Source: Dhaatri*

to a life of landlessness and illegal mine labour, have forced children to pan for diamonds, break stones and scavenge for residual ores. We found children less than 10 year old addicted to gutka, tobacco, alcohol and other substances in these communities even while Covid caused more starvation. Illegal sand mining increased

during this period, causing many accidents and deaths. Women braved their local mafia and tried to protect their rivers from the sand loot. Yet, the IBM report stands at single digit figures on complaints received or actions taken.

We share some of the stories from the ground as women spoke about their new crisis in existing problems while Covid swept the country. This also gave opportunity in some places, thanks to philanthropic outreach, for exploring their own models of resilience to crisis in post mining landscapes. These small models show the way to transition and restoration that only local women can demonstrate -their own nature based solutions and just practices for 1.5 degrees.



*CAMPA plantation in Chhatarpur circle, South Panna division of Madhya Pradesh*

*Source: Dhaatri*

### **CAMPA - Fortresses that sink women, not carbon**

In Chhatarpur circle of Southern Panna division, Madhya Pradesh, it is reported that CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management Programme Authority) was implemented in lieu of diversion of forest lands for mining,

highways and irrigation projects, in violation of FRA (Forest Rights Act) and other legal and human rights of largely, Gond Adivasis. Mining and CAMPA together have displaced/evicted Adivasi and Yadav communities, who are small and marginal farmers, from their food crops and forest produce. Ironically, poor women who are the last mile

energy users are facing energy crisis and alienation, and forced to spend more hours foraging for fuelwood, facing abuses of forest guards, as a result of India's diamond mining, wildlife conservation and 30% target of tree cover maintenance under the Paris Agreement, through artificial mechanisms like CAMPA. **Read more**

### **Life After Displacement- forced into illegal mine-labour: Panna Tiger Reserve**

In 2009, around 130 Gond families were displaced from Badron village as it falls under the core area of the Panna Tiger Reserve. They are scattered in Chattarpur, Sagar district and other nearby places in Panna. A field visit to the relocated colonies of Janakpur, Nayi Basti and Madla in October 2021 revealed the tragic story of Adivasi life after displacement. In Nayi Basti the relocated families work in illegal mines, facing harassment from officials. **Read more**



*Women labour in an Illegal diamond mine site, Panna. Source: Dhaatri*

### **Illegal Diamond Mining in Majgaon, Panna**

Mine tailings from NMDC in Majgaon are the source of livelihood for poor landless Adivasi families who scavenge from this scrap in the hope of finding a speck of the precious stone. Panna Tiger Reserve displaced families who lost both revenue and forest land but did not receive either FRA pattas or compensation, have become landless and forced to depend on illegal mine labour. **Read more**



*Displacement survey in Janakpur village, Panna. Source: Dhaatri*



*Local communities prohibited in their own forest after cancelled diamond mining project site of Rio Tinto remains fenced off with security. Source: Dhaatri*

### **Adivasi Women of Buxwaha forest, Madhya Pradesh, share their fears**

Despite the diamond mining project earlier leased to Rio Tinto being terminated about five years ago, the mine site remains fenced with security personnel restricting access to the land. The proposed threat of diamond mining by Aditya Birla group in the same location has led to anxiety among local Adivasis of around 16 villages like Sagoria, Birampura, Kasera, Nimani, Jariamar, Jagora, Manjora, Hardoha, Shivpura, Bilai, who fear losing their land and access to the rich biodiversity of their forest. In Tilai, which is one of the affected villages, while some men from landless families seem to welcome the proposals, hoping to get work locally, majority of Adivasi women were worried that their agriculture would be destroyed. Women here collect a variety of forest produce for their food and income and none of them migrate for work outside Chattarpur. The

close proximity of biodiverse forest for grazing cattle, NTFP and other needs makes the proposal to mine, a destructive economy for Gond women, who also worry about the water sources being affected by mining operations which they are already experiencing due to dust and water pollution by quarries.

#### **Read more**

### **Ironed out during Covid: the lives of iron-ore affected communities in Hospet, Karnataka**

Field visits and workshops with youth in the mining camps in Hospet (PBS, Nagappa camp) in November 2021 revealed a critical situation of workers, especially migrant worker families. Most of them work in Jindal, MSPL, BBM and RBS mines, mainly as lorry drivers, cleaners and daily wage labour. During Covid, they were extremely vulnerable

as incidence of cases were high in these mine sites. Workers were temporarily laid off without any ration or wages.

**Read more**

### **Compensatory afforestation in mining affected Hospet, Karnataka**

In Hospet, field visits to CAMPA projects (implemented in lieu of mining companies as user agencies for diversion of forest lands) in PKHalli, Basawandurga and Kamalapura villages



*CAMPA Plantation near PK Halli village, Vijayanagara district, Karnataka. Source: Dhaatri*

revealed the serious conflicts between local communities and the forest department. Small farmers were evicted from lands under food crops where ambiguities between banjar and forest land boundaries were leveraged by forest authorities to take up plantations and prevent local communities from either cultivation or collection of firewood or medicinal plants. As in

Panna, women as firewood 'thieves' are casualties of India's targets of tree cover percentages and the galloping pace of mining clearances. Many Dalit families have become landless as a result of mining as well as compensatory afforestation plantations. India's belligerence globally for its right to emissions to meet its energy needs belies the denial of even basic energy needs of poor rural and tribal women for their household cooking. In Hospet and Panna, mining companies are allowed to expand legally and illegally, while plantation fortresses are created to alienate local communities from co-existence with their community resources. **Link for details**

### **Illegal Mine-Labour: only livelihood option for Adivasi Women of Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh**

Adivasis in Vidisha district largely depend on daily wage labour in stone quarries which are mostly illegally operating as most agricultural land has been dug up by illegal contractors and the forest is highly degraded. Contractors identify potential forest land where Dalit and Adivasi men go at night to dig up the land for stones and transport them to Ganj Basoda and Vidisha towns. Any cases slapped on them by the police or forest department have to be handled by the workers



*Women mineworkers in a stone quarry near Nahariya village, Vidisha district.*

*Source: Dhaatri*

themselves while contractors keep away. This gives a picture that it is the dalit and Adivasi communities who resort to illegal mining and the real owners escape. **Read more**

### **Dalit Women and Girls in Mica Mines, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh**

In Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh, during the Covid-19 pandemic, mica, silica and quartz mines were shut down due to lockdown and a disruption in access to transport. Mineworkers lost their wages during the pandemic as most contractors could not continue their businesses. Although Nellore is known to be one of the country's mica mining hotspots, the largely illegal nature of mining brings no relief to workers, either through wages or welfare funds. There is no publicly available information on Mica Mining Welfare Fund disbursed in Nellore, and none of the

workers interviewed had received any benefits not even during the Covid lockdown. Women and adolescent girls, particularly, work in very hazardous conditions and with Covid, the susceptibility to respiratory illnesses has worsened. Yet, it is impossible to visit the mine sites to understand the working conditions inside. **Read more**



*Quartz mine waste dumping site near Kalichedu village, Nellore district. Source: Dhaatri*

### **Stories of Resilience: Dalit Women rebuild their livelihoods in a post mining Covid crisis with support from Women's Rights NGO in Hospet**

Women in Hospet earlier worked in the iron ore mines for several years, as daily wage labour. Since most of the illegal mines closed, Dalit communities seasonally migrate in large numbers to neighbouring districts for sugarcane cutting and construction work. During the lockdown, they returned to Hospet but



*Land reclamation and livestock rearing activities initiated by local NGO Sakhi, with mining affected women in Hospet, Karnataka. Source: Sakhi Trust*

faced severe starvation as they had no other source of income. The fear of migrating and walking back long distances has brought women together to explore alternate ways of sustaining their food and economic needs. The local NGO Sakhi works in Hospet taluk with Dalit women and youth on gender and livelihood empowerment. In order to demonstrate models of rehabilitation for mining affected communities, Sakhi gave confidence to the Dalit women's collectives that small-scale alternative models of restoration could bring dignity and relief. It mobilised philanthropic support to help women reclaim their lands left fallow after mine dust and water contamination destroyed their soil fertility. Women underwent training in land restoration, soil conservation, revival of their local millets and vegetable cultivation. Landless women struggled to find land for lease to develop cooperative farming models

and livestock rearing. They faced stiff opposition from upper caste patriarchy who tried to prevent them from getting any land. Some even poisoned their newly purchased cattle, unable to witness Dalit and devadasi women rebuilding their lives independently. The suspicion of these women overcoming caste and gender hierarchies has been the biggest cause for hurdles put by local leadership. The women still struggle to find alternate land, but the first year's harvest gave much joy and confidence. Women have been presenting their micro plans to local authorities for DMF funds to be utilised locally in mining affected villages. Special purpose funds and political will need serious review.



*Women grow vegetables in their kitchen gardens for nutrition and food security of their families in Hospet taluk, Vijayanagara district of Karnataka. Source: Sakhi Trust*

**This newsletter is primarily intended as an information platform for groups working on the ground to exchange news and stories from mining affected communities. We are currently bringing it out in English, Hindi and Kannada. We invite contributions from communities and local groups. We also encourage young and barefoot researchers to join us in compiling stories and data. You can send your photos and stories in any Indian languages.**

**Write to us at: [dhaatriweb@gmail.com](mailto:dhaatriweb@gmail.com)**