

4. Sex Work and Livelihoods: Beyond the 'Negative Impacts on Women' in Indonesian Mining

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Introduction

The highly gendered nature of the global mining industry has now been exposed by a number of academic commentators and activists who advocate the rights of local communities in relation to mining companies. This research is also now being recognised by international bodies such as the World Bank and the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM).² Large-scale mining around the world provides overwhelmingly male-dominated employment and tends to create and reinforce masculine-oriented cultures in the workplace and in mining towns. It is often argued that, as a consequence of this, women have been excluded from the direct economic benefits of mining and have borne the brunt of any negative social and economic changes. While the evidence for these gender imbalances is clear, I argue here that the prevailing emphasis on the 'impacts' of mining on women creates and reinforces problematic categorisations and the essentialising of women living in mining communities, particularly in reference to commercial sex.

The almost inevitable growth of the sex industry in mining towns has been written about by both academics and activists. Some scholars investigating social change in mining areas have described in detail the masculine cultures that promote sex industries in mining towns (Robinson 1996; Campbell 1997), and a small number of researchers have looked at the issue from sex workers' points of view (Campbell 2000; Kunanayagam 2003). In addition, Parpart (1988,

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2 The World Bank has recently established an Extractive Industries and Gender Initiative after sponsoring a series of women and mining conferences in Papua New Guinea. The Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development (MMSD) project's 2002 final report 'Breaking New Ground' and some subsequent ICMM output documents contain cursory recognition of gendered differences in mining impacts. More recently, the World Bank established an Extractive Industries and Gender Initiative after sponsoring a series of women and mining conferences in Papua New Guinea.

2001) has documented patriarchal attempts to restrain the increase in 'wicked women' on the Zambian Copperbelt as well as women's resistance to these policies of control.

However, the majority of publications on mining and sex work are by 'women and mining' activists. In these writings, prostitution is simply listed among other 'impacts on women' as though it is self-evidently negative (for example, see Bhanumathi 2002; Macdonald 2002, 2006; Byford 2003; Hill 2007, 2008; Eftemie 2008; Oxfam Australia 2009: 7). While undeniably negative consequences can certainly be traced or predicted, such as an increase in HIV infection,³ I argue that this activist literature presents an overly simplistic picture of mining community women's actual diverse relationships to the sex industry, whether as sex workers, miner's wives or as women otherwise living in a mining community. It also overlooks the capacity of women and men to protest and to act.

By relying on moral reactions to prostitution and neglecting to explain exactly why it is that prostitution in mining areas is negative for women, this literature implies two alternative, yet equally problematic, categorisations of women living in mining towns.

The first alternative assumes that women, as one group, regardless of occupation or choice, are equally the victims of mining and its resultant market for commercial sex. This approach either entirely neglects inclusion of sex workers in the category of 'mining community women', or it includes them but assumes that selling sex is an inherent violation of women's human rights regardless of a sex worker's choice or agency.

The second alternative distinctly divides women living in mining communities into two categories: (migrant) sex workers and (indigenous) community women. Community women are assumed to be the chaste, ignorant and powerless victims of their husbands' sexuality and their assumed predilection for spending their mining wages on the services of prostitutes. If an indigenous community woman should become a sex worker then she is seen as having been forced by social and economic circumstances resulting from mining into a demeaning occupation. On the other hand, migrant sex workers must necessarily be opportunistic 'bad' women who take advantage of 'good' women's husbands and the blameworthy vectors of disease rather than being identified as individual women pursuing livelihood options. This second alternative brings the forced (innocent) or voluntary (guilty) dichotomy into the debate about sex work in mining towns.

3 Many large-scale mining companies now have HIV/AIDS prevention programs of one sort or another, having recognised the health threat to workforces and local communities. Female sex workers are often the targets for these programs as a 'high risk population' that has direct links back to the male dominated mining labour force.

While the literature which implicitly relies on these two alternative categorisations may help to motivate change in mining policies, it does not accord with many feminists' rejection of the notion of women necessarily being 'victims' without agency. Nor does it accord with new understandings of sex work. Nor, further, is it reflective of the realities in the mining community where I conducted my research. This chapter aims to move beyond these problematic categorisations and to present a more balanced portrayal of the sex industry in a mining area. It is based on research carried out during 2007 among the communities surrounding Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC), a large-scale coal mine in Indonesia. This research includes in-depth interviews with female sex workers and others involved in the sex industry as well as with many women and men otherwise living in the mining area from diverse economic and social backgrounds. While every mine is necessarily different and situated within a specific temporal, social and economic context, that this one mining area so evidently does not fit in the straightforward 'all women as victims of mining' model, it at least suggests that accounts of gender and sex work in other mine areas should be re-examined.

Victims or Heroines, Prostitutes or Sex Workers?

At the heart of this issue of causally linking mining with 'negative impacts on women' is the fundamental feminist dilemma of the tendency to portray women as being essentially similar in their 'victimhood' in relation to patriarchy or patriarchal development programs in order to motivate cohesive action. The (often postcolonial) representation of the essential sameness of women as an 'already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location' (Mohanty 1988: 64), has long been shown to be misleading by overlooking the diverse lived experiences of women and thereby potentially increasing disempowerment and stigma. The general 'women and mining' literature likewise tends to assume that all women living in mining areas have similar backgrounds and interests (and particularly are all indigenous, rather than migrants), and that this similarity existed prior to and after the start of large-scale mining (see Macdonald 2002, 2006).

Beyond this one essential category, women also often feature in these narratives in dichotomous identities, for example, as either victims or heroines (Cornwall et al. 2007). They are the victims of imposed economic development programs that interrupt their supposedly closer natural connection to the land and are afflicted by male oppression, alcoholism, violence and sexual urges. The heroines are the women bearing these burdens, yet struggling bravely and opposing development. While these victim/heroine narratives have the power

to initiate action and policy change (as evidenced by the women and mining campaigners' success in gaining the attention of the World Bank), they fail to truly reflect gendered realities.

Singular and dichotomous representations of women also run through the debates about prostitution/sex work and the trafficking/migration of women for sex. Feminist analysis has shown that these debates have a tendency to fall into the trap of innocent/guilty and madonna/whore representations.

Some, often termed abolitionists, see prostitution as an extreme form of gender discrimination that is 'inherently violative of women's bodily integrity and freedom from violation, regardless of consent or choice' (Peach 2008: 237). Abolitionists see female prostitutes as needing to be saved from commoditisation and a life of sexual slavery (for example, Barry 1995). On the opposing side of the prostitution and anti-trafficking debate are those 'reformists' and sex worker activists who argue that prostitution should be seen as sex work—a legitimate form of labour, and not an inherently evil or immoral practice. Acknowledging that some women are indeed forced into selling sex and their human rights violated, the reformists (and UN anti-trafficking instruments) draw a distinction between forced and voluntary sex work. Critics of this approach have in turn argued that the forced/voluntary dichotomy creates a guilty/innocent division that reproduces the whore/madonna division within the category of the prostitute (Doezema 1998: 47). The forced/voluntary approach has been shown not to reflect the reality of sex workers' multiple subjectivities and personal agency within the context of wider social, economic and personal factors (Kempadoo 1998; Sandy 2006).

It has also been argued that due to all the attention on trafficking, women who migrate for sex have long been missing from migration studies thus preventing them from being seen as members of diasporas, as entrepreneurial women and active agents participating in globalisation (Agustín 2006, 2007). Granting agency to individuals who migrate for sex work does not mean denying the vast structural pressures that push and pull them (Agustín 2006: 39), rather it allows acknowledgement that migration for the sex industry is often a way of 'expanding life choices and livelihood strategies' (Doezema 2000: 26). It can also be a means of travel and seeking adventure (Bandyopadhyay et al. 2007: 95). These arguments are supported by a study in the Riau Islands, Indonesia, which describes how becoming a migrant sex worker allows some women to make a living, to provide for family members and, in some cases, to find their way into a more prosperous lifestyle (Ford and Lyons 2008).

My research in the KPC area shows that this line of feminist research on migration and sex work that rejects the forced/voluntary division should be incorporated into discussions of the gendered dynamics at work in mining communities.

Female sex workers in mining areas should be acknowledged as women who are pursuing a livelihood opportunity within their wider socio-economic context. Sex workers are not necessarily victims or heroines, nor are the women living in mining communities who pursue other means of economic support.

Selling Sex in a Mining Area: KPC Research Findings

One of the largest coal mines in Indonesia, Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC) began work in the early 1990s and has a contract of work until 2021. It was owned equally by Rio Tinto and BP until 2003 when the company was sold to the Indonesian company Bumi Resources. A minority share has recently been bought up by the Indian company Tata Power. KPC operates in two main areas: Sangatta and Bengalon, in the district of East Kutai in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. Mine production began in Sangatta in 1991 and in Bengalon in 2004. These areas were sparsely populated with indigenous and migrant farmers prior to KPC's operations, but have now attracted large numbers of migrants from around Indonesia seeking employment and business opportunities in the area.

Employment statistics show that around 95 per cent of workers in KPC are men. KPC's contractor companies tend to have an even higher proportion of male employees. At KPC, the 5 per cent of women workers tend to be clustered in administrative roles, although there are women geologists, engineers and truck operators. The proportion of women employees has decreased slightly over time from a high of about 7.5 per cent in 1993 (Lahiri-Dutt 2004) to 5 per cent in 2006. Some women informants explained that it was easier for the wives of company employees to obtain work in the company in the earlier years of mine production when there was a smaller local labour supply.

Demographic data shows consistently higher numbers of men moving to the area than women, particularly far higher numbers of single men than single women.⁴ My interview data shows that an overwhelming majority of married women cite their reason for migrating to the KPC areas as, following their husbands (*ikut suami*), although this answer may well gloss over their role in the migration decision. It is necessary, however, to look beyond this majority and recognise that there is plenty of evidence of single women migrating there by choice to live with more distant relatives, to find well-paid husbands or to find work, some as sex workers. There is also ample evidence of single and married women earning incomes in entrepreneurial roles, shops, farming, government work

⁴ These statistics are derived from the Indonesian Population Census of 2000 and the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics Kutai Timur dalam Angka [East Kutai in Numbers] series.

and as teachers, among other roles. Female migrants in my surveys consistently reported a higher standard of living in the KPC areas than in their place of origin and particularly appreciated the ability to more easily finance their children's education in the mining area (Lahiri-Dutt and Mahy 2006).

Class is also a significant factor in women's lives in the KPC areas. The lives of the women who live in the higher-level mine accommodation compounds or the family of top government officials are significantly different to the lives of women in farming, petty trade or mining operators' families. Ethnicity and religion play a part in determining where certain groups are more likely to live and the social circles they move in but do not appear to be as important a determinant as class to lifestyles and status in the multi-ethnic communities around KPC.

Sex Industry: Changes over Time

Prostitution is not just a single or static practice and the sex industry in KPC areas of operation has changed in character over time. This change has taken place according to the mine cycle and also in response to changes in the legal and illegal logging industries. It is generally agreed that the sex business was at its busiest during the mine construction phases when mine employment was dominated by single men working on short contracts. In the early 1990s, when the mine workforce included many male expatriates, there was a system of 'contract wives' in place under which bar girls would each try to contract more regular services and payment with an expatriate worker. These arrangements would often create the illusion of romance with some, sometimes going as far as holding contract wedding ceremonies (Kunanayagam 1994).

It is also reported that KPC was notorious as one of the easiest places for workers to institute such arrangements, and that women were often allowed to live inside the housing compounds for long stretches of time; they were also given their own security passes. It is said that at KPC 'everyone had a girl in their room' (Cannon 2002: 214). This practice has now been prohibited by stricter security measures and tighter allocation of catering facilities. The drop in numbers of expatriates has also had a significant effect, and the sex industry in the KPC areas is now dominated by Indonesian clientele. The contract wife system has now mostly disappeared and many bars have gone out of business or moved away from areas that are now more family-oriented.

Currently, the main area where sex is sold in Sangatta is the quasi-official brothel complex (*lokalisasi*) (Kampung Kajang), with around 150 resident sex workers occupying a number of different brothels (*wisma*) facing a narrow lane. Each *wisma* also has a bar which serves beer and provides music and

karaoke entertainment. The complex has a male coordinator who manages the young male security guards and other matters. A 2005 survey estimated that approximately 20 per cent of clients to Kampung Kajang are male mine workers; the remainder includes civil servants, army and private sector workers and students (*Tribun Kaltim*, 2005). There are also numerous separate bars, small hotels, massage parlours and cafes (*warung*) located elsewhere in Sangatta where sexual services are sold. Some of these are strategically located in relation to mine worker accommodation.

In Bengalon, there is a similar sized *lokalisasi* located on an unsealed road outside the main town. It is said that there has been prostitution in the Bengalon area since around 1986 with mainly logging clients, but the busiest years in Segadur were 2000 and 2001. Closer to the mine and coal port area there is a number of bars. Again, during the mine construction period here, there was more business than there is currently with more short-term contract workers present. Two of the bars in this area used to operate in Segadur, but have now moved in order to be closer to the mine in the hope of better business and less competition. At the time of data collection (late 2007) there were 20 female sex workers working in the three bars in this area.

Both *lokalisasi* and bars in Sangatta and Bengalon have obviously been affected by the government crackdown on the illegal logging industry. Most sex workers and brothel owners commented that business had been comparatively quiet in the previous year or so.

A factor common to the *lokalisasi* and bars in these areas is their integration in to local economies. Many people depend vicariously on them for their livelihoods. These include cafe owners, masseuses, parking attendants, laundry workers, security guards, clothing and cosmetics peddlers and motorcycle taxi drivers. Profits also flow to the police and local government in the form of administrative fees.

Travelling to East Kalimantan to Sell Sex

Most sex workers in the Sangatta and Bengalon *lokalisasi* and bars are of East Javanese and Madurese origins. Other ethnic identities found in smaller numbers include Sundanese, Buginese and Dayak. None of the sex workers interviewed claimed to have been born or grown up in the mining areas, and, like the majority of adult residents in the area, can all be classed as migrants. Their ages range from teenage to above 40 years, with most of the women in their 20s and 30s. Most of the sex workers come from poor rural or urban backgrounds and have low levels of education, though a small number had completed high school.

A majority of the sex workers interviewed were divorced or separated with children whom they support through their work in East Kalimantan. Their children tend to live with grandparents in their home towns. A small number of the sex workers had never married or were single at the time. The women from East Java and Madura in particular describe a pattern of early arranged marriages that did not last very long. Many share stories of desertion—their husbands remarrying, of husbands' inability to support them or simply, incompatibility. One woman was escaping her husband's creditors. She was slowly paying off his debts by working as an assistant brothel manager and bar tender. A twenty-year-old woman had run away from home in Semarang in order to escape an arranged marriage. Another had brought her baby to Sangatta with her but fostered the child with a local farming family.

Many of the sex workers do not tell their families about the kind of work they do; instead they inform them that they work in shops, hotels, as domestic servants or run small businesses. Some families, however, particularly those who collect remittances at the brothel manager's home in Java, are well aware of the type of work that the women do in Kalimantan even if it is not spoken about openly. A few interview extracts have been provided:

C: Some of us have just passed primary school or junior high school. Our parents did not have the money to send us to school. We are trying to earn our own money so we don't need to ask our parents for it, so that our children will not become like us.

L: I'm from Malang in East Java. I'm divorced. I followed a friend here. I heard about Kalimantan from that friend. Java is far more developed, but it is easier to earn money here. I have two children. My ex-husband's parents look after them. They love my kids like I would, maybe more.... Every month I send home money for my children, but the amount I send depends on the number of clients I get. Sometimes it is very quiet. I would like to work somewhere else one day, become a good person, but it is not yet possible.

While most cited their economic circumstances and lack of a male breadwinning partner as reasons for their decision to enter the sex industry, a small number of the female sex workers placed more emphasis on the fact that this lifestyle was less confining than being married and obeying one's husband:

V: I understood what it meant to be a housewife, but my husband was authoritarian. I was young and wanted to sleep in until the afternoon every day. If I wanted to go somewhere I had to ask for his permission. I was stressed and depressed. Now I'm divorced. On the other hand, now

I'm free. If I compare now to when I had a husband, it is better now.... I don't call my family as it would just make them sad. I can't tell them that I work like this, right.

While many sex workers feel isolated and sad about their circumstances, others quite enjoy their rebellious status and breaking mainstream norms for Indonesian women. These women flaunt their ability to wear sexy clothing, to dance until late at night, drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and have tattoos. 'I got it done when my husband left me,' said one woman about the rose tattoo on her shoulder. Most of the sex workers used assumed names either to hide their original identities or to assume a more sophisticated persona.

The sex workers most often spoke about their situation with the euphemism 'working like this' (*kerja begini*), while some would use the term 'PSK'—the Indonesian acronym for a commercial sex worker. Invariably they called themselves 'workers'. Others in the community would use PSK or '*wanita nakal*' (naughty/bad women) to refer to them. A small number of the sex workers described themselves as business women:

D: I want to earn my own money. To save money. After all there's no guarantee that I'll find a rich husband. When I was first here I was earning a lot of money. While my friends were sending money home I was saving. Now I'm not earning quite as much. But I've been able to buy a house, and motorbikes for all my younger siblings, one by one, and started some transport businesses.... I'm good at business. I've studied what my rich relatives in Jakarta do and copied them.

High Mobility in the Sex Industry

There are many areas where sex is sold in East Kalimantan: in urban centres, transport hubs and in rural districts where there is industry of some kind to support it. In the KPC areas, the sex workers had mostly come through informal recruiting networks. One common way is for current sex workers to go home for holidays and then return to East Kalimantan with friends who are seeking work. Ramadan and Idul Fitri are common times for the women to return home as business tends to be slower during the fasting month and it is the traditional time for migrant workers to visit their families. Often the cost of an airfare to East Kalimantan is borrowed from the brothel owner, and the sex worker can return only having cleared the debt. Some of the sex workers can fall into cycles of debt with the brothel owner. Other networks are more formal; brothel owners often recruit in their home regions and maintain a house there where women seeking work can contact them:

Y: I didn't come with a friend. I came by myself. All because I was annoyed with my husband who went to Malaysia and didn't come back for five years. I found out he had married again. So I ran away. That's all. I work. My brother-in-law helped take me to a particular house and then I came here. My mother cried when I left. I've been home once and then I came back here. My father is old and cannot work. I'll stay here while my child is at school. I don't care if my husband brings his new wife home—the important thing is that my child isn't taken away.

Some of the women claimed that they were tricked into coming and expected some other form of employment. On finding that they were expected to be sex workers they accepted the change for lack of better choices. There was one documented case of trafficking in 2006 where a brothel owner in Kampung Kajang was imprisoned for 18 months for receiving a young woman who had been brought to Kalimantan with the expectation that she would work in a shop and then reported her situation to the police. That this one woman at least was able to protest suggests that the others who were tricked but stayed had made conscious decisions to do so.

There is a high level of mobility among the sex workers. Many, though not all, had worked elsewhere in East Kalimantan before coming to Sangatta or Bengalon, including complexes in Samarinda and Tarakan. While some stay for a number of years, others stay for only a week or two if they dislike the place and prefer to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Some have moved between Kampung Kajang and Segadur and other bars in the area:

T: I have been here for three years. It is better here than when I worked in Tarakan for eight months. It wasn't a city area. There were little rivers everywhere and they were the only places we had for bathing. If there were any disturbances then we had to run away ourselves, find our own safety. There was no security.... Here, I used to be contracted to one man [an illegal logger], but it is better to find a client every night because that way I'm free.

A: My parents arranged a marriage for me when I was 12 years old. Finally I ended up here. I didn't know about this area though I'd been past often. I just followed a friend. I'm half Kutai and half Dayak Kenyah. First I worked in Segadur for three weeks, then I came here. In Segadur there were lots of wismas, there was a lot of competition. Here the Mami [female brothel owner] is nice and so is the food. In Segadur the music has to be turned off at 12am. Here we can play music until morning. There my earnings disappeared on electricity bills and food....Actually,

I can't save money, it just slips through my fingers. I buy clothes. I give it to friends if I'm feeling sorry for them ... before it was ... well now I'm independent. I can travel far and have my own income.

Women who leave the complexes either return home, get married and live in the community, or move to other *lokalisasi* or bars within East Kalimantan. Bar owners are often former sex workers. Those who stay on in the community are often whispered about as being ex-prostitutes and they may try to hide that part of their lives as far as possible. I found that there were different levels of tolerance towards former sex workers depending on the social circles to which they belonged.

Choosing Work Conditions

The sex workers in the KPC area demonstrated that they were weighing up their options and making choices about where they would work, particularly whether they preferred to live in the *lokalisasi* or in individual bars. They make decisions based on the cut of their earnings that they must give their *wisma* owner, whether they must pay for electricity and water use, and whether they are required to buy their food from the *wisma* owner or if they are free to eat anywhere. Unlike the bars, sex workers in the *lokalisasi* must pay weekly and monthly fees to the complex coordinators to fund the security officers and to pay police and local government administration fees.

The advantage of the *lokalisasi* is that it clearly provides a reliable security system for the sex workers. Should one of the women have any trouble with a client due to drunkenness, violence or, more commonly, a refusal to pay, she shouts for help and the security officers will chase down the man and demand payment. In Kampung Kajang, truncheons are kept ready in the security booth. No one can enter or leave the complexes without passing it. None of the sex workers interviewed reported any cases of personal violence against them that the security officers could not handle. While it is possible to leave the complex at night with a client by paying an extra fee, most say that they would not do so unless the client was a trusted regular. The individual bars tend not to provide this kind of security, and in some the workers routinely leave with the client.

The *lokalisasi* security system does, however, represent a check on the sex workers' freedom of movement. In order to leave during the day, to go shopping or to the bank or the doctor, they must first seek permission from their *wisma* owner and then report to the security post and pay a small fee before leaving. They are also usually required to use motorcycle taxis (*ojek*) that are affiliated with the complex. The security officers also check that the sex workers are dressed appropriately for appearing in public. The complex coordinators say

that this system is required in case 'anything should happen' to the women while away. On one occasion, I was present when two sex workers had returned to the *lokalisasi* after having left without getting permission or paying the fee. They were being sternly spoken to by the complex manager, but shrugged and laughed afterwards. They had decided that it was worth risking the punishment to avoid paying the fee.

Agency from Different Perspectives

The district government has periodically announced plans to shift the *lokalisasi* at Kampung Kajang to a more remote location in order to remove 'immoral practices' from the general population (*Kaltim Post*, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d). No concrete steps have been taken as yet and where the budget would come from for the move is contentious. The coordinator of the complex pointed out that any relocation would be far more difficult than the government has bargained for. There would need to be buildings in the new location and a serviceable road and it would disrupt the livelihoods of not only the *wisma* owners and sex workers but all the other people who rely on the complex for their incomes. 'The *lokalisasi* was here first, and all these others moved in to live around us, so trying to remove the complex from the general population is absurd,' he said.

The economic dependency of many women on their husbands or other male relatives is a reality in the KPC areas given the larger labour market for men and mainstream norms about the nuclear family and child care. While one can find plenty of harmonious households with apparently high levels of trust, there are also those where wives expressed their concern that their husbands are cheating on them or spending wages on alcohol, gambling and/or sex. One woman commented, 'here a husband might say he's going out to a coffee shop and come back a father.' In some cases increased income has prompted men to take on second wives or mistresses.

However, it is wrong to think that women are necessarily passive in the face of such pressures. In 2006, a group of women in a Bengalon village narrated how they had come together as a group to successfully close down a nearby bar in response to their fears that the sex workers there would tempt their husbands away. In fact one village man had left his family in order to marry one of the sex workers. The women said that they were also worried about the young men from the village spending their wages on alcohol at the bar. This bar in fact did not close entirely but moved somewhat further away. The bar owner in question

when I asked him about this, agreed that he had been forced to move. He also admitted that the profits from his bar depend on having female waitresses and sex workers.

Nor will many wives passively allow their husbands to visit sex workers. In the *lokalisasi*, I was told that it is not uncommon for a wife to seek her husband in the brothel complexes and to take him home. The complex management does not interfere so long as there is no violence or disruption. They may even extract a man from the complex and deliver him to his wife if she waits outside the complex. One informant, a business owner, admitted that she had had some trouble with her husband being tempted by women and gambling in the past, but that she had made her feelings clear on the matter and he had changed his behaviour. It helped in her case that she was the main income earner in the family and could determine how much money her husband had access to.

Conclusion

Sex work in mining towns is a vexed issue with plenty of varying perspectives depending on one's moral and/or feminist viewpoints. This research shows that while negative consequences certainly exist, sex work should not be straightforwardly classified as a negative impact of mining on *all* women. In the absence of better choices, it often provides a livelihood and an escape from mainstream social constrictions for many women. The sex workers in the KPC area were clearly expressing the reasoning behind the choices they have made both in becoming a sex worker and concerning the conditions of their work. The victim/heroine and forced/voluntary dichotomies have very little meaning in this context.

Where sex workers' agency is acknowledged, so too is the capacity of miner's wives to protest and to act in ways that ensure their own economic survival and personal satisfaction. The picture of the chaste, ignorant and passive woman living in a mining community needs to be replaced with a far more real picture of diversity, opportunism and agency while also acknowledging that mining communities have specific gendered dynamics caused by the male dominated workplace and wider patriarchal traditions.

The 'women and mining' literature has been moderately successful in bringing to light the previously overlooked gender disparities in mining communities. However, policy makers should be cautious when implementing any changes based around depictions of homogenous categories of women in mining communities. In the context of sex work, this is particularly relevant for HIV prevention programs and the targeting of high risk populations.

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