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SHARPENING THE GENDER LENS ON CHINESE INVESTMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

WORKING PAPERS SERIES

Sharpening the Gender Lens on Chinese Investment in Latin America: Assessing the Mining Sector in Peru

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About this initiative

The ***Sharpening the Gender Lens on Chinese Investment in Latin America*** project examines how gender dynamics intersect with the growing presence of Chinese investment in Latin America, with particular attention to the mining sector in Peru and Colombia. Led by the Center for China and Asia-Pacific Studies (CECHAP) at Universidad del Pacífico, the project brings together research on public policy, corporate practices, international standards, and the experiences of women in mining-affected territories.

The project starts from a central question: as Chinese companies become increasingly important actors in Latin America's mining sectors, and participate more in global responsibility initiatives, how are gender considerations incorporated into the governance of their operations? The research finds considerable variation across companies and countries, challenging the idea of a single "Chinese model". Corporate practices are shaped by the interaction of Chinese overseas investment guidelines, host-country institutions, international industry standards, and company-level decisions.

The project team is led by principal researcher Kehan Wang, with Nifta Lau, Alicia Zegarra and the research assistance of Lucciana Rengifo. This working paper series presents their principal findings from Peru and Colombia, alongside evidence from Chinese mining policies and overseas investment regulations, and a review of the existing literature. Together, the four papers identify advances as well as persistent gaps in gender governance, particularly beyond workplace equality and in mining-affected communities, and consider how governments, companies, civil society, and international organizations can strengthen gender-responsive governance of extractive investment.

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Abstract

As global demand for a variety of critical minerals accelerates, large-scale mining in Latin America has regained its strategic importance. Peru, which is one of the largest producers of copper and several other minerals, is now at the forefront of this transition, while Chinese companies have emerged as major players in Peru's mining sector. Despite a growing commitment from Chinese government agencies and companies to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, including gender equality, there is little systematic research on how these commitments will be implemented by Chinese firms overseas.

This report assesses the gender dimension of Chinese investment in mining in Peru using a combination of policy analysis and field-based research. This includes assessing gender dynamics within the mining workforce and impacted communities, analyzing applicable policy frameworks in both Peru and China (national gender equality laws, sector-specific regulatory frameworks, and international industry standards), and evaluating the corporate practices of the various mining companies in the region through their sustainability reports, environmental impact assessments, and other public disclosure statements.

To supplement this institutional assessment, the research presents a case study of the Toromocho copper mine, operated by China National Aluminum Company (Chinalco), in the Junín Region of Peru. Using field-based research methods, including interviews conducted with employees of the mine, residents and officials, local leaders and company representatives, the research identifies how gender dynamics have been influenced by the relocation of the mining town and the broader economic changes resulting from the growth of this large-scale mining operation.

The results indicate that although gender equality is formalized in the national laws and regulations of both Peru and China, gender mainstreaming is currently lacking in official policies governing the mining industry in both countries. Industry-wide initiatives and standards, such as those provided by the China Chamber of Commerce of Metals, Minerals and Chemicals Importers and Exporters (CCCMC) and the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), play an important role in advancing more gender-inclusive practices. However, the application of these largely voluntary standards varies significantly across Chinese mining companies operating in Peru. At the local level, the case study suggests that gendered outcomes are less related to unique Chinese corporate practices and more a result of larger institutional gaps and structural economic changes in mining areas. Therefore, the final section of this report provides targeted policy recommendations for companies, governments, and civil society organizations to create more inclusive and gender responsive mining governance models.

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"Sharpening the Gender Lens on Chinese Investment in Latin America: Assessing the Mining Sector in Peru"

Kehan Wang, Nifta Lau, and Alicia Zegarra - CECHAP[1]

Introduction

As global demand for critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, and rare earths has accelerated in recent years, large-scale mining in Latin America has entered a new phase of strategic importance. Peru's mining industry is the heartbeat of the national economy and stands at the crossroads of sustainability debates. Minerals from Peru are essential to low-carbon technologies as well as to major conventional industries, including defense and construction. However, the extraction and export of these minerals pose challenges to communities in the regions where mines are located. While mining drives economic growth, it has often also deepened social and territorial inequalities, many of which are gendered.

China plays a leading role in most mineral supply chains. Alongside this growing influence, Chinese authorities and firms are increasingly called upon and, in many cases, have formally committed to a range of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards in their overseas operations, including objectives related to gender equality. In principle, this is not entirely new. China has a long-standing domestic policy tradition emphasizing women's workforce participation and has historically positioned itself as a supporter of gender equality in international fora. More recently, Chinese mining companies have also engaged with global industry initiatives and sustainability frameworks. Yet despite these commitments and China's growing presence in Latin America's mining sector, there remains limited systematic evidence on how Chinese actors translate gender-related objectives into practice in their overseas operations.

Peru is an important case in this regard. Chinese companies have been investing in Peru's extractive sector since the early 1990s and have become among the leading investors in the country (Sanborn et al., 2024). By 2025, Chinese companies are operating five producing large mines—Marcona (Shougang Hierro Perú), Shouxin (Minera Shouxin Peru), Toromocho (China National Aluminum Company, Chinalco), Las Bambas (China Minmetals – MMG), and La Arena I (Zijing Mining Group) —and control eight[2] more major projects in the Ministry of Energy and Mines' investment pipeline, accounting for about one-fifth of its value (US$13 billion) (MINEM, 2025a). The scale of this presence has given Chinese mining companies tremendous leverage to transform local economies, physical landscapes, and social structures. Yet some questions remain largely absent from public debate, corporate disclosure, and academic publications: How do Chinese mining companies affect gender dynamics within the industry, and more specifically, women's rights and opportunities? Do these projects reproduce longstanding patterns of exclusion of women from working in and benefiting from mining, or create new spaces for participation and empowerment? And how do Chinese companies compare with others in this notoriously

[1] The authors thank research assistant Lucciana Rengifo for her support in the preparation of this report and the project. We are also grateful to the representatives of Chinalco Perú and the residents of Nueva Morococha and Yauli who generously shared their experiences during interviews and field visits. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this report are solely those of the authors.

[2] Rio Blanco (Zijin-Rio Blanco), La Arena II (Zijin-La Arena), El Galeno (China Minmetals-Lumina Copper), Don Javier (Junefield), Shougang Expansion (Shougang Hierro Peru), Ferrobamba Replacement (MMG-Las Bambas), Pampa de Pongo (Jinzhao), and Toromocho Expansion (Phase II) (Chinalco).

male-dominated industry, including in their engagement with host-country governments and their adherence to gender-related standards?

These questions lie at the center of the project entitled "Sharpening the Gender Lens: Examining China's Investments in Latin America", coordinated by the Center for China and Asia-Pacific Studies (CECHAP) of the Universidad del Pacífico. As part of a broader research and policy dialogue initiative called "Capitalizing on the New Climate Economy in the Americas[3]," this project examines how Chinese investment in South America's extractive and renewable energy sectors affects gender dynamics, and more specifically, the lives and opportunities of women, and how these impacts can be managed more equitably. In its initial stages, it focuses on two main countries, Peru and Colombia. This report takes an initial look at the Peruvian case, while a shorter, companion study focuses on Colombia. Based on primary and secondary sources and original field research, the authors examine whether and how Chinese companies operating in this context integrate gender equality principles into their operations, their own firms, and the communities they serve and affect.

To evaluate the gender outcomes of Chinese companies in Peru's mining industry, the authors first review common dynamics related to gender within the mining workforce and affected communities, drawing on the framework outlined by Bebbington et al. (2026) and Manrique and Sanborn (2021). Then, they analyze the national policy frameworks of both Peru and China, including Peru's sectoral laws within its national gender equality policy and China's domestic laws, ESG norms, and regulations for companies operating abroad. They also review international guidelines such as the recent gender protocol of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), of which Peru is a leading member and in which most Chinese companies voluntarily participate; the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) Mining Principles, the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. They also utilize intensive corporate sources, including companies' annual sustainability reports, environmental impact assessments, and modifications.

Field research was conducted in Morococha, in the Junín Region of central Peru, at the site of Chinalco's large Toromocho copper mine. This builds on earlier field research conducted by other CECHAP & UP researchers (Cano 2019; Sanborn and Chonn 2017; Sanborn and Torres 2009) and by Wang (2024) near the MMG Las Bambas mine site – another large-scale copper mine owned by Chinese capital. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with local officials, community leaders, male and female workers, and company representatives; participant observation; and informal conversations during two site visits to the City of Nueva Morococha and its surrounding settlements, and to the mining camp and operations in Toromocho. The authors also conducted expert interviews in Lima with academics, civil society leaders, and representatives of international organizations. Interviews were conducted in accordance with approved IRB procedures, with oral informed consent and guarantees of confidentiality.

To protect the privacy of certain contributors, particularly those residing in local communities or currently employed in operational roles, a coded identification system is used throughout this report. Interviews are cited in-text by their assigned code, the participant's professional role, and the date of the session (e.g., Interview 11, Pastor in New Morococha, September 2025). A full index of these codes, detailing each interviewee's affiliation and position, is provided in the Appendix for transparency.

[3] Universidad del Pacífico Center for China and Asia-Pacific Studies & Boston University Global Development Policy Center. (2026). Latin America, China and a Just Energy Transition: Working Paper Series.

This report understands gender as a dynamic social construct that shapes power relations, access to resources, exposure to risks, and professional opportunities within the mining industry, rather than as a simple condition that positions people binarily as men or women. While gender equality is relevant to all individuals, this analysis focuses primarily on women. As nowhere in the world do women have equal standing with men in the workforce, the gap is particularly wide in the economic opportunities and experience around mining. Women remain significantly underrepresented in the mining workforce, face structural barriers in what has historically been a male-dominated sector, and often experience disproportionate social and economic impacts in mining-affected communities, as will be shown in the second section of this report. Centering women's experiences, from workers to community members, helps identify where public policies, corporate practices, and social management systems fall short in promoting inclusion, equality, and equity.

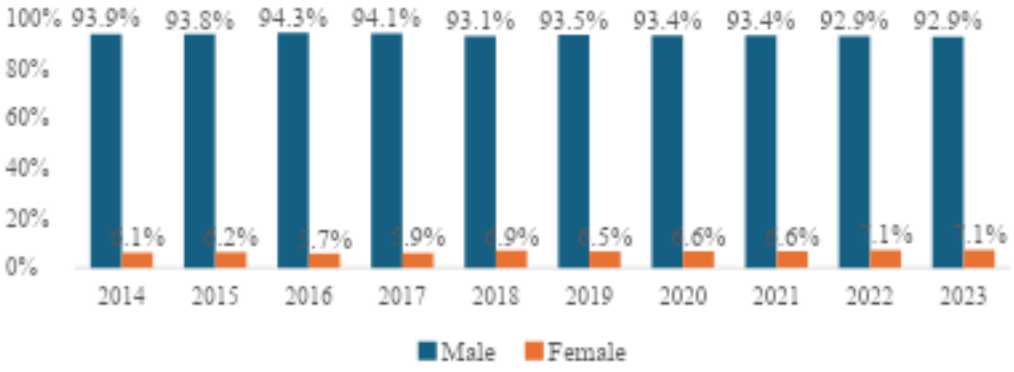
The rest of this report is organized as follows: Section two situates the research within broader literature and discussions about women and mining in Latin America, and identifies the recurring impacts, challenges, and opportunities that tend to be presented for different groups of women who work in, or are affected by, large-scale mining. Section three examines China's domestic gender-equality policies and their extension (or lack thereof) to overseas operations under the Belt and Road Initiative. Section four analyzes Peru's ESG regulation framework, international norms on gender in the industry, and the corporate policies and practices of the major Chinese mining companies operating in Peru. Section five presents the core findings and observations from the case study of Chinalco's Toromocho project. Section six synthesizes findings, discusses policy implications, and offers recommendations for companies, governments, and civil society, while section seven concludes this report.

1. Gender and Mining in Latin America: Impacts, Challenges, and Opportunities

1.1. Key Issues Faced by Women Working in the Mining Sector

Underrepresentation and occupational segregation. Women remain a small minority of Latin America's mining workforce and are largely confined to certain roles. For example, in Peru's mining industry, women accounted for 7.8% of the technical workforce in 2025 (MINEN, 2025b) and overall 13% of the entire workforce (Interview 01, WIM Peru, April 2025). Over the last decade, this number has increased slightly from approximately 6% (Méndez et al., 2024). In contrast, in countries such as Australia, the proportion could be as high as 16% (Weldegiorgis, 2022). Women in Peru's mining industry hold 22% of administrative roles and 11% of managerial roles, whereas only 5% of operational roles and 4% of plant positions are held by women. Consequently, there is a 6% wage gap between men and women in the mining industry (Vaccaro, 2022). This segregation underscores the persistent stereotypes that mining is "men's work". It reinforces women's lack of access to engineering education and vocational training, as well as higher-paying technical and field positions (International Institute for Sustainable Development [IISD], 2023; Orihuela and Gamarra, 2019).

Chart 1. Distribution of Direct Jobs in Mining from 2014 to 2023 by gender (%)



Source: Merino (2026).

Workplace discrimination and harassment. The mining industry is widely characterized by a hyper-masculine workplace culture that reproduces gender hierarchies and normalizes exclusion practices (Heimann et al, 2023; Lahiri-Dutt, 2022). Empirical evidence shows that male colleagues often express doubts about women's qualifications or treat their presence in mining as exceptional, reinforcing stereotypes that undermine women's professional authority and sense of belonging (Benya, 2017; Silva Valadares et al., 2024; Caro et al., 2021; Ledwaba and Nkomo, 2021; Mkhatshwa and Genc, 2022). To cope with these dynamics and gain acceptance, many women adapt by conforming to masculine workplace norms and tolerating everyday forms of harassment or discriminatory behavior, including sexist remarks and exclusion from informal networks, which are often normalized as part of mining culture rather than addressed as structural gender issues (Ringblom, 2022; Norberg and Fältholm, 2018; Kansake et al, 2021).

Lack of supportive infrastructure (sanitation, equipment, childcare). The physical setup of mining operations has traditionally overlooked the needs of women. Occupational safety regimes in mining, such as risk assessment, safety protocols, and training systems, are largely designed around male-dominated

labor norms and fail to account for women's differentiated bodies and exposures, rendering women's specific safety needs largely invisible within formal regulatory and operational frameworks (Lahiri-Dutt, 2011; Somerville and Abrahamsson, 2016; Laplonge, 2017). Moreover, the working regimes at remote mine sites pose challenges for women with family responsibilities. Mining operations often operate in isolated areas with long shift rotations, but companies provide little accommodation for caregiving roles – on-site childcare is virtually non-existent (Segovia et al., 2021; Baruah and Biskupski-Mujanovic, 2021; Caro et al., 2022).

Opportunities and efforts for women's inclusion. Despite prevailing challenges, there are some emerging efforts to improve women's participation in mining. In Peru, the government has signed up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)'s new standard that requires collecting sex-disaggregated data and promoting gender equality in the extractive industries (EITI, 2023). Acknowledging the gap is the meaningful first step. The Women in Mining (WIM) network has been established in most Latin American countries, including Peru, aiming to support women professionals and raise awareness of gender issues in the industry. Large mining companies have also articulated commitments and strategies to foster a more inclusive workplace. For example, BHP Americas established an ambitious goal in 2016 to achieve gender balance in its workforce by 2025, and it has since reported achieving approximately 40% female representation in its Chilean operations (BHP, 2024).

1.2. Key Issues Faced by Women Directly and Indirectly Impacted by Mining

Disrupted livelihoods and economic exclusion. Large-scale mining projects dramatically reshape local economies and often disrupt women's traditional livelihoods. In Peru, many mines are located in the rural highlands, where communities rely heavily on agriculture and livestock. Mega-projects have drastically altered the landscape and environment and may strip women of resources they depend on, such as subsistence farming plots, water sources, and foraging areas (Bebbington et al., 2008; Himley, 2026). As León (2016) observed in the Tintaya case in Peru, Resettlement of villages for mine development could also widen the gender gaps in the rural communities. Because of gender-biased land ownership and social norms, men frequently receive and control the compensation funds or the new jobs on offer. Women, especially older and indigenous women, tend to be left out. Relocated women may lose access to communal lands or struggle to qualify for jobs in the new mining economy due to lower literacy and educational attainment.

Increased care burdens and shifts in gender roles. The social changes that accompany mining frequently intensify women's unpaid labor and caregiving roles (Castillo et al., 2023). When men in a rural community take jobs in the newly developed mines, women are left to fill the gap in agriculture. Rural women in the new local mining economy must care for children, tend to crops and animals, and perform domestic tasks on their own while their husbands are away earning a mine wage. The result is a heavier unpaid work burden on women and worsened financial dependency. Even when mining creates new jobs for women, these positions are often extensions of care work, such as cooking, cleaning, or providing lodging for male workers (Pérez et al., 2019). While these activities generate income for women, they are only low-paying and entrench old gender roles in the mining economy.

Health and environmental impacts. The exposure of mineworkers to environmental and physical hazards has been widely studied, producing serious respiratory diseases, noise-induced hearing loss, cancers, severe stress, and physical injuries (ICMM, 2016). Because most mineworkers are men, these

impacts are undeniably gendered, disproportionately affecting workers' own lives and indirectly those of their families. Yet large-scale mining also affects the local environment beyond the mine site, and the ecological degradation also tends to have gender-differentiated consequences, often hitting women and children hardest. In rural areas, women are usually responsible for securing water, growing food, and maintaining family health – all activities that are sensitive to environmental quality. Large-scale mining can lead to water contamination or depletion, soil degradation, and other forms of pollution (e.g., dust and heavy metals), undermining subsistence livelihoods (Jenkins, 2014; Svampa, 2019).

Beyond the impacts on livelihoods, women also bear the health burdens in multiple ways. Pregnant women and young children are particularly vulnerable to toxins. As primary caregivers, women also shoulder the responsibility of caring for family members who fall ill from mining-related pollution, adding to their stress and labor (Seck and Simons, 2021; Adomako and Hausermann, 2023). Despite these gender-differentiated challenges, mining policies, including regulations governing environmental impact assessments, have been gender-blind. Regulatory agencies rarely systematically evaluated or tried to mitigate the gendered impacts of environmental damage. This negligence also means that corporate environmental mitigation plans often fail to address the needs of women (Li, 2009; Derechos Humanos sin Fronteras, 2019; Soria et al., 2021).

Rising gender-based violence and social disruption. Mining booms can bring rapid social change to communities, which may trigger increases in gender-based violence and other social problems. The influx of male workers from outside the community, the sudden abundance of cash, and the proliferation of bars, alcohol, and sex work around mining areas may have contributed to heightened domestic conflicts. Men may engage in heavy drinking or drug use, which in turn is linked to higher rates of intimate partner violence (Warren and McAuliffe, 2021; Mishra et al., 2024). Changes in family dynamics, such as women becoming more economically active or jealousy and tension arising from men being away for extended periods, may also prompt men to reassert control over women (Kotsadam et al., 2017; Weill, 2024). Such violence is not only a personal tragedy but also restricts women's ability to engage in public life or benefit from any new opportunities mining brings.

Exclusion from decision-making and community benefits. Although women are very active in the social domain, even in remote rural areas impacted by mining, they remain routinely excluded from formal decision-making processes regarding mining projects. This could occur during consultation and consent (social licensing) processes, in community assemblies, during negotiations over impact benefits, and in local governance structures that manage mining revenues (Cuadros, 2010). The lack of female representation in decision-making means that issues particularly affecting women, such as the need for improved healthcare, water quality, childcare, or equitable compensation, may be overlooked in agreements with mining companies. It also means women have less influence over how mining funds are used, which often results in projects that benefit men (for example, funding for male-dominated industries or infrastructure projects) rather than addressing women's priorities (Orihuela et al., 2014; Rickard, 2020; Huaylla Quispe, 2018; Romero, 2019).

Opportunities for empowerment and positive change. While the challenges are formidable, mining has also opened some avenues for women's empowerment in certain contexts, and ongoing efforts are addressing gender disparities (Bury, 2004; Jenkins, 2014). For example, the influx of new economic opportunities and infrastructure allows local women to travel more freely and access new public spaces, such as markets, training centers, or town hall meetings, more than before. This spatial mobility translates

into women gaining slightly more say in household decisions and more opportunities to engage in small business or other jobs (even though often revolve around caregiving and are underpaid), thereby enhancing their economic independence (Castillo, 2023). One study even finds that the presence of mining near the community may reduce domestic violence, as women have access to more education and employment opportunities (Chavez, 2023).

The presence of mining frequently brings NGOs and government programs into the producing region for conflict mitigation or development, some of which target women for leadership training, microenterprise support, or education scholarships (Boulding, 2014). Some mining companies have started incorporating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs to offer women technical training or support women's businesses and cooperatives (See Section Four).

Nonetheless, women's organizing and resilience have also been notable (Venes et al., 2023). Across Latin America, women affected by mining have formed organizations and networks to advocate for rights. These acts of resistance and participation can shift community perceptions and gradually validate women's political agency. Women have also been taking on leadership roles in local governments and governance structures (Bebbington and Bury, 2013; Li, 2015; Leinius, 2021) and actively participate in the negotiation of benefits-sharing agreements with mining companies affecting their communities.

2. Women and Mining in China and China's Overseas Commitments

2.1. Women's Employment and Gender Policy in China's Mining Industry

China has made unprecedented strides in women's advancement over the past four decades. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, held in Beijing, gender equality has become both a political principle and a milestone of economic modernization. Thirty years later, in October 2025, China hosted another high-level international forum for women – the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. In his keynote address, President Xi Jinping reaffirmed China's commitment to advancing women's rights and called for a new memorandum for the global pursuit of gender equality and women's development (Xinhua, 2025a).

Earlier in 2025, China released a white paper titled "China's Achievements in Women's Well-Rounded Development in the New Era," celebrating domestic progress in education, health, and labor participation (Xinhua, 2025b). It portrayed Chinese women as both beneficiaries and active participants in economic growth, science, and political governance, highlighting positive transformations towards gender equality in all aspects of Chinese society. Yet this success story has been uneven across sectors, particularly in heavy industries historically dominated by men, such as mining, construction, and energy. According to the China Labor Statistics Yearbook (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022) published by China's National Bureau of Statistics, women constitute about 15% of total mining employment, compared to more than 40% of the national workforce overall.

Gender equality in employment is established within China's domestic legal framework; however, Chinese law also permits exclusions for jobs deemed "unsuitable" for women, such as underground mining and other physically demanding jobs. For example, the Employment Promotion Law, ratified in 2015, prevents gender bias in recruitment and forbids discrimination based on pregnancy or marital status. However, although general gender-based hiring barriers are illegal, employers may exclude women from

state-designated harmful roles (National People's Congress, 2015). Similarly, the Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, ratified in 1992 and revised in 2018, mandates equal pay, promotion opportunities, and protection during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, and prohibits dismissal or pay cuts for maternity reasons; however, it also restricts women from "unsuitable" jobs and labor (National People's Congress, 2018). The "unsuitable" jobs and labor for women are specified in China's Labor Law, ratified in 1994 and revised in 2018, the Labor Security Supervision Regulations issued in 2004, and the Special Provisions on Labor Protection for Female Employees issued in 2012 (Liu and Kang, 2025).

In the mining industry, women were allowed to participate in both surface and underground work until the enactment of the Provisions on Labor Protection for Female Employees, which banned women from underground mining in 1988 (Yao, 2006). The restrictions are justified on the basis that such work has higher risks of occupational disease and injury and can affect women's reproductive health and childbearing capacity (China CDC, 2016). The justifications are grounded in both Confucian patriarchal traditions that position women primarily as reproducers and caretakers within the family (Evans, 2021; Rosenlee, 2023) and in the poor working conditions and meager labor protections during the first years of China's economic reforms. It protected women from hazardous working conditions in the mining industry; however, the increasing adoption of automation, remote operations, and artificial intelligence has been transforming the industry, making it less reliant on physical labor and making gender-based job restrictions obsolete (Huang et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, these legal "protections" have already shaped a culture where the notion that women cannot handle certain mining tasks is widely accepted – effectively institutionalizing discrimination. Women in the Chinese mining industry are perceived as less reliable, more expensive, or physically incapable, thus reinforcing gendered hiring practices (Yao, 2006). A UNDP-Peking University report on the transition in China's coal industry, the leading sector of China's mining industry, shows that 80% of workers are men, and women are concentrated in management and logistics rather than core production. It also documents that women's share of employment in the coal mining and washing sector fell from 21.9% in 2003 to 13.3% in 2020, despite advances in automation, and women are more likely than men to lose jobs during restructuring or be left out of hiring even in boom periods (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] & Peking University Institute of Energy [PKUIE], 2023). Similarly, a Work Bank report (Foreign Environmental Cooperation Center [FECO], 2024) finds that, in the Chinese metallurgical industry, amid structural adjustment and technological advances, overall employment decreased by 30.51%, while female employment decreased by 40.31%.

In terms of the gendered social impacts of mining, in contrast to Latin America, there has apparently been minimal academic attention in China. However, the Chinese-language literature in resource-dependent cities sometimes captures the socio-economic vulnerabilities of women, documenting challenges faced by women under the pressure of mine restructuring and closing, such as household income insecurity, shifts in family responsibilities, and increasing unemployment of women in non-mining jobs (Xinhua, 2017; Wang, 2021; Fu et al., 2020).

In sum, gender equality in the mining industry and the gendered impacts of mining more broadly remain profoundly marginalized topics in China. This marginalization stems in part from the legal framework, which continues to bar women from core operational roles and underground work, and in part from enduring cultural stereotypes that cast women as physically weaker or unsuitable for technical, high-risk,

or non-logistical positions. Their perceptions are reinforced further by long-standing state concerns about women's reproductive health, which historically justified occupational restrictions while entrenching gender segregation within the sector. As a result, the relationship between mining and women is largely absent from mainstream discourse, and discussions of mining's impacts on women tend to surface only indirectly, typically as a byproduct of broader social problems in resource-dependent or resource-exhausted areas, such as unemployment, out-migration, or domestic violence, rather than as explicit gender issues.

Within this context of institutionalized gender blindness, it would be reasonable to expect Chinese mining companies to carry similar assumptions and blind spots into their overseas operations, shaping their labor practices, community engagement approaches, and social responsibility agendas in host countries. However, our research reveals a more nuanced reality. In practice, Chinese companies do not simply transplant domestic norms abroad; instead, they often adapt to the prevailing gender norms and industry standards in the host countries.

2.2. China's Overseas Commitment and the Belt and Road Initiative

China's emergence as a major outward investor has been reinforced alongside the rise of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the country's flagship global development strategy since 2013. The Chinese government frames the BRI as a vision of transcontinental connectivity, a promise to deepen trade, investment, and infrastructure integration, and a narrative of shared development and prosperity for participating countries (Xinhua, 2023). As China's global footprint expanded through large-scale infrastructure finance and investments in mining, energy, construction, and logistics, the Chinese government increasingly recognized that "going out" exposed both companies and the state to new reputational, environmental, and social risks abroad. Over the past decade, this realization has driven Beijing to issue an expanding set of guidelines, instructions, voluntary norms, and policy signals to shape corporate conduct overseas.

These norms did not emerge solely from Beijing's own initiative. The pressure from host-country institutions, civil society organizations, transnational advocacy networks, international financial institutions, and competing global standards has led China to recognize that the behavior of its companies abroad, particularly state-owned companies, has become a matter of diplomatic sensitivity and public scrutiny (Nedopil Wang et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Chinese companies themselves also began to request clearer rules and better guidance, as they encountered unfamiliar legal systems, cultural contexts, and ESG expectations in host countries. Over time, what emerged was not a coherent legal framework, but rather a fragmented constellation of directives, spanning different ministries, agencies, regulators, and industry associations.

Most documents guiding companies overseas take the form of policy mandates, guiding opinions, and non-binding guidelines, rather than enforceable laws. They primarily express the government's baseline expectations, political priorities, and the conduct it proffers, but they lack direct sanctions for noncompliance. Among the most significant instruments are those issued by ministries under the State Council, particularly the National Development and Reform Commission (NRDC), Ministry of Commerce (MofCom), Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), all of which issued guidelines on green development, ecological protection, sustainable financing,

and the environmental conduct of overseas projects (See Table 1). Many of these emerged after the first Belt and Road Forum in 2017, when green development became an explicit pillar of BRI (NRDC, 2023).

The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) also stepped in with guidelines requiring central SOEs to improve ESG disclosure, strengthen social responsibility, and enhance the quality of their overseas operations since 2022. In addition, the national financial regulators, including the People's Bank of China, the Ministry of Finance, and the China Securities Regulatory Commission, have pushed forward sustainability disclosure systems that increasingly resemble global ESG standards.

Table 1. Major Official Norms for Overseas Operations

Key Policies	**Year**	**Institutions Involved**
Green Credit Guideline《绿色信贷指引》	2012	CBRC
Guideline of Environment Protection for Overseas Investment and Cooperation《对外投资合作环境保护指南》	2013	MEE, MofCom
Guidelines for Establishing the Green Financial System《关于构建绿色金融体系的指导意见》	2016	PBC, MoF, NDRC, MEE, CBRC, CSRC, CIRC
Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road《关于推进绿色"一带一路"建设的指导意见》	2017	NDRC, MEE, MFA, MofCom
Guiding Principles on Financing the Development of the Belt and Road《"一带一路"融资指导原则》	2017	MoF
The Belt and Road Ecological and Environmental Cooperation Plan《"一带一路"生态环境保护合作规划》	2017	MEE
Guiding Principles on Financing the Development of the Belt and Road《"一带一路"融资指导原则》	2017	MFA
Green Investment Principles《"一带一路"绿色投资原则》	2018	PBC
Green Development Guidance for BRI Projects《"一带一路"项目绿色发展指南》	2019, 2021	BRI International Green Development Coalition (MEE)
Guidelines for Green Development of Outbound Investment and International Cooperation《对外投资合作绿色发展工作指引》	2021	MEE, MofCom
Opinions on Jointly Promoting Green Development of the Belt and Road《国家发展改革委等部门关于推进共建"一带一路"绿色发展的意见》	2022	NDRC
Green development guidelines for overseas investment and cooperation《对外投资合作建设项目生态环境保护指南》	2022	MEE, MofCom

Work Plan for Improving the Quality of Central SOE-controlled Listed Companies《提高央企控股上市公司质量工作方案》	2022	SASAC
Guiding Opinions on Central Enterprises Fulfilling Their Social Responsibilities with High Standards in the New Era《关于新时代中央企业高标准履行社会责任的指导意见》	2024	SASAC
Guidelines for Self-regulation of Listed Companies - Sustainable Development Report (Trial) (Draft for Comments)《上市公司自律监管指引——可持续发展报告（试行）（征求意见稿）》	2024	CSRC
Corporate Sustainability Disclosure Guidelines - Basic Guidelines (Trial Implementation)《企业可持续披露准则——基本准则（试行）》	2024	MoF, MFA, NRDC, MIIT, MEE, MofCom, PBC, SASAC, NFRA
Guidelines for Overseas Social Responsibility Fulfillment by Enterprises《企业境外履行社会责任工作指引》	2025	MofCom

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Alongside the government, China's main industry associations of companies with overseas operations, especially the China Chamber of Commerce for Metals, Minerals and Chemicals Importers and Exporters (CCCMC), China International Contractors Association (CHINCA), and Chinese Mining Association (CMA), have also issued industry-level guidelines. For example, CCCMC has been issuing guidelines on social responsibility for overseas mining investments since 2014, and its 2022 version aligns with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s guidelines for responsible mineral supply chains (CCCMC, 2022). Based on these guidelines and standards, CCCMC also provides auditing services to its member companies to detect major risks in their operations and supply chains (Interview 16, CCCMC, April 2025). In late 2025, CMA issued the first guidelines for ESG disclosure and ESG rating standards in the Chinese mining industry (CMA, 2025). Although also non-binding, these norms are notable for referencing international standards on responsible sourcing, supply chain due diligence, community engagement, and risk management.

Taken together, many of these guidelines affirm China's commitments to environmental protection, community engagement, anti-corruption, safeguarding local labor interests, respecting indigenous communities, improving social outcomes, etc. These documents articulate China's desire to promote green BRI, align with global sustainability trends, respond to international expectations, and portray itself as a responsible major power that can offer high-quality development cooperation. But their limitations are also clear: none of them are legally binding with enforceable obligations, and almost all lack grievance mechanisms, monitoring systems, or penalties for non-compliance. Companies are encouraged to report positive stories while largely avoiding disclosure of overseas controversies.

Gender is an especially stark area of omission. While many guidelines reference "social responsibility" or "inclusive development," almost none include concrete gender criteria: no gender-sensitive impact assessment, consultation process, social responsibility indicator, or protections for women in affected communities. The recent CMA's ESG disclosure guideline mentioned gender equality, but only in terms of equal pay for work of equal value (CMA, 2025). One of the very few documents that sheds light on the

gender lens of Chinese companies' overseas practices is the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA)'s report, *China's Practices in International Development Cooperation – Women's Empowerment and Development* (2025), which presents positive case studies of China's international cooperation projects and highlights women's participation. However, there is little documented institutional effort to promote gender equality in those stories.

While China's overseas commitments under the BRI have evolved substantially, and the growing constellation of guidelines signals real interest in improving corporate conduct abroad, the system remains fragmented, voluntary, and extremely weak in its approach to gender. Without binding rules, grievance mechanisms, or gender-specific requirements, the current framework offers limited protection for women affected by Chinese overseas investment. In Latin America, where Chinese companies are playing increasingly important roles in the mining industry, relying solely on Chinese domestic legislation and regulations for overseas operations is far from sufficient to advance gender equality within the industry and the interests of women in affected communities. For this reason, the next section of this report reviews the host country's (particularly Peru's) policy framework on gender equality, the international norms to which the country and other multinational companies subscribe, and the practices of Chinese mining companies in compliance with these norms and regulations.

3. Chinese Mining Companies in Peru: Policies, Compliance, and Practices

3.1. Peru's ESG and Gender Regulatory Framework

In Peru, as in China, there is robust general legal protection of women in the workplace, reflected in the Constitution and other cross-cutting laws. Specific labor regulations establish essential protections, including maternity leave (Law No. 30367), the requirement for workplace lactation rooms (Law No. 29896), equal pay for work of equal value (Law No. 30709), and non-discrimination in hiring and training (Law No. 26772) (Vaccaro, 2022). Furthermore, Peru maintains a stringent legal framework to penalize sexual harassment in the workplace and educational institutions, as set out in Law No. 27942 and Articles 176-B and 176-C of the Peruvian Penal Code.

To reinforce this legal framework across state agencies, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables – MIMP) enacted the Supreme Decree (D.S.) No. 005-2017-MIMP[4], which established formal mechanisms for gender equality within national and regional government entities. This was followed by the National Gender Equality Policy (2019–2030), approved via D.S. No. 008-2019-MIMP, which mandated the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all public planning, service provision, and monitoring processes (MIMP, 2019). At the sectoral level, the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MINEM) integrated this approach by establishing the Committee for Gender Equality (*Comité para la Igualdad de Género*) via R.M. No.

[4] Supreme Decree that provides for the creation of a mechanism for Gender Equality (Decreto Supremo que dispone la creación de un mecanismo para la Igualdad de Género).

394-2017-MEM/DM[5]. This mechanism was later formalized as a permanent body through R.M. 020-2019-MEM/OGPP-OPPIC[6] (Vaccaro, 2022).

However, this framework is undergoing a significant transformation with the enactment of the Equality of Opportunity Law (*Ley de Igualdad de Oportunidades*) (Law No. 32535) in December 2025. This law repealed the previous Equality of Opportunity Law (Law No. 28983) of 2007 and explicitly eliminated the "gender perspective" (*enfoque de genero*) from public policies, replacing the term with "equal opportunities between women and men". Under this new mandate, all existing policies, programs, and training must be adjusted to remove the gender approach in favor of a vision of equal rights based on biological and scientific criteria (Congreso de la República, 2025). Beyond the challenges posed by this "de-mainstreaming" of gender, the existing legal framework remains compromised by general protections that are not specifically tailored to the distinct dynamics of mining workforces or the unique vulnerabilities of women in mining-impacted communities.

Regarding the mining sector specifically, Peru's multilayered regulatory system is sophisticated but far from streamlined. It combines modern environmental authorities, sector-driven economic ministries, and a fragmented approach to social issues. Following the logic mapped by Merino (2026), there are three core pillars in Peru's social and environmental management framework in mining: environmental certification and management, environmental enforcement and remediation, and social governance (including citizen participation, prior consultation, and labor protections). Gender-related provisions intersect with this architecture unevenly, revealing a substantial gap between national gender policy commitments and their integration into the mining sector (See Table 2. Peru's Gender Regulatory Framework for the Mining Industry).

Table 2. Peru's Gender Regulatory Framework for the Mining Industry

Category	Key Regulations	Gender Provisions
Environmental Certification	D.S. 040-2014-EM; D.S. 042-2017-EM; D.S. 014-92-EM; Law No. 28611	No gender criteria
Supervision	D.S. 007-2012-MINAM	None
Remediation	Law No. 28271	No gender lens
Participation	D.S. 002-2009-MINAM; D.S. 028-2008-EM; R.M. 304-2008-MEM/DM	No gender-sensitive participation requirements
Prior Consultation	Law No. 29785; R.M. 403-2019-MINEM/DM	No gender-specific processes
Labor	Law No. 29783; Law No. 28048; D.S. 009-2004-TR; D.S. 024-2016-EM;	Gender-specific OHS provisions

Sources: (Merino, 2026) and authors' own elaboration.

The first two pillars of Peru's social and environmental management framework concern environmental regulations, which are built primarily on the General Mining Law (D.S. 014-92-EM) enacted in 1992, the

[5] Creating the "Committee for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Energy and Mines (Crean el "Comité para la Igualdad de Género del Ministerio de Energía y Minas).

[6] Recognizing the "Committee for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Energy and Mines" as a permanent mechanism (Reconocen al "Comité para la Igualdad de Género del Ministerio de Energía y Minas" como mecanismo de carácter permanente).

General Environmental Law (Law No. 28611) passed in 2005, and the subsequent reforms that created the Ministry of Environment (MINAM) in 2008 and the Environmental Assessment and Enforcement Agency OEFA (*Organismo de Evaluación y Fiscalización Ambiental*), and later in 2011, the environmental certification agency SENACE (Servicio Nacional de Certificación Ambiental para las Inversiones Sostenibles). These institutions were designed to counterbalance the sector ministries that historically promoted extractive activity, especially the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MINEM; Merino, 2018; 2026).

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the central tool of environmental certification, the first pillar of Peru's ESG framework. Based on the project's environmental risk, there is a hierarchy of instruments: Environmental Impact Statement (Declaración de Impacto Ambiental -DIA) is required for mining projects with a low probability of generating significant negative environmental impacts; Semi-detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (Estudio de Impacto Ambiental Semidetallado – EIA-sd) addresses projects with the potential to cause moderate environmental impacts; Detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (Estudio de Impacto Ambiental Detallado – EIA-d) is obligatory for large-scale projects that could produce significant negative environmental impacts. SENACE under MINAM is responsible only for the most complex and high-risk EIA-d, while MINEM retains control over smaller instruments.

While these instruments embed procedural safeguards, such as baseline studies, impact evaluations, mitigation plans, and monitoring obligations, they are formally gender neutral. There are two laws governing the environmental certification process in mining, D.S. 040-2014-EM[7] and D.S. 042-2017-EM[8], the texts of which do not require gender-disaggregated data, gender analysis, or identification of differentiated impacts on women. The language consistently references "populations (poblaciónes)", "communities (comunidades)", and "(affected) persons (personas)" without recognizing gendered vulnerabilities or roles with extractive economies (MINEM, 2014; El Peruano, 2017).

The second pillar concerns environmental enforcement and remediation. OEFA oversees environmental monitoring and sanctions, applying typified infractions listed on D.S. 007-2012-MINAM[9] and sector regulations. As for remediation, Peru is the first country in Latin America to establish a legal framework for mining environmental liabilities (*pasivos ambientales mineros*) (PAM) through Law No. 28271 in 2004 (Saade Hazin, 2014). As with certification, these monitoring and remediation instruments are devoid of gender content. They define environmental damage and liabilities in technical terms and focus almost exclusively on physical and ecological restoration, overlooking the gendered impacts that often accompany environmental infraction and resource depletion (MINAM, 2012; MINAM, 2017).

The third pillar, social governance, is broader and includes citizen participation, prior consultation with indigenous peoples, labor regulations, and transparency initiatives. Procedurally, Peru has robust participation rules in the mining sector. Participation takes place in the preparation, evaluation, and approval of environmental studies and throughout the project life cycle. The general regulation D.S.

[7] Environmental Protection and Management Regulation for Mining Exploitation, Beneficiation, General Labor, Transportation, and Storage Activities (Reglamento de Protección y Gestión Ambiental para las Actividades de Explotación Beneficio, Labor General, Transporte y Almacenamiento Minero)
[8] Environmental Protection Regulation for Mining Exploration Activities (Reglamento de Protección Ambiental para las Actividades de Exploración Minera)
[9] Table of Classification of Infractions Applicable to Large- and Medium-Sized Mining (Cuadro de Tipificación de Infracciones aplicables a la Gran y Mediana Minería)

002-2009-MINAM[10] outlines transparency and participation rights for all environmental matters. Two special regulations, D.S. 028-2008-EM[11] and (Ministerial Resolution) R.M. 304-2008-MEM/DM[12], detail various participation mechanisms, including access to executive summaries and the content of environmental studies, advertising participation notices, conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups, guided tours of project facilities, participatory workshop and public hearings, and access to "dialogue tables (*mesas de diálogos*)" etc.

Regarding prior consultation, Peru was among the first Latin American countries to adopt domestic legislation (Law 29785) in 2011, in alignment with ILO Convention 169, to recognize the right to prior consultation of indigenous peoples. As of March 2025, the Ministry of Culture has reported 40 prior consultations in mining out of a total of 111 processes. In practice, prior consultation in Peru incorporates fewer rights than the international standard of free, prior, and informed consent established in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the rulings of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Merino, 2026). According to MINEM (R.M. 403-2019-MINEM/DM[13]), consultation applies to the resolution authorizing the start of exploration or exploitation operations, not to the granting of concessions or to the EIA evaluation processes. Critics argue that consultation should occur earlier in the project development stage, and that if it happens only when real activities begin, indigenous groups are left with no real option but to accept the project (Merino, 2025 & 2026).

Despite the breadth of the mechanisms of citizen participation and prior consultation, they contain no explicit gender-sensitive mandates. Participation is framed in universal terms, without acknowledging the well-documented structural barriers that women, especially indigenous and rural women, face in public deliberation. The prior consultation procedures, too, do not mandate separate spaces for women's gender-balanced representation or for gender-specific impact assessment. Empirical research on women's participation in these processes suggests that few indigenous women actively speak up or are called upon (De la Cruz Huaman 2022; Potesta, 2020; Sanborn, Ramirez, and Hurtado 2017).

More concrete gender content appears in the labor regulations, particularly in the occupational health and safety framework, deriving primarily from the general Occupational and Health and Safety (OHS) Law (Law No. 29783) and regulations protecting pregnant workers (Law No. 28048[14] and D.S. 009-2004-TR[15]). These norms prohibit assigning pregnant workers to hazardous tasks and require employers to assess risks to reproductive health. In mining specifically, these protections apply through

[10] Regulation on Transparency, Access to Public Environmental Information, and Citizen Participation and Consultation in Environmental Matters (reglamento sobre transparencia, acceso a la información pública ambiental y participación y consulta ciudadana en asuntos ambientales)
[11] Regulations for Citizen Participation in the Mining Subsector (Reglameto de Participación Ciudadana en el Subsector Minero)
[12] Rules governing the Citizen Participation Process in the Mining Subsector (Normas que regulan el Proceso de Participación Ciudadana en el Subsector Minero)
[13] Administrative procedures of the mining subsector subject to prior consultation (Procedimientos Administrativos del subsector minero sujetos a Consulta Previa)
[14] Protection for pregnant women who perform work that puts their health and/or the normal development of the embryo and fetus at risk (Protección a favor de la mujer gestante que realiza labores que pongan en riesgo su salud y/o el desarrollo normal del embrión y el feto)
[15] Protection for pregnant women who perform work that puts their health at risk (Protección a favor de la mujer gestante que realiza labores que pongan en riesgo su salud)

sectoral safety regulations and technical manuals (D.S. 024-2016-EM[16]). Nevertheless, these are general labor protections, not designed to address the broader gender dynamics of mining workforces.

Taken together, Peru's ESG architecture is sophisticated in environmental and procedural terms but profoundly gender-blind in design and implementation. For companies operating in Peru, including Chinese firms, this creates an ambiguous regulatory environment. Although equality between men and women is declared a national priority, the core regulations do not require gender responsive practices. As a result, gender considerations depend primarily on the institutional strength of specific agencies, the pressure from civil society actors, and the voluntary policies of foreign investors, rather than on binding domestic rules. Fortunately, in Peru, the mining sector is very open to multinational investment, and, as shown in the following subsection, international norms and industry standards are well regarded.

3.2. International Norms and Industry Standards on Gender Equality in Peru

In addition to Peru's domestic regulatory framework, mining companies operating in the country are increasingly evaluated against international norms and voluntary industrial standards addressing gender equality, labor rights, and social inclusion. Although these measures are not legally binding under Peruvian law nor universally adopted by international mining companies, they shape the definition of responsible mining practice and serve as essential reference points for ESG government policy, corporate reporting, lender requirements, and stakeholder expectations. For companies seeking to secure financing and operate within global supply chains, alignment with these standards has become increasingly consequential.

At the multilateral level, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development establishes gender equality as a core objective of development policy. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 (Gender Equality) is complemented by commitments under SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), all of which have direct implications for extractive industries. In mining, these goals mean expectations for women's access to formal employment, occupational safety, participation in decision-making, and mitigation of gender-differentiated social and environmental impacts (UNDP et al., 2016).

The primary vehicle for corporate alignment with these norms is the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). The UNGC is the world's largest voluntary corporate sustainability initiative. It is based on Ten Principles derived from UN declarations on human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption. Its mission is to mainstream these principles into business strategies and catalyze action towards the 17 SDGs (UNGC, 2022; 2024). Within this framework, the UN Global Compact Strategy for China (2022-2025) aims to localize international sustainability standards in the Chinese corporate context while emphasizing the responsibilities of Chinese companies as they expand internationally (UNGC, 2022). Its 2024 guidance, *Women at Work: Chinese Companies Taking Action on Gender Equality*, compiles case studies of Chinese enterprises implementing gender-responsive ESG practices. Although this document primarily focuses on domestic cases, it demonstrates UNGC's efforts to facilitate the adoption of international gender norms by Chinese companies (UNGC, 2024).

[16] Occupational Safety and Health Regulations in Mining (Reglamento de Seguridad y Salud Ocupacional en Minería)

A more specialized roadmap for corporate gender mainstreaming is provided by the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), developed jointly by UN Women and the UNGC. The WEPs articulate seven core principles covering leadership and governance, workplace equality, health and safety, education and training, enterprise development, community engagement, and transparency. Although sector-agnostic, the WEPs have been increasingly applied to the extractive industries, which are recognized as high-risk environments for gender-based discrimination and exclusion (UN Women, n.d.). In Latin America, the WEPs have become a critical reference point used by multilateral development banks, donor agencies, and industry leaders to evaluate corporate gender performance (Berniell et al., 2023; UN Women, 2020).

Beyond broad multilateral commitments, sector-specific standards further refine these global expectations for gender equality, with the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) playing a central role in defining best practices for what it claims is roughly one-third of the global industry (ICMM, 2023). In 2022, the ICMM updated its Mining Principles to include Performance Expectation 3.9, which mandates that member companies "eliminate all forms of harassment and discrimination" and promote an inclusive workplace (ICMM, 2022). This was followed by a landmark Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Position Statement in 2023, in which all 25+ member companies collectively committed to eliminating discrimination, harassment, and assault in their workplaces and to fostering a positive cultural shift in the communities where they operate (ICMM, 2023).

Membership in the ICMM entails structured peer accountability. Since 2020, ICMM has adopted the Assurance and Validation Procedure, under which members must undergo mandatory third-party validation at the asset level to confirm they meet the Performance Expectations (PE). When an auditor validates PE 3.8 (Women's Rights) and PE 3.9 (Inclusive Workplace), they look for specific criteria such as documented anti-harassment policies, evidence of gender-sensitive PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), and interview data conforming to an inclusive culture. Failure to demonstrate evidence of implementation results in a "Does Not Meet" rating, which is disclosed in corporate reporting and signals a systemic breakdown in the member company's commitment to responsible mining (ICMM, 2020).

Certification-based initiatives such as the Copper Mark and the International Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) translate ESG and gender commitments into independently verified operational standards. The Copper Mark requires producers of copper and other minerals to undergo third-party assessments against 32 ESG criteria. Criterion 18 specifically targets gender equality, requiring companies to demonstrate proactive risk management and to implement inclusive practices (The Copper Mark, n.d.). IRMA, distinguished by its multi-stakeholder governance structure, explicitly integrates gender equality into its Standard for Responsible Mining, mandating anti-harassment measures and recognizing the structural barriers women face in the sector (IRMA, 2022). Recent memoranda of understanding between IRMA and CCCMC signal an emerging effort to align Chinese industry associations and their standards with more rigorous international verification frameworks (IRMA, 2025a).

Transparency mechanisms have also evolved to incorporate gender considerations. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), initially focused on revenue disclosure and anti-corruption, has progressively integrated gender-disaggregated data and inclusive participation requirements. The 2023 EITI Standard requires implementing countries and participating companies to disclose gender-disaggregated employment and wage data and to integrate gender perspectives into multi-stakeholder governance processes (EITI, 2023). Peru, an EITI implementing country since 2007, is

undergoing validation against the updated standard (EITI, 2025). Even though Peru's current validation does not strictly align with the 2023 Standard, some elements from the new standard will be applied (Interview 26, EITI expert, February 2026). Given that major Chinese mining companies participate in Peru's EITI reporting, the strengthened provisions on gender-specific disclosure will be an increasingly important mechanism affecting their operations in the country. Peru also distinguishes itself as a global pioneer in the subnational implementation of the EITI standard, establishing eight active regional missions. One of them is the Apurimac Region, where the Chinese-owned Las Bambas project participates.

At the national industry level, additional voluntary mechanisms reinforce gender expectations in Peru's mining sector. The PERUMIN Seal of Excellence in Gender Equality (*Sello PERUMIN a la Excelencia en Equidad de Género*) recognizes mining companies and suppliers that demonstrate progress in closing gender gaps, drawing on international references such as the WEPs, SDGs, and ISO 26000 (Instituto de Ingenieros de Minas del Perú [IIMP], 2024). Women in Mining Peru (WIM Peru) operates as a professional and advocacy network promoting women's participation in mining. To become a member, mining companies must have their gender policies, reporting mechanisms, and internal governance structures assessed by WIM Peru (Interview 01, WIM Peru representative, April 2025). The Aequales Ranking, active in Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, evaluates organizational performance in gender equality across dimensions such as talent management, harassment prevention, work-life balance, and transparency (Aequales, 2025). Although voluntary, engagement with these national platforms has increasingly become a benchmark for good gender policy within Peru's mining industry.

Taken together, these international norms, sectoral standards, certification systems, transparency frameworks, and national voluntary mechanisms create a layered governance architecture in which gender equality is increasingly recognized as a core component of responsible mining. For mining companies operating in Peru, alignment with these standards is not merely reputational but also intersects with conditions for accessing international finance, global supply chain requirements, and social legitimacy in other host countries. The following section assesses how Chinese mining companies operating in Peru position themselves within this normative landscape.

3.3. Chinese Mining Companies' Corporate Policy Alignment

Four major Chinese mining companies currently operate large-scale projects in Peru: Shougang Hierro Perú (Marcona), Minera Chinalco Perú (Toromocho, Los Calatos), Minera Las Bambas (operated by MMG Limited under China Minmetals), Zijin Mining (La Arena I & II), and China Nonferrous Metal Industry's Foreign Engineering and Construction Co., Ltd. (NFC) (Raura). Together, these firms position Chinese capital as one of the most influential actors in Peru's mining economy.

As detailed in Section 4.1, Peru's social environmental management architecture in mining is procedurally sophisticated yet largely gender neutral. Environmental certification (EIA), environmental enforcement, remediation regimes, citizen participation rules, and prior consultation mechanisms do not contain explicit gender-sensitive requirements. None of the Chinese companies' publicly available EIA documentation demonstrates a structured analysis of differentiated impacts on women in affected communities. While companies comply with Peru's environmental certification and enforcement regime, overseen by SENACE and monitored by OEFA, the framework itself does not compel gender-responsive environmental governance.

Gender content in the Peruvian legal framework appears primarily in general labor and occupational health and safety (OHS) protections, such as maternity leave, equal pay for work of equal value, workplace lactation rooms, and anti-sexual harassment provisions. Across the four Chinese mining companies, operations are formally subject to Peru's labor, occupational safety, and anti-harassment framework. Publicly available corporate documents generally reference principles of non-discrimination and workplace safety.

In the area of citizen participation and prior consultation, the Chinese-owned mining projects analyzed here were not subject to prior consultation procedures under Law 29785 during the period of Chinese ownership. For example, exploration activities at Toromocho predated both the 2011 law and Chinese ownership. In addition, the officially recognized areas of influence of Toromocho and Shougang Hierro Perú have not been classified as indigenous territories requiring consultation under Peru's current legal framework. As a result, no prior consultation processes were legally triggered for these projects under Chinese ownership. In the case of Las Bambas, exploration began in 2004, prior to the enactment of the Prior Consultation Law in 2011, and when the project was acquired by the Chinese-owned MMG in 2014, construction was already nearing completion. However, disputes arose around citizen participation during the ownership transfer from Xstrata-Glencore to MMG. MMG obtained a modification to the environmental impact assessment from the Peruvian government without consulting the communities about the change in transportation methods, sparking mass protests from the adjacent communities (Merino, 2026).

In short, alignment with Peru's domestic ESG framework is strong on paper. However, because the core environmental and social governance instruments are largely gender-neutral, compliance alone does not guarantee substantive progress in addressing structural gender inequalities in mining workplaces or host communities.

When evaluated against the international governance architecture outlined in Section 4.2, the four Chinese firms display differentiated patterns of engagement, both in terms of formal membership in global initiatives and in the depth of project-level implementation.

MMG Limited (Las Bambas) exhibits the highest degree of formal integration into global mining governance standards among the Chinese operators in Peru. As a member of the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) since 2009, MMG is subject to third-party asset-level validation under ICMM's Assurance and Validation Procedure (MMG Limited., n.d.). This includes assessment against Performance Expectations such as PE 3.9, which requires member companies to eliminate harassment and discrimination and promote inclusive workplaces. Through its ICMM membership, Las Bambas is embedded in a peer-reviewed governance structure that goes beyond Peru's domestic regulatory requirements.

MMG also publicly supports the implementation of the EITI Standard in Peru (both national and subnational) and the Congo and appears on the official list of EITI-supporting companies (EITI, n.d.). Its sustainability reports include gender-disaggregated workforce data and references to diversity and inclusion initiatives, including recruitment practices aimed at expanding women's participation and formal mechanisms for reporting workplace harassment (MMG Limited, 2025). The reports proclaimed that women now make up approximately 13.4% to 15% of the workforce. This is higher than the Peruvian national average for mining.

Besides, MMG participates in Peruvian initiatives to promote gender equality in the industry. They are a long-standing "institutional ally (*aliado institucional*)" of WIM Peru, signaling a recognized commitment to gender equality and workplace inclusion (Women in Mining Perú [WIM Perú], n.d.). In 2025, they were also awarded the PERUMIN Seal of Excellence in Gender Equity. PERUMIN, the nation's largest and one of the most influential mining conventions in Latin America, invited 420 companies in the mining supply chain to participate in the evaluation process. Thirty-nine applied, and twenty-four were awarded the seal, among them the largest international mining and operational companies in the country (IIMP, 2025).

Compared to other Chinese operators in Peru, MMG demonstrates relatively more structured disclosure of gender-related workforce information. While these disclosures do not necessarily indicate transformative outcomes, they reflect deeper integration into internationally benchmarked reporting and validation systems. The company's Melbourne headquarters and exposure to Australian disclosure regimes likely reinforce this governance orientation.

Zijin Mining presents a more globally articulated ESG framework at the corporate level. Zijin Mining had a turbulent start in Peru in 2007, when it acquired the Rio Blanco copper project. The project has stalled since Zijin's takeover, due to ongoing resistance from local communities and public questioning about its social and environmental sustainability (Sanborn et al., 2024).

Since 2023, the company has referenced alignment with international reporting standards and responsible mining principles in its sustainability communications, including the integration of international disclosure benchmarks such as the World Gold Council's Responsible Gold Mining Principles and the IFRS S1 & S2 sustainability disclosure standards (Zijin, n.d.). In its 2023 ESG Report (Zijin Mining Group, 2024), Zijin reported that it achieved 15.4% female representation on its Board of Directors and a global female employee ratio of 14.37% for 2023. In 2025, Zijin acquired La Arena I, a producing gold project, and the La Arena II concession in Peru. Beyond global positioning, at the level of its Peruvian operations (La Arena I), publicly available documentation shows fewer concrete, measurable gender-equality targets or independent verification under initiatives such as ICMM, IRMA, or Copper Mark. Thus, alignment is most visible in corporate-level ESG positioning and disclosure language, while structured, externally validated gender governance mechanisms at the project level remain less publicized.

Minera Chinalco Perú (Toromocho) reflects a governance model more closely anchored in regulatory compliance and general sustainability commitments. Although the parent company articulates ESG principles and has gained recognition in China (China Nonferrous Metals News, 2024), its engagement with structured global mining initiatives remains less visible. Toromocho is not an ICMM member asset, nor has it pursued certification under IRMA or the Copper Mark (Interview 09, Manager at Chinalco, July 2025). Workplace policies emphasizing equal opportunity and non-discrimination, anti-harassment mechanisms, and childbirth support are referenced in its 2024 ESG report (Chinalco, 2025). This alignment was confirmed by interviews in both the Toromocho mining site and the Lima office (Interview 10, VP of Human Resources at Chinalco, September 2025; Interview 23, Manager at Chinalco, September 2025). However, systematic gender-disaggregated reporting and measurable diversity benchmarks are not prominently articulated in materials from Peru. Alignment with international norms appears selective and mediated primarily through compliance with domestic labor law and general corporate sustainability frameworks rather than through membership in externally validated industry standards.

Recently, Chinalco Perú joined Women In Mining (WIM) Perú, signaling greater engagement with industry initiatives promoting women's participation and leadership in mining (WIM Perú, 2026).

Shougang Hierro Perú exhibits the most limited articulation of alignment with international gender-focused governance initiatives. While corporate communications (Shougang Hierro Perú, 2026) reference compliance and social responsibility, publicly available materials do not indicate structured engagement with ICMM, IRMA, Copper Mark, or any of the international or national initiatives. As far as we know from the very limited sources, gender equality is not prominently framed as a strategic corporate objective in public reporting, and workforce diversity data are limited. In this sense, Shougang's governance profile remains primarily anchored in domestic regulatory compliance rather than in participation in voluntary international benchmarking systems.

Beyond Peru, however, segments of the Chinese outbound mining sector are increasingly engaging with certification and assurance mechanisms. A notable example is CMOC's Tenke Fungurume project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which became the first Chinese-owned mining project to obtain Copper Mark certification in 2024 (The Copper Mark, 2024) and subsequently committed to IRMA assessments (IRMA, 2025b). In parallel, during the 2025 International Forum on Sustainable Mineral Supply Chains (SMISC) held in Xiamen, China, the China Chamber of Commerce of Metals, Minerals and Chemicals Importers and Exporters (CCCMC) signed Memoranda of Understanding with IRMA and Copper Mark respectively, signaling an institutional effort to translate international standards into the Chinese mining industry context (IRMA, 2025a; The Copper Mark, 2025). Earlier cooperation agreements between CCCMC and ICMM in 2017 similarly aimed to promote alignment with international environmental and social performance standards (ICMM, 2017).

Overall, Chinese mining companies in Peru operate within Peru's formal ESG framework and increasingly reference international sustainability standards, but the depth of alignment with gender-specific governance mechanisms varies across firms. Because Peru's regulatory architecture is largely gender-neutral in environmental and participatory domains, compliance alone does not drive structural gender transformation. Where companies are embedded in externally validated systems—such as ICMM membership or structured international reporting—gender-related commitments are more visibly institutionalized through disclosure and peer review. Where engagement is limited to general ESG articulation and domestic compliance, gender integration remains more declarative than operational.

4. Case Study: Chinalco-Toromocho and Gendered Change in the Community

As discussed in the previous sections, Chinese mining companies in Peru operate within a largely gender-neutral institutional environment. While general labor protections, sectoral safety standards, and non-discrimination clauses exist in both China and Peru, formal mechanisms that address gender inequalities in mining workplaces and in mining-affected communities are limited. Therefore, in practice, closing the gender gaps depends more on voluntary international and industry norms, corporate initiatives, and local governance dynamics than on binding regulatory mandates. In this background, a detailed case study is necessary to understand how gender relations are actually reshaped on the ground around a Chinese-owned large-scale mine.

This report selects the Toromocho copper project, operated by Chinalco, as the main case study for several reasons. First, Toromocho is one of the largest Chinese mining investments in Peru. The project

has a substantial labor force, significant fiscal contribution to the Peruvian central and local governments, and a wide social and environmental footprint in the central highlands of Junín. For this reason, it provides a meaningful test case for assessing whether Chinese ownership translates into distinct gender-related outcomes.

Second, Toromocho is located in a high-altitude Andean ecosystem at about 5,000 meters above sea level, an environment that is both ecologically fragile and economically constrained for human economic activities. These high-altitude Andean conditions are shared by many current and prospective critical mineral projects across the region, including lithium projects in southern Peru and neighboring Bolivia and Argentina. The large-scale extraction in such an environment poses environmental risks that affect water systems and local livelihoods far beyond the concession areas. At the same time, mining often represents one of the few viable engines of local economies, as it generates direct and indirect employment and public revenues.

Third, this case is distinctive in Peru's mining landscape due to the relocation of the mining town of Morococha. Unlike projects started primarily in agrarian or indigenous territories with limited prior mining experience (e.g., Las Bambas), Toromocho had to relocate a historically mining-dependent urban settlement with a predominantly male workforce. It allows us to examine not only gender dynamics in the transformation of a rural society, but also in the restructuring of an established urban mining town. Earlier studies, including work by Sanborn and Chonn (2017) and Cano (2019), documented the initial phases of the resettlement. However, relatively little research has revisited the site after the consolidation of operations, demographic shifts, and economic changes in the area. Revisiting the Toromocho case over a decade after the relocation began provides a unique perspective to assess how gender relations evolve over time.

Drawing on two field visits in 2025, prior field research, primary and secondary published materials, and extensive interviews, this section briefly examines the gendered changes in the community surrounding the Toromocho copper project. Although Chinalco does not overtly align with the Western ESG initiatives (Interview 09, Manager at Chinalco, July 2025), its community relations have a fairly positive profile in Peru. Through this case, the authors show how gender relations were reconfigured through resettlement, employment structures, service provision, and community engagement. The case illustrates both the continuities between Chinese ownership and Peru's broader extractive model and some specific governance features of Chinalco. It also exposes the gap between development planning and everyday socioeconomic realities, as well as the gendered impacts of this gap, which are often neglected by corporate and state decision-makers.

4.1. Resettlement and Structural Transformation of a Mining Town

The Toromocho copper project is located in the Department of Junin, Central Peru, in an area long dominated by older mining operations, particularly conventional underground mines. The Morococha district has a mining history stretching back over a century, characterized by labor-intensive extraction of silver, zinc, and lead. Before the Toromocho project, the local economy was anchored primarily by Compañía Minera Argentum (a subsidiary of Pan American Silver) and Sociedad Minera Austria Duvaz. These underground operations, despite the difficult and often hazardous working conditions for their predominantly male workforce, provided stable employment and sustained the town's social and commercial life (Interview 20, Chinalco production area staff, September 2025).

Chinalco's acquisition of the Toromocho project in 2007 marked a structural shift. Unlike the older underground operations, Toromocho was conceived as a large-scale, capital-intensive, open-pit copper mine, framed within contemporary discourses of "modern," technologically advanced, and socio-environmentally responsible mining. The concession includes the historic town of Morococha, a densely constructed settlement built over decades of extraction, situated on unstable geological terrain and characterized by limited sanitation, water contamination risks, and deteriorating infrastructure (Sanborn and Chonn, 2017).

Between 2012 and 2014, approximately 5000 residents were relocated from Old Morococha to a purpose-built settlement, Nueva Morococha. The relocation was financed and executed by Chinalco, following a consultation process documented in earlier studies (Sanborn and Chonn, 2017; Cano, 2019). Nueva Morococha was designed according to contemporary urban standards: paved roads, standardized housing units, potable water systems, sewage networks, electricity, schools, health facilities, and municipal offices. In material terms, the new town represented a significant upgrade from the precarious living conditions of the old town (Interview 08, Project Manager of Social Capital Group[17], June 2025).

However, the relocation coincided with broader restructuring in the local mining economy. As Toromocho expanded, the older underground operations of Argentum and Austria Duvaz contracted. Argentum, which had employed roughly one thousand workers at its Morococha mine and Amistad processing plant, entered into agreements with Chinalco in 2010 that eventually led to the closure of Amistad and the placement of the underground mine on care and maintenance in 2022. In 2023, Pan American Silver divested the Morococha mine (Pan American Silver, 2023). Austria Duvaz had been operating in the area since 1906 and held critical surface rights in Morococha. They also transferred their land and mining concessions to Chinalco (Chinalco, 2014) and entered a formal closure process between 2021 and 2022, thereby dismissing nearly 500 workers (MINEM, 2022).

These closures transformed the local labor market. Toromocho's open-pit model is more mechanized and requires a more technically specialized workforce. While overall employment opportunities remain significant, the shift from labor-intensive underground mining to capital-intensive extraction has reduced the demand for older, less-skilled male mining workers, who constitute the majority of Morococha's population (INEI, 2017). This structural transformation, modern housing combined with the contraction of traditional employment, especially for men, forms the backdrop for understanding the gendered consequences of the resettlement. The following subsections examine how these changes reshaped daily life, livelihoods, and gender relations in Nueva Morococha more than a decade after resettlement began.

4.2. Reorganization of Livelihoods after the Resettlement

From a gender perspective, the transition from Old Morococha involved far more than improved infrastructure. It entailed a profound reorganization of everyday economic and social relations that affected women and men differently. In Old Morococha, where an estimated 71% of residents were men, primarily mineworkers (INEI, 2017), women's livelihoods were also closely intertwined with the rhythms of traditional mining. Many women in Old Morococha operated small-scale informal businesses – selling meals to workers, providing laundry services, weaving garments on commission, renting out rooms, or running small shops from their homes. The dense urban layout and proximity between workplaces and residences facilitated these activities. Women could combine income-generating work with caregiving

[17] Social Capital Group is the consulting firm that assisted Chinalco with the resettlement of Morococha.

responsibilities, drawing on extended kinship networks and long-standing social ties (Interview 13, Vendor in New Morococha Market, September 2025).

In Nueva Morococha, this social fabric was disrupted. The planned layout, standardized housing, and separation of the mining camp and the town reduced informal economic exchanges. Workers from the Toromocho projects are largely housed in company camps, and food and laundry services are contracted to formal providers such as Sodexo rather than to street vendors in Nueva Morococha (Interview 18, Coordinator at Sodexo, September 2025). As a result, many women who had relied on informal service provisions lost their primary clientele.

The resettlement process, which at the time was voluntary and consulted, included provisions intended to protect women's rights. The most notable being the joint titling of new housing to both male and female partners. This mechanism served as a crucial safeguard, given the high rates of informal cohabitation in rural Peru, by explicitly ensuring women's legal co-ownership outside formal civil marriage frameworks. While these measures addressed asset ownership, they were not aimed at offering future income security. For example, homeownership in Nueva Morococha disqualified their families from government-sponsored social welfare programs aimed only at the poor (Interview 17, Morococha municipal government staff, September 2025). While homeownership eliminated poverty in the eyes of the Peruvian government, losing access to these programs increased women's caregiving burden. Together with the disruption of livelihood, women, mainly middle-aged and senior women without formal education, often feel economically worse off after the resettlement.

The decline and eventual closure of Argentum and Austria Duvaz's operation exacerbated the disruption of local livelihoods in Morococha for both men and women. While Chinalco prioritized recruiting and training qualified workers from Morococha as part of their corporate community relations strategy (Interview 22, Manager of Community Relations at Chinalco, September 2025), employment at Toromocho reflects a pattern common across large-scale mining in Peru. Most new operational positions require qualifications or on-the-job training that pose a steep barrier for older and less-educated community members. Several interviewees emphasized that local workers are frequently hired as assistants or helpers, with few opportunities to advance their mining careers (Interview 11, Pastor at New Morococha Church, September 2025; Interview 15, Community leader in Morococha, September 2025).

Chinalco's training initiatives, such as the "Toroboys" job training program for youths, were frequently cited in interviews as positive but as having limited scope and duration. While the "Toroboys" program enabled some young local residents, mostly men, to gain technical skills to secure operational positions and formal employment at Chinalco, it ended with the completion of resettlement. It was not institutionalized as an ongoing pathway. Although the existence of women in the program was touted as an example of Chinalco's gender inclusion policy, women were largely absent from these opportunities, reinforcing gendered occupational segregation (Interviews 19 and 23, Managers at Chinalco, September 2025).

Access to well-paid operational roles at Chinalco drove a sharp socioeconomic divide within the Morococha community. For a significant portion of residents hired at various stages of the project's development, rising incomes enabled families to relocate to cities such as Lima or Huancayo. For others, as traditional underground jobs disappeared and new jobs at Toromocho and its contractors and subcontractors were not always attainable, many left Nueva Morococha in search of employment

elsewhere. While some women and youth also migrated, the majority who left were men. Interviews with community members and religious leaders highlighted that male out-migration increased women's unpaid care burdens, social isolation, and mental stress due to marital breakdowns, while reducing household income stability (Interview 12, Church coordinator in Yauli, September 2025). Combining the demographic data from 2017 and 2020, before the final closure of the two mines, there was already an 8% decrease in population, with the male population decreased by 27.6% (INEI, 2017; Walsh Peru, 2020). The authors of this report could not access more up-to-date demographic data, but based on field observations in Nueva Morococha, the population loss after the closure is likely to be more severe.

After men migrate to other mining regions for employment, women in the family, often middle-aged or older and with limited formal education, are left to care for children and elderly relatives. They attempted to adapt through selling food on the streets, operating small shops from their living rooms, or participating in weaving collectives such as Illari. These activities generate modest income but cannot substitute for the scale of demand previously generated by the operations of the two old mines. While the new town offers improved housing and public services, it does not automatically translate into sustainable livelihoods.

4.3. Corporate Policies, Governance, and Women's Agency

Chinalco's community relations strategy in Morococha includes a range of social programs, some of which directly engage women. The most prominent example is the support provided to the women's artisanal weaving collective, Illari. The collective was initiated by a group of women resettled in the new town in response to a decline in commission orders from miners. They were identified by Chinalco, and, with assistance from the company and its consulting partners, the group formalized its operations, received training, gained access to regional and national markets through fairs in major cities, and even opened a storefront on the main street of Morococha (Interview 14, Treasure of the Illari Weavers, September 2025).

For the women involved, Illari represents both an economic opportunity and a space of social recognition. Interviews with members emphasized the pivotal support from Chinalco and the importance of collective organization in the wake of the fragmentation of community life following resettlement. At the same time, the limitations of such initiatives were evident. Participation is part-time, income is irregular, and the group remains highly dependent on external support. Illari is also the only women's group receiving sustained backing from the company, underscoring the narrow reach of gender-focused programming.

Other community initiatives, such as municipal bakeries, childcare facilities, or family support programs, illustrate the broader ecosystem of gendered support in which Chinalco is willing to participate. In many cases, the company provided resources or funding, while the program was initiated and implemented by local stakeholders, including the government, healthcare facilities, and civil society. This model offers flexibility and fosters community agency; however, in a traditional mining community, it also means that women's needs were largely silenced. As a result, even as the community relations team at Chinalco proactively identifies and responds to community dynamics (Interview 22, Manager of Community Relations at Chinalco, September 2025), gendered supports are primarily implemented as discrete projects rather than under guiding principles. Gender considerations are rarely mainstreamed across all community engagement activities.

Another recurring theme was the absence of robust, inclusive mechanisms for dialogue between Chinalco and the Morococha population. Unlike the Peasant Community (*Comunidad Campesina*) of Pucará, another community in the District of Morococha, which has stronger communal organizations due to its legal status and cultural background, the urban sector of Morococha lacks a unified platform through which residents, particularly women, can articulate demands or grievances. While formal complaint channels exist – in fact, Chinalco's community relations office is stationed in the new town of Morococha, and there have been central government-presided Dialogue Roundtables (*Mesa de Diálogo*) between the community and the company, they are perceived as ineffective (Interview 11, 12, 14, and 15, Residents and community leaders in Morococha, September 2025).

Women's participation in decision-making remains constrained by social norms, time burdens, and the technical framing of negotiations. Taking the Dialogue Roundtables, for example, discussions around employment quotas, procurement, or environmental monitoring are typically dominated by male leaders and framed in economic or legal terms that marginalize women's experiences. Issues such as childcare, household labor, and informal livelihoods are rarely prioritized in the community's negotiations with Chinalco, despite being top concerns for women in their daily lives. Many women noted increasing disengagement with the prolonged and futile negotiations, as it is harder for them to balance caregiving responsibilities, informal labor, and engagement with the process, further marginalizing their voice in the outcomes (Interview 16, Morococha municipal government staff, September 2025).

Environmental management presents a similar duality. The environmental infrastructure in the Toromocho project is technically sophisticated, particularly in water treatment and waste management. Chinalco built and operates the Kingsmill Wastewater Treatment Plant, one of the most advanced such plants in the country, which not only collects and treats wastewater from its own operations but also regulates water contamination caused by decades of mining activities across the entire area (Interview 07, Former executive at Chinalco, June 2025). Chinalco's role in providing potable water and managing wastewater infrastructure in Nueva Morococha is widely acknowledged to have significantly improved conditions in the old town (Interview 16 and 17, Morococha municipal government staff, September 2025). For women, this has reduced health risks and resources spent securing water for household use.

At the same time, reliance on the company for essential services creates new dependencies. Moreover, Chinalco works only with the local government on environmental issues related to Toromocho's operation. Interviews revealed risks regarding accountability, long-term sustainability, and the lack of independent environmental monitoring mechanisms accessible to ordinary citizens (Interview 21, Manager of Environmental Affairs at Chinalco, September 2025). Women often act as informal monitors of environmental change, noticing variations in water quality or children's health, yet lack formal channels to translate these observations into action. These dynamic underscores a broader pattern: women experience environmental risk acutely but have limited institutional power to influence environmental governance.

4.4. Discussion: Progress, Mismatch, and Gendered Outcomes

The Chinalco-Toromocho case demonstrates that large-scale mining can generate significant development gains while simultaneously reproducing gender inequality. It neither confirms a story of uniquely problematic Chinese practices nor celebrates transformative gender inclusion. Instead, it reveals how

gendered outcomes in extractive contexts are shaped primarily by structural economic transitions and institutional gaps, within which corporate actors operate with varying degrees of responsiveness.

First, Chinalco's investments improved infrastructure, reduced environmental hazards, and expanded access to services. These are not trivial achievements, particularly in a region with long-standing structural deficits. However, the project reveals a mismatch between corporate and institutional efforts and the lived socioeconomic realities of the relocated mining town. The restructuring of the local mining economy, from labor-intensive underground operations defined by Argentum and Austria Duvaz to capital-intensive open-pit extraction, narrowed local men's employment pathways and reduced women's opportunities for informal service provision. Male job loss and out-migration altered household dynamics. Women's economic autonomy was constrained by the erosion of their old livelihoods. Both men and women suffer from limited access to skilled employment. Gender inequality in a mining town in this context was not reinforced solely by the company, but was reconfigured through an industrial transformation deemed positive for the area and the nation.

Second, the case highlights the limits of gender-neutral development planning. Resettlement incorporated progressive measures such as joint housing titling, yet economic transition strategies did not adequately anticipate the gendered implications of labor restructuring. Training initiatives led by the company and the state were episodic and insufficient. They failed to prepare the local labor force for the transition from traditional labor-intensive to modern skill-intensive employment and to address structural barriers to women's participation in technical roles. When it comes to corporate support for local development, community engagement mechanisms exist, but were framed around employment quotas and infrastructure demands, areas traditionally dominated by male leadership. Concerns expressed more by women, such as care burdens, loss of informal income, and environmental issues, were insufficiently integrated.

Third, the case illustrates that gender equality in extractive regions cannot be advanced through isolated corporate programs alone. The Toromocho experience underscores that the question of "if Chinese companies are of any difference" must be situated carefully. In community relations and gender programming, Chinalco's practices largely mirror patterns observed across Peru's mining sector. Gender inclusion on the ground is addressed primarily through targeted projects rather than through mainstreamed, cross-community engagement. Meanwhile, local governments also lacked the institutional capacity to integrate gender perspectives into economic planning. National gender-equality policies remained disconnected from the extractive governance framework. The collapse of the town's older mining economy was imminent in the expansion of modern large-scale mining, but neither the state policy environment nor the norms of the mining industry were intrinsic to act upon it.

5. Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

5.1. Key Findings and Implications for Gender-Responsive Mining Governance

This study examines the gender dimensions of Chinese mining investments in Peru by linking four analytical layers: the structural gender dynamics of mining; China's domestic gender regime and overseas commitments; Peru's regulatory and ESG framework; and the lived outcomes observed in a major Chinese mining project. Taken together, the findings reveal that even though mining has benefited some groups of women, gender inequality in and around mining persists. This is not the result of isolated corporate failure, but of cumulative governance gaps across borders and institutions.

First, the study confirms that mining remains a deeply gendered industry. Across Peru and Latin America, women are structurally underrepresented in mining workforces, concentrated in administrative and service roles, and excluded mainly from technical and operational positions. Mining-related displacement, environmental change, and labor regimes often increase women's unpaid care burdens and undermine informal livelihoods while limiting their participation in decision-making. At the same time, mining can generate tangible benefits for women, including improved infrastructure, access to services, and opportunities for selective employment and entrepreneurship. These dual dynamics, opportunity and exclusion, form the baseline against which Chinese mining investments must be assessed.

Second, the report shows that China's domestic approach to gender in mining combines formal recognition with weak operationalization. Gender equality is embedded in Chinese law and state discourse, and women's advancement is framed as part of national development. However, in heavy industries such as mining, women's participation remains low, occupational segregation is reinforced through protective labor norms, and gender is treated as a labor welfare issue rather than as a governance concern. This domestic context shapes how Chinese companies conceptualize gender in their overseas operations.

Third, China's overseas investment governance framework articulates broad commitments to inclusive development, sustainability, and social responsibility but provides little guidance on gender. There are no binding requirements for gender-sensitive impact assessment, consultation, or monitoring in overseas mining projects. As a result, gender considerations are mainly left to host-country regulation and voluntary corporate action.

Fourth, while Peru has a relatively strong legal framework on gender equality, its application to mining governance is partial. National gender policies, labor laws, and environmental regulations exist, but gender is poorly integrated into mining-specific instruments, including EIAs, resettlement planning, subcontracting oversight, and participation mechanisms. International initiatives and standards adopted in Peru, including EITI, have begun to introduce gender considerations, but implementation remains uneven and limited in scope.

Fifth, Chinese mining companies operating in Peru generally comply with formal regulatory requirements but rarely treat gender as a strategic priority. Corporate policies emphasize non-discrimination, safety, and ethical conduct, and some companies adopt gender-related programs or disclose workforce data. Nevertheless, these measures are fragmented, focused primarily on direct employees, and weakly connected to community engagement and the supply chain.

Finally, the Chinalco-Toromocho case illustrates how these institutional patterns translate into practice. The Toromocho project delivered substantial material improvements in housing, water, sanitation, and contamination management, benefiting the daily lives of numerous women. At the same time, resettlement disrupted some women's informal livelihoods, while new employment pathways remained male-dominated, and participation mechanisms did not adequately reflect women's voices and priorities. These outcomes were shaped by gender-neutral planning, limited workforce inclusion, and weak coordination between corporate initiatives and governmental institutions.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the gender situation in Chinese mining projects in Peru is best understood as an institutional mismatch. Gender is acknowledged in law and discourse in both China and Peru, but it remains marginal to the governance of mining investment. Improving gender outcomes,

therefore, requires coordinated action across corporate practice, state regulation, and international frameworks, moving beyond isolated projects towards systematic gender mainstreaming. The policy recommendations that follow are designed to address these gaps.

The rest of this section sets out policy recommendations to strengthen gender-responsive governance in Chinese mining operations in Peru. The recommendations are grounded in the empirical findings of this study and are directed at five sets of actors: Chinese mining companies, Peruvian public institutions, civil society, international partners, and future research. While distinct in focus, these recommendations are mutually reinforcing and intended to support coordinated action.

5.2. Recommendations for Chinese Mining Companies Operating in Peru

Chinese mining companies operating in Peru generally demonstrate strong capacity for regulatory compliance, environmental management, and large-scale project execution. Building on this foundation, companies can strengthen gender outcomes by institutionalizing gender considerations within core business functions rather than treating them as peripheral corporate social responsibility concerns.

First, companies should explicitly integrate gender equality into overseas ESG and management frameworks. This includes adopting clear gender or diversity policies applicable to international operations, assigning responsibility for gender-related issues within senior management or ESG units, and incorporating gender-disaggregated indicators into internal monitoring and public reporting.

Second, companies should expand gender inclusion in workforce development and employment pathways. Beyond commitments to non-discrimination, this entails targeted recruitment, training, and retention programs for women, particularly in technical and operational roles. Partnerships with vocational institutes, universities, and training centers could help address skills gaps while creating accessible pathways for women from mining-affected regions.

Third, community engagement strategies should shift from welfare-oriented support toward economic participation and voice. While support for women's organizations and social programs is valuable, these initiatives should be linked more systematically to local procurement, service provision, and livelihood diversification. Consultation, grievance, and monitoring mechanisms should be designed to ensure women's participation, accounting for time constraints, care responsibilities, and local social norms.

Finally, companies should strengthen gender-sensitive impact assessment and monitoring, particularly in resettlement and transition contexts. Periodic evaluation of gendered impacts on livelihoods, care burdens, and participation would enable companies to anticipate risks, adjust programs, and mitigate unintended consequences throughout the project lifecycle.

5.3. Recommendations for Peruvian Public Institutions

Peru's legal and policy framework provides a solid normative basis for gender equality, but its application to mining governance remains uneven. Public institutions play a critical role in closing this gap.

At the national level, ministries responsible for mining, the environment, labor, and women's affairs should improve policy coordination to ensure that gender considerations are systematically integrated into

mining oversight, environmental impact assessments, resettlement planning, and labor inspections. Gender-disaggregated data collection should be strengthened and made publicly accessible.

At the regional and municipal levels, local governments in mining areas require greater institutional capacity and resources to engage with companies on gender issues. This includes training technical staff, supporting women's participation in local governance spaces, and ensuring that public investments financed through mining revenues address gender-differentiated needs, such as childcare, mobility, and employment support.

5.4. Recommendations for Civil Society, Academia, and International Partners

Civil society organizations, research institutions, and international partners play an essential bridging role between companies, communities, and the state. Civil society and academic actors should continue to document and analyze the gendered impacts of mining, using mixed-methods and longitudinal approaches to capture changes over time. Strengthening local research capacity can improve the quality and policy relevance of evidence available to decision-makers

International organizations and donors can support capacity-building for women's organizations in mining-affected areas, enabling them to engage more effectively in dialogue, negotiation, and monitoring. Support for peer learning across mining regions within Peru and across Latin America can help scale successful approaches.

Finally, bilateral and multilateral platforms involving China and Peru provide opportunities to mainstream gender equality into discussions on sustainable investment. Aligning China's overseas investment guidelines with host-country gender priorities and international standards could help translate gender commitments into operational practice.

5.5. Recommendations for Future Research and Academic Agenda

Because this report is exploratory and focuses primarily on a single in-depth case study, it highlights several areas requiring further academic investigation.

First, comparative project-level research is needed. Future studies should examine multiple Chinese-owned and non-Chinese-owned mining projects in Peru to assess whether the patterns observed in Toromocho are representative or site-specific. Systematic cross-case comparison would allow researchers to distinguish between ownership effects and structural features of Peru's mining model.

Second, longitudinal analysis is essential. Gendered outcomes of mining are not static. Resettlement, labor restructuring, and demographic shifts unfold over years or decades. Follow-up research should track changes in employment patterns and women's livelihoods over time to evaluate whether early disruptions consolidate into structural inequalities or evolve into new forms of agency.

Third, research should explore how evolving Chinese industry-level initiatives (e.g., CCCMC engagement with IRMA, new ESG disclosure standards) translate into operational changes at overseas sites. The emerging interaction between Chinese industry associations and global certification systems presents an important opportunity to study norm diffusion and regulatory hybridization.

6. Conclusion

This report has examined the gender dimensions of Chinese mining investment in Peru by linking structural patterns in the mining sector, China's domestic gender regime and overseas commitments, regulatory and ESG frameworks, and lived outcomes in a major Chinese mining project. The analysis challenges simplified narratives that portray Chinese mining as either uniquely harmful or uniquely developmental. Instead, it reveals a more complex picture in which material improvements coexist with persistent gender inequalities shaped by institutional misalignment.

Chinese mining projects in Peru have delivered substantial benefits, including improved infrastructure, stronger environmental management, and expanded access to public services, which have positively affected many women's daily lives. At the same time, gender-neutral planning, male-dominated labor structures, and fragmented community engagement have limited other women's access to formal employment, disrupted informal livelihoods, and constrained participation in decision-making.

These outcomes are not best understood as the result of isolated corporate shortcomings. Instead, they reflect the interaction of China's gender-blind overseas governance, Peru's uneven regulatory implementation, voluntary international standards, and deeply gendered local social structures. Gender equality is widely acknowledged in law and discourse in both China and Peru, yet remains marginal in the governance of mining investment.

As Peru and China deepen their economic relationship amid the global energy transition, addressing gender inequality in mining is both a social and strategic imperative. Moving forward, progress will depend on coordinated action across corporate practice, public policy, and international cooperation. By embedding gender considerations into workforce development, community engagement, and ESG governance, Chinese mining investments in Peru can contribute more effectively to inclusive growth and a just energy transition.

Annex 1: List of Interviewees – Chinalco Case Study & Related

Code	Affiliation	Position	Time
INT-01	WIM Peru/Freeport MacMoRan	Vice President of Institutional Relations / Government Relations Manager	April 2025
INT-02	CCCMC, Department of Development	Senior Researcher	April 2025
INT-03	University of the Pacific	Mining Expert & Consultant	April 2025
INT-04	University of the Pacific	Gender expert; Senior Professor	May 2025
INT-05	Private foundation	Program Officer / sociologist & mining expert	May 2025
INT-06	University of California, Los Angeles	Researcher / Student	May 2025
INT-07	Chinalco	Former Executive	June 2025
INT-08	Social Capital Group	Project Manager	June 2025
INT-09	Chinalco	Manager of Communications and Institutional Image	July 2025
INT-10	Chinalco	Vice President of Human Resources and ICT	July 2025
INT-11	New Morococha Church	Pastor	September 2025
INT-12	Evangelical Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ in Yauli	Church coordinator	September 2025
INT-13	New Morococha Market	Vendor	September 2025
INT-14	Illari Weavers	Treasurer	September 2025
INT-15	Pflucker neighborhood	President	September 2025
INT-16	Municipality of Morococha	Secretary General	September 2025
INT-17	Municipality of Morococha	Deputy Manager of Public and Social Services	September 2025
INT-18	Sodexo	Social Management Coordinator	September 2025
INT-19	Chinalco-Toromocho	Production Area Manager	September 2025
INT-20	Chinalco-Toromocho	Production Area Staff	September 2025
INT-21	Chinalco-Toromocho	Manager of Environmental Affairs	September 2025
INT-22	Chinalco-Toromocho	Manager of Community Relations	September 2025
INT-23	Chinalco-Toromocho	Manager of Occupational Health	September 2025
INT-24	Shougang Hierro Peru	Executive	September 2025
INT-25	International Labor Organization	Specialist in Green Jobs and Just Transition	October 2025
INT-26	Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana	Executive Coordinator / EITI Specialist	February 2026

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