

Depletion of fresh water in the mining regions of Goa, India: gendered impacts and responses

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As the problem of fresh water depletion and contamination takes on global proportions, the need to unravel the human dimensions of this problem becomes even more crucial. This paper focuses on the human dimensions of changes in groundwater in the mining belt of Goa from a gendered perspective.

While mining has been instrumental in spurring growth in the local Goan economy, it has also been the driving force for significant changes in the natural environment, which impact people's lives, such as lowering of the water table through the extraction of groundwater. Concurring with a vast body of literature on gender and environment, this paper emphasizes that the burden of environmental changes – in this case changes in availability of fresh water – is borne disproportionately by women because their gender roles are confined to the homestead. Simultaneously, this paper highlights the gender-related constraints on women's participation in governance and decision-making, which curtail their ability to respond to environmental changes that profoundly affect their lives. While groundwater depletion is a global phenomenon, its causes and impacts are local in nature. Consequently, the authors stress that sustainable solutions need to be developed by prioritizing people's use of natural resources and by institutionalizing women's role in decision-making and governance. This is not only to ensure women's well-being but also to provide solutions to counter the global phenomenon of groundwater degradation at the local level.