

**Women's Agency in the Mining Frontier:  
Inclusive Civil Society Strategies for  
Environmental Justice in South  
Kalimantan**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines women's agency in mining-affected communities in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, focusing on how women negotiate environmental change and develop collective responses within a masculinized extractive context. Drawing on Feminist

Political Ecology and Kabeer's theory of women's agency, the study employed a qualitative case study in Banjar Regency, Tapin Regency, and Banjarmasin City. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis with 20 participants: 12 women from mining-affected communities, five civil society representatives, and three actors from public institutions, academia, or community initiatives. Data were analyzed thematically through iterative coding and theoretical interpretation. The findings show that women's agency emerges through environmental meaning-making, livelihood adaptation, care practices, and kinship-based solidarity. Economic dependence on mining constrains women's capacity for overt resistance, while gendered decision-making structures limit their participation in environmental governance. Nevertheless, everyday care and mutual support generate relational resources that strengthen collective agency. The study also identifies civil society as an institutional bridge that translates women's situated ecological knowledge and localized solidarity into broader environmental advocacy. It argues that environmental justice is inherently gendered and that strengthening women's agency requires gender-responsive civil society and environmental governance.

**Keywords:** Women's Agency; Feminist Political Ecology; Civil Society; Environmental Justice; Mining Communities

## A. Introduction

The mining industry is widely regarded as a key driver of economic growth, particularly in coal-producing provinces such as South Kalimantan, Indonesia. At the macro level, the sector contributes significantly to national revenue generation, job creation, and infrastructure development (Bebbington et al., 2018). At the local level, mining activities often bring new economic opportunities, improved access to public infrastructure and services, and expanded corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives targeting education,

healthcare, and community empowerment (Hilson et al., 2018). However, beyond its economic contributions, the mining industry also generates substantial socio-ecological challenges, including water pollution, land degradation, social conflict, and increased public health risks for local communities (Emmanuel, Jerry, & Dzigbodi, 2018).

In many mining contexts, women experience these adverse impacts disproportionately, as they often lead unpaid care work, including securing access to clean water, preparing food, and caring for children (Perreault & Bridge, n.d.). From a feminist political ecology perspective, women's everyday interactions with natural resources provide them with distinct ecological knowledge and environmental perspectives, particularly through their care work and stewardship of local ecosystems. For example, Indigenous women living in mining-affected areas of East Nusa Tenggara perceive nature not merely as an economic resource but as a living space that sustains the well-being and continuity of their families and communities (Parastasia, n.d.). Despite this critical role, women in the mining sector continue to face entrenched gendered power relations, in which prevailing social norms, organizational structures, and industry policies systematically constrain their meaningful participation in environmental governance and decision-making.

A recent study on gender in industrial mining organizations found that the mining industry has historically been characterized by masculine organizational cultures and exclusionary institutional practices, limiting women's representation in leadership and other strategic decision-making positions (Heimann & Johansson, 2025). These structural inequalities shape not only women's access to opportunities within the sector but also the unequal distribution of the risks and benefits associated with mining activities. Consequently, environmental justice cannot be understood as gender-neutral. Rather, a gender lens is essential for revealing how women and men experience environmental harms and benefits differently, and how women exercise agency

and develop collective strategies to respond to the socio-ecological consequences of extractive industries (Pulido, 2017; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996).

Across Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, scholarship on the intersections of gender and mining has increasingly examined women's differentiated experiences, livelihood roles, and responses to extractive activities. Existing studies have addressed women as mine workers (Mahmudah, 2019), contributors to household livelihoods (Sununianti, 2024), and participants in corporate empowerment programs (Asmirah & Rizal, 2025). Other studies have examined gendered divisions of labor and women's participation in mining governance (Famelasari & Prastiwi, 2021), as well as the gendered vulnerabilities associated with environmental degradation (Asmirah & Rizal, 2025). Importantly, recent Indonesian scholarship has also begun to foreground women's agency. Studies have documented women's leadership and negotiation within mining-related governance, while Glynn and Maimunah (2024) demonstrate how women in mining-affected communities develop empathy, solidarity, and everyday forms of resistance. Research on the Wadas movement further illustrates women's mobilization and advocacy in response to extractive development (Yuliasari et al., 2024). These studies indicate that women's agency in Indonesian mining contexts is neither absent nor unexplored.

Nevertheless, important analytical gaps remain. Existing studies tend to focus on particular dimensions of women's agency, including labor negotiation, livelihood strategies, leadership, resistance, or collective mobilization. Less attention has been given to how these forms of agency develop through women's everyday environmental experiences and how individual negotiation can evolve into relational solidarity and broader collective action. In particular, the role of civil society in connecting localized women's ecological knowledge and solidarity with wider environmental governance remains insufficiently examined in the context of South Kalimantan. This gap is important

because women's capacity to act is shaped not only by individual choices but also by access to social networks, institutional spaces, and political resources.

The present study addresses this gap by bringing together Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) and Kabeer's theory of women's agency. Kabeer (1999) conceptualizes agency as the capacity to make strategic life choices and act upon them within conditions shaped by unequal access to resources. FPE, meanwhile, situates women's agency within the gendered relations through which environmental resources, risks, labor, and decision-making are distributed (Rocheleau et al., 1996). These perspectives provide a framework for examining agency as a relational and context-dependent process rather than equating agency exclusively with overt resistance. Research on extractive industries further demonstrates that women's responses may involve adaptation, negotiation, livelihood management, care, and resistance (Hilson et al., 2018; Lahiri-Dutt, 2022), while feminist and participatory approaches highlight the importance of examining everyday forms of agency within masculinized mining spaces (Heimann & Johansson 2025; Lutz-Ley & Buechler 2020).

Against this background, this study examines how women in mining-affected communities in South Kalimantan develop and exercise agency in response to socio-ecological change. Specifically, it examines how women construct environmental meanings, negotiate gendered power relations, develop collective solidarity, and engage with civil society in pursuing environmental justice. By tracing these interconnected processes, the study contributes to gender and mining scholarship by showing how localized forms of women's agency can develop from everyday environmental experience and relational solidarity toward broader forms of collective action and environmental governance.

## **B. Method**

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore women's agency within the socio-

ecological context of coal mining in South Kalimantan, Indonesia (Creswell, 2009). A qualitative approach was appropriate for examining participants' lived experiences, meanings, and strategies in responding to the social and environmental consequences of mining. The study focused on how women's agency is shaped by everyday experiences of environmental change, gendered power relations, and interaction with community and civil society actors.

The research was conducted in Banjar Regency, Tapin Regency, and Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan. These sites were purposively selected based on three considerations: the intensity of coal mining activities, the socio-ecological impacts experienced by surrounding communities, and the presence of civil society organizations involved in environmental issues, including rural and urban sites, enabling comparison of how women's agency is shaped across different socio-spatial contexts and through varying access to social, institutional, and civil society resources. Fieldwork was conducted between September 2025 and March 2026, comprising approximately Four Months of field engagement.

Participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. The inclusion criteria were: (1) women aged 18 years or older who lived in or had direct experience of mining-affected communities; (2) women who had experienced, observed, or responded to socio-ecological changes associated with mining; and/or (3) women involved in community activities, environmental initiatives, advocacy, public institutions, or civil society organizations related to environmental issues. Participants included 12 women from mining-affected communities, 5 representatives of civil society organizations, and 3 women working in public institutions, academia, or community-based initiatives, comprising a total of 20 participants. Their backgrounds varied in terms of age, occupation, socio-economic position, and rural-urban location. This variation was deliberately maintained to capture differences in women's experiences and forms of agency across socio-ecological

settings.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and, where appropriate, local conversational forms used by participants. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and focused on participants' understandings of environmental change, experiences of mining-related impacts, household and community responses, participation in decision-making, forms of solidarity, and relationships with civil society organizations. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently reviewed against the original recordings to ensure accuracy. Where local expressions or culturally specific terms were used, their meanings were retained during transcription and clarified during analysis.

Participant observation was conducted in informal community interactions and civil society activities for approximately four months. Observation focused on everyday interactions, patterns of solidarity, environmental care practices, participation in collective activities, and the ways women negotiated their roles within community and institutional settings. Field notes were recorded systematically to document contextual, behavioral, and non-verbal dimensions that interviews could not fully capture.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach informed by Creswell's (2009) qualitative analysis framework. The process involved five interconnected stages: (1) organizing and preparing interview transcripts, field notes, and documents; (2) repeatedly reading the dataset to develop an overall understanding of the empirical material; (3) conducting open coding to identify meaningful units of data; (4) grouping related codes into broader analytical themes; and (5) interpreting the themes through the theoretical lenses of Kabeer's (1999) theory of women's agency and Feminist Political Ecology (Rocheleau et al., 1996). The analysis was iterative, moving continuously between empirical evidence,

emerging themes, and theoretical interpretation. The analysis focused on the relationships among environmental meaning-making, resources, agency, collective solidarity, gendered power relations, and civil society engagement.

Data adequacy was assessed through information saturation, defined as the point at which additional interviews and observations no longer generated substantively new themes relevant to the research questions. Saturation was assessed progressively during data collection by comparing emerging codes and themes across participants, locations, and data sources. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents was then used to strengthen the credibility of the findings and to identify convergences and discrepancies across sources.

Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection of participants' identities. Given the political and social sensitivities surrounding mining, gender relations, and environmental advocacy, identifying information was removed from transcripts and reporting. The researcher also maintained ongoing reflexivity throughout data collection and analysis by critically examining positionality, access to participants, relationships with research sites, and potential interpretive bias.

## **C. Discussion**

### **1. Women's Environmental Meaning-Making and Critical Consciousness in Mining Landscapes of South Kalimantan**

Women's understandings of the environment are shaped not only by ecological conditions but also by their everyday social, economic, and political interactions with mining landscapes. The findings show that women construct meanings of the environment through their everyday experiences of living, working, and caring within mining-affected landscapes. Participants connected rivers, gardens, water sources, and surrounding land with household survival, family health, livelihood

security, and the responsibilities of everyday care. Environmental change therefore became meaningful to women through concrete experiences such as difficulties in accessing clean water, changes in agricultural resources, and the increasing demands of maintaining household well-being. These experiences shaped women's environmental consciousness and influenced how they understood mining's consequences mining for their families and communities. This pattern reflects Feminist Political Ecology (FPE), which explains environmental meanings through gendered divisions of labor, unequal access to natural resources, and differentiated experiences of environmental change (Rocheleau et al., 1996).

The empirical findings reveal three interrelated ways in which women construct environmental meaning in mining-affected communities. First, nature is understood as a reproductive space. Participants consistently described rivers, gardens, and surrounding forests as the material foundation of everyday life, providing water, food, medicinal plants, and other resources essential for household survival. One woman described the changing condition of local water sources in relation to her everyday household responsibilities:

“In the past, the river water was good; we could use it for bathing, washing, and household needs. Now the water has changed—especially during long dry season—adding to the burden of finding clean water for us. As women, we are greatly inconvenienced, because the responsibility for water, cooking, washing, and taking care children are still our duty.” (P006, A Woman in Tapin Regency).

Her account illustrates how environmental degradation becomes materially experienced through women's reproductive labor. Changing water conditions do not simply represent an ecological problem; they create additional work tied to securing water, maintaining household hygiene, preparing food, and caring for children. For many women, rivers, gardens,

and surrounding landscapes were therefore not perceived primarily as economic assets but as spaces that sustained everyday life. When mining activities reduced access to clean water, degraded agricultural land, or disrupted local ecosystems, women experienced these changes as an erosion of the material conditions necessary to sustain household well-being. These findings reinforce FPE's argument that environmental degradation is experienced through socially differentiated responsibilities. Because women disproportionately shoulder unpaid care work, ecological decline can translate directly into increased reproductive labor, making environmental change a deeply gendered experience (Lahiri-Dutt, 2022).

Second, nature functions as a source of collective identity. Participants frequently associated rivers, forests, and agricultural land with local cultural traditions, intergenerational knowledge, and community belonging. Particularly among Banjar and Dayak communities, environmental change disrupts cultural practices and social memory embedded in local landscapes. Rather than separating ecological and cultural values, women understood environmental protection as inseparable from preserving community identity (Intergovernmental Forum, 2023). This finding illustrates how ecological knowledge is socially embedded and collectively reproduced, a central proposition of Feminist Political Ecology (Rocheleau et al., 1996).

Third, nature is interpreted as an everyday political space. Women's narratives revealed growing awareness of environmental problems and unequal participation in community decision-making. One participant noted:

“The residents have held several meetings to discuss how the dust and noise from the mining site are increasingly disturbing the residential area. However, women almost never attended, as the meetings were held at night and attended mostly by men.” (P007, A Woman in Tapin)

This account shows how women recognize both the

environmental consequences of mining and their limited access to spaces where these problems are discussed collectively. Although the participant did not frame her experience in formal political terms, her observation reflects an emerging critical ecological consciousness in which environmental change becomes connected to questions of participation, gender, and power. Such consciousness represents an important cognitive shift from experiencing environmental degradation as individual hardship to understanding it as an issue of justice and unequal decision-making (Lahiri-Dutt, 2022).

Importantly, this critical consciousness was neither uniform nor linear. Women occupying different social positions interpreted environmental change in distinct ways. Participants living in mining-dependent households often expressed ambivalence, recognizing the environmental costs of mining while simultaneously acknowledging their economic dependence on extractive livelihoods. In contrast, women engaged in environmental organizations or urban community initiatives were more likely to frame ecological degradation through broader discourses of sustainability and environmental rights. These differences suggest that environmental consciousness is shaped not only by gender but also by livelihood strategies, social position, and proximity to extractive economies, reflecting the intersectional perspective advanced within contemporary Feminist Political Ecology (Lutz-Ley & Buechler, 2020).

Overall, the findings show that women's environmental consciousness in mining landscapes is not fixed or homogeneous. Instead, it emerges through continuous negotiation between reproductive responsibilities, economic survival, cultural identity, and ecological experience. This consciousness forms the foundation upon which women subsequently develop diverse forms of agency to negotiate gendered power relations within masculinized mining spaces. The following section explores how these emerging forms of agency are expressed through everyday negotiation, adaptation, and resistance.

## **2. Negotiating Gendered Power in Masculinized Mining Spaces**

The emergence of critical ecological consciousness does not automatically translate into collective environmental activism. Rather, women first negotiate the unequal power relations embedded within mining landscapes through a range of everyday practices that reflect both structural constraints and individual capacities to act. From the perspective of Women's Agency, agency should not be understood solely through overt resistance or public mobilization, but also through the ways individuals exercise choice, negotiate constraints, and pursue strategic actions within unequal social structures (Kabeer, 1999). In mining contexts, where employment opportunities, political authority, and environmental governance remain deeply masculinized, women often express through subtle, negotiated actions rather than confrontation.

The findings indicate that many women in mining-affected communities are profoundly economically dependent on extractive livelihoods. Several participants acknowledged the environmental degradation, health risks, and livelihood insecurity generated by mining activities, yet simultaneously recognized that mining remained an important source of household income. This tension was particularly evident among women whose family members worked in informal or illegal mining. One participant explained:

“I actually understand that the environment is damaged by the mining activity, but my father works in that mine for I can go to college.” (P18, A Woman in Banjar Regency).

Her statement captures the ambivalence embedded in women's environmental consciousness: she recognizes the ecological costs of mining while simultaneously understanding mining income as a means of securing her education. Environmental concern, therefore, does not automatically translate into opposition to mining, but is negotiated alongside household economic needs and aspirations.

Rather than interpreting these choices as evidence of passivity or environmental indifference, the findings suggest a form of survival-oriented agency, whereby women continuously negotiate limited opportunities within highly constrained economic circumstances. Consistent with Kabeer's (1999) conception of agency, these decisions reflect strategic choices made under unequal resource distributions rather than unrestricted expressions of individual autonomy. FPE similarly emphasizes that agency should be understood in relation to the structural conditions produced by extractive capitalism rather than evaluated through idealized notions of resistance (Rocheleau et al., 1996).

Women's agency was also expressed through everyday practices aimed at protecting household and community well-being despite ongoing environmental degradation. Participants described managing alternative water sources, cultivating household gardens, reducing exposure to mining dust, and restoring small areas of degraded land as routine parts of daily life. Although these practices were rarely framed by participants as political actions, they represent forms of embodied resistance rooted in reproductive labor and ecological care. As argued by Lutz-Ley and Buechler (2020), everyday care practices may constitute a politics of everyday life by sustaining ecological resilience amid environmental injustice. Rather than confronting extractive industries directly, women maintained the ecological conditions necessary for household survival through continuous acts of care that simultaneously carried environmental and political significance.

Agency was not confined to domestic or community spaces. Women employed in government institutions and environmental agencies also described negotiating masculinized bureaucratic structures in which their participation in mining governance was frequently limited to administrative responsibilities rather than substantive decision-making. Formal inclusion, therefore, did not necessarily translate into meaningful influence over environmental policy. These findings illustrate what may be understood as silent agency

(Kabeer, 1999), forms of influence that remain largely invisible within formal political processes yet shape environmental governance through incremental negotiation, professional engagement, and strategic accommodation. Rather than interpreting limited public activism as an absence of agency, the findings demonstrate that women's actions often remain embedded within institutional and cultural constraints that restrict opportunities for open political contestation.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that women's agency in mining landscapes is neither linear nor uniform. Instead, it is expressed through multiple and interconnected forms of negotiation, including survival-oriented decision-making, embodied ecological care, and subtle institutional engagement. While these practices primarily operate at the individual and household levels, they also generate shared experiences, mutual recognition, and informal networks among women facing similar environmental challenges. In this sense, individual agency provides the social foundation from which solidarity and collective agency may subsequently emerge. The following section examines how these everyday practices evolve into broader forms of collective action through women's networks and civil society organizations.

### **3. Collective Agency through Women's Solidarity**

Although women's agency in mining-affected communities is frequently expressed through individual acts of negotiation and survival, these practices rarely occur in isolation. The findings demonstrate that everyday interactions among women gradually generate shared knowledge, mutual trust, and informal support networks that constitute the social foundations of collective agency. Rather than emerging through formal environmental movements, collective agency develops through ordinary social relationships that enable women to respond collectively to share ecological challenges.

These practices are rarely identified as environmental activism, yet Feminist Political Ecology recognizes them as a collective infrastructure of care.

Rather than limiting care to the private domestic sphere, FPE conceptualizes reproductive labor as a political practice that sustains both ecological resilience and community survival (Rocheleau et al., 1996). Through these everyday interactions, women collectively reproduce local ecological knowledge while simultaneously strengthening social cohesion in communities affected by extractive development.

These findings also extend Kabeer's (1999) understanding of resources by demonstrating that the foundations of collective agency are not exclusively material. Beyond access to land, income, or formal education, women's agency is reinforced by relational resources such as trust, reciprocity, shared experiences, emotional support, and locally embedded ecological knowledge. These intangible resources enable women to exchange information, coordinate adaptive responses, and collectively reduce household vulnerability despite limited institutional support. In this sense, solidarity itself functions as a strategic resource that expands women's capacity to act collectively within highly constrained socio-political environments. Rather than representing the outcome of empowerment, solidarity becomes one mechanism through which empowerment is progressively constructed.

Despite this potential, the findings indicate that several structural barriers continue to impede the transformation of women's collective agency into sustained environmental advocacy. First, household dependence on mining-related livelihoods creates substantial material risks for women who openly challenge extractive activities. Potential income loss, social stigma, and economic insecurity discourage public participation in environmental movements, consistent with findings from extractive industries elsewhere (Baddianaah, 2023; Ofosu et al., 2022). Second, patriarchal norms and formal systems of representation continue to marginalize women's voices within environmental governance. Decision-making processes, including environmental impact assessments (EIA/AMDAL) and village deliberation forums, frequently

recognize male household heads as the primary representatives, thereby limiting women's opportunities to influence environmental policies (Heimann & Johansson, 2025). Third, increasing threats against environmental defenders, including intimidation, criminalization, and gender-based violence, create significant safety concerns that further discourage women from engaging in overt environmental advocacy. Recent global evidence demonstrates that environmental defenders, particularly women, continue to face escalating risks in many resource-dependent regions (Global Witness, 2024). Collectively, these structural constraints explain why women's agency in South Kalimantan remains predominantly localized despite the emergence of critical ecological consciousness and collective solidarity.

From a comparative perspective, this pattern differs from experiences documented in other extractive regions. Studies from West Africa show that women engaged in artisanal and small-scale mining have built cross-border associations that advocate for legal recognition, occupational safety, and gender-responsive mining governance (Hilson et al., 2018; Ofori, Torbor, & Sarpong, 2022). Similarly, women's environmental movements in Latin America have transformed everyday practices of ecological care into broader political struggles for environmental justice by connecting local communities with national advocacy networks (Lutz-Ley & Buechler, 2020). These international experiences suggest that collective agency becomes politically transformative when locally embedded solidarity is supported by broader institutional resources, legal assistance, advocacy organizations, and sustained civil society engagement.

The findings reveal the emergence of embryonic solidarity among women in mining-affected communities. Although this solidarity has not yet evolved into organized environmental movements, it is reflected in everyday practices of mutual support, including the exchange of ecological knowledge, adaptive livelihood strategies, and reciprocal assistance in addressing

household and community needs. These informal networks demonstrate that women are not passive recipients of extractive impacts but active producers of collective resilience. Similar patterns have been documented in other Indonesian environmental conflicts, such as the community-based resistance movements in Wadas and Kendeng, where women's shared experiences of ecological degradation stimulated collective awareness of environmental injustice and gender inequality (Yuliasari et al., 2024). Studies of women in artisanal and small-scale mining likewise show that informal solidarity often marks the first step toward broader environmental advocacy and demands for safer, more equitable livelihoods (Nagari, 2020; Famelasari & Prastiwi, 2021).

From the perspective of Feminist Political Ecology, these forms of solidarity extend beyond social support to become spaces for producing ecological knowledge and collective political capacity. Women's gatherings, religious activities, neighborhood meetings, and *gotong royong* (cooperation) create opportunities to exchange experiences, interpret environmental change, and develop shared responses to mining's socio-ecological consequences. Consistent with Kabeer's (1999) resources–agency–achievements framework, these relational networks function as critical social resources that strengthen women's capacity to act collectively. Resources, in this sense, encompass not only material assets but also trust, emotional support, shared identities, and locally embedded ecological knowledge. Consequently, women's collective action should be understood not merely as an economic survival strategy but as an ongoing effort to sustain ecological integrity and social justice within extractive landscapes (Irawan & Pramana, 2025; Sununianti, 2024).

Transforming embryonic solidarity into transformative collective agency requires an enabling civil society ecosystem that expands women's access to organizational networks, legal support, advocacy platforms, and political opportunities. In this regard, women's empowerment should not be understood as an individual process of capacity building alone but as a

relational and institutional process through which everyday experiences of environmental injustice are translated into collective action for environmental justice (Guimbeau et al., 2023; Ofosu et al., 2022).

These findings resonate with Rowlands' concept of power-with, which conceptualizes empowerment as the collective capacity to act through cooperation, mutual trust, and shared purpose rather than domination (Rowlands, 1997; Veneklasen & Miller, 2007). In the mining communities examined in this study, women's solidarity constitutes an emerging form of "joint-power" that strengthens collective resilience, even as it operates largely outside formal political institutions. Although this solidarity has not yet developed into an organized environmental movement, it establishes the relational foundations upon which broader civil society mobilization can be constructed (Wambui, 2023).

#### **4. Reconceptualizing Women's Agency through Civil Society for Environmental Justice**

Civil society represents a critical political arena through which women can expand their agency beyond everyday survival and collective solidarity toward broader environmental governance. In South Kalimantan, however, women's engagement with mining and environmental issues remains largely confined to administrative roles, urban community initiatives, or symbolic participation in government programs. Yet civil society, comprising environmental organizations, women's groups, local communities, and academic initiatives, offers a strategic institutional space through which women's lived experiences can be translated into ecological knowledge, collective action, and political influence. By connecting localized experiences with broader advocacy processes, civil society enables women to renegotiate unequal power relations, circulate environmental knowledge, and build solidarity across communities and sectors.

Building upon these findings, this study argues that strengthening women's agency within civil society requires interconnected cognitive, structural, cultural,

and institutional transformations. First, cognitive transformation requires recognizing women's experiential knowledge as legitimate ecological knowledge. Women's everyday experiences of managing water resources, maintaining household health, and responding to environmental degradation constitute forms of situated knowledge that remain largely invisible within technocratic environmental governance (Rocheleau et al., 1996). Participatory research, community documentation, and public dialogue can bridge these locally grounded experiences with formal environmental policymaking (Lutz-Ley & Buechler, 2020). In this sense, civil society performs an important epistemic function by translating women's lived experiences into publicly recognized environmental knowledge.

Second, structural transformation requires redistributing power within civil society itself. Environmental organizations should move beyond simply involving women as participants toward positioning them as decision-makers and movement leaders. Cross-sectoral coalitions connecting community women, environmental activists, academics, and public institutions can strengthen collective agency (Kabeer, 1999) while fostering power-with, collective power generated through cooperation, mutual trust, and shared purpose rather than hierarchical control (Rowlands, 1997; Veneklasen & Miller, 2007). Such an approach shifts environmental governance from a model of women's inclusion toward one of women's leadership.

Third, cultural transformation requires recognizing care's political significance. Drawing upon the concept of the politics of care (Tronto, 1993), this study argues that activities traditionally viewed as domestic—including maintaining water sources, restoring home gardens, and caring for household environments—should be understood as forms of embodied ecological resistance rather than merely reproductive labor. Civil society organizations can facilitate this transformation by connecting everyday care practices with environmental literacy campaigns, community care circles, and cross-community ecological initiatives. In doing so,

environmental politics is expanded beyond formal policy arenas into the everyday spaces where environmental justice is continuously negotiated.

Finally, institutional transformation requires embedding women's agency within environmental governance processes. Civil society organizations should serve as bridges connecting women from mining-affected communities with state institutions responsible for environmental planning and regulation. Collaborative policy briefs, advocacy training, legal assistance, and integrating gender-responsive environmental perspectives into regional development planning provide important mechanisms through which women's collective agency can influence public policy. As Cornwall (2016) argues, empowerment ultimately occurs not through participation alone but through women's capacity to shape political decisions affecting their lives.

Taken together, these findings reconceptualize civil society as a transformative socio-political ecosystem that connects women's localized agency with broader environmental governance. By expanding access to knowledge, participation, and recognition of care, civil society can transform women's solidarity from localized coping into collective political action. In South Kalimantan, this process signals an emerging feminist ecological politics through which women challenge extractive power relations and reshape environmental justice.

## **D. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that women's agency in mining-affected communities in South Kalimantan develops through everyday encounters with environmental change, economic dependence, and gendered power relations. Women exercise agency through livelihood negotiation, care practices, environmental knowledge, and kinship-based solidarity, despite limited access to formal environmental decision-making. Rather than viewing agency primarily as overt

resistance, the findings show it as a relational process through which survival and care generate shared knowledge, trust, and collective capacity. This extends Feminist Political Ecology and Kabeer's agency framework by showing how environmental consciousness develops into collective agency through relational resources.

The study further demonstrates that localized solidarity requires supportive institutions to become broader environmental action. Civil society functions as an institutional bridge through which women's ecological knowledge, care practices, and collective experiences gain political recognition and influence environmental governance. Environmental justice therefore requires more than women's participation; it requires gender-responsive arrangements that expand women's voice, leadership, and access to decision-making. Strengthening these pathways can transform everyday care and solidarity into sustained collective environmental action.

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