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# GENDER ISSUES IN THE ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE MINING SECTOR

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is a significant source of income for tens of millions of people in developing countries. ASM refers to small groups and individuals engaged in low-cost and labor-intensive excavation of minerals using minimal mechanization. ASM techniques are used in the production of precious minerals such as gold and diamonds, fertilizers used in agriculture, garnet used to filter water, and gravel and stone used for building bridges and paving rural roads. According to current estimates, at least 40 million people globally work directly in the ASM sector, and about 300 million people in more than 70 countries depend indirectly on the sector (Stocklin-Weinberg et al., 2019). Women are estimated to represent 30–50% of the global ASM workforce but are often overlooked by donors and governments. In Ghana, women account for as much as 90% of the gold mining labor force, and women represent the majority of gemstone miners in Tanzania (Yakovleva, 2007; Craig & Antonocci, 2014).

While there is significant variation across countries, women tend to earn only one quarter of what men earn in the ASM sector (Eshun, 2016; Lahiri-Dutt, 2018). Despite earning less than their male counterparts, ASM still represents a critical source of income for women. In some countries, the relative economic opportunities in the ASM sector are comparatively more valuable for women than men. For example, while women in ASM in Uganda earn less than men, women can still earn 335% more at the mine site compared to non-mining activities, while men can only earn 65% more (Buss et al., 2019).

In most countries, women do not enjoy the same opportunities around access to, control over, and benefits from artisanal mining in their communities. The division of labor within the ASM supply chain is typically gendered with women more often occupying non-digging jobs, such as washing and crushing stone, and creating ancillary businesses, such as selling food and goods around mining sites (Arcos et al., 2018; Buss et al., 2017). However, women are increasingly stepping out of indirect supportive roles and engaging directly in mining (IGF, 2018).

Development interventions focused on the legalization of the ASM sector that do not explicitly promote women's economic empowerment can have the unintended consequence of further excluding women from the economic benefits of ASM (Buss et al., forthcoming). At a national level, even when existing laws treat women and men equally, these laws are often still enforced and interpreted using existing societal norms—a reality that can often exacerbate inequalities between men and women.

Understanding how and why women and men differentially interact with, and are impacted by, ASM production and commercialization is key to bringing about reforms in this important economic sector. Gender differences can be found at all levels of the commodity chain, from the point of production to processing in the international economy. By exploring the gendered dynamics in ASM contexts, one gains a deeper understanding of how women in the ASM sector contribute to poverty alleviation, national revenue generation, and foreign exchange earnings. Social relations between women and men are structured through traditional gender norms and power relations. Much can be learned from applied research on the sector and the small suite of projects working in this sphere.

## SHIFTING VIEWS ON GENDER IN THE ASM SECTOR

The literature on gender relations in the ASM sector has evolved greatly over the past three decades. Over this period, the focus of research has shifted from an emphasis on the negative impacts of artisanal mining on women and children, the natural resource base, and labor violations to the important economic roles of women in the sector.

Prior to the 1990s, the ASM sector was largely viewed as illegitimate and a threat to the more efficient and profitable industrial mining sector. The sparse research on ASM tended to focus on extraction, placing an emphasis on the role of the miner in the economy. Women were described in terms of the roles they played in non-digging activities such as rock crushing, sluicing, washing, panning, sieving, transporting, and food vending. Early literature depicted women as a cheap and readily available reservoir of labor, but one that needed special protections (Lahiri-Dutt, 2012). To protect women and children, some countries prohibit pregnant women from accessing mine sites to reduce their risk of exposure to mercury, a powerful neurotoxin. Other countries restrict the roles available to women in the sector, ostensibly to protect women from the risks of heavy labor.

In the early 2000s, the discourse on the ASM sector began to shift, and with it, the discourse on gender also began to shift. The international development community began highlighting the ASM sector's potential to drive economic growth, alleviate poverty, and contribute to development. In terms of gender, a new focus was placed on the income-generating opportunities for women involved in the various stages of mineral extraction. However, the literature continued to portray roles typically filled by women (e.g., rock crushing, washing) as ancillary, despite their importance to ASM supply chains.

Increasingly, gender considerations are being incorporated into high-level policy documents and due-diligence systems. For example, the 2012 Washington Declaration Diagnostic Framework, launched with support from USAID, includes a commitment to strengthening women's rights. The

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### Artisanal Mining in Global Context

*The ASM sector accounts for about 20 percent of global gold production, 80 percent of global sapphire production, and 20 percent of global diamond production. Artisanal mining is also a major source of minerals indispensable for manufacturing electronic products. 26 percent of global tantalum production and 25 percent of tin comes from ASM.*

*(Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development, 2017).*

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Washington Declaration Diagnostic Framework helps countries assess their artisanal diamond mining sector and improve implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) – a due-diligence system aimed at preventing “conflict diamonds.” The Washington Declaration calls for participants to “promote gender equity and strengthen efforts to guarantee women equal access to land rights, education, credit and training programs” (Washington Declaration, 2016). Although the Kimberley Process Core Document does not address gender explicitly, gender safeguards call for a commitment to gender equality within Kimberley Process documents, an expansion of the definition of conflict diamond to include violence against women, and the establishment of a trust fund to support interventions for women in mining communities (GIZ & Levin Sources, 2019).

Best practices dictate that development programs in the ASM sector should approach gender as a cross-cutting issue. Gender should be an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of ASM development policies and programs. A normative view is emerging that ASM sector programming should aim to:

- 1) Reduce gender disparities in the ASM sector including access to, control over, and benefit from resources;
- 2) Reduce gender-based violence in and around mine sites; and
- 3) Empower women and girls – economically, socially and politically.

## **DATA GAPS ON GENDER IN THE ASM SECTOR**

Data on gender in the ASM sector remains very sparse. Women are most active in the ASM sector in Africa, followed by Latin America. There is little empirical data on the number of people engaged in ASM on a country-by-country basis, and data that does exist often cannot be disaggregated by metrics such as gender, age, class, ethnicity, and educational background (World Bank, 2019). However, this is slowly changing. The development programs noted in Annex I have generated important data on the roles of women in the artisanal mining sector, and more importantly, have sought to promote greater gender equality in the full range of the value chain from the point of extraction to the export of minerals.

Data on women in ASM in Africa is sparse and built primarily on secondary sources. In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, no women have been officially registered as artisanal diamond miners during the last two decades, yet women are actively financing extraction and sometimes mining diamonds themselves. Women in the Central African Republic (CAR) comprise 28% of workers at gold mining sites (Jaillon & de Brier, 2019) and 3% of workers at diamond mining sites (Ndongo & Dejong, 2019). However, only 5% of site managers in CAR are women. Even when women are officially site managers, it is sometimes in title only, with men managing the day-to-day operations of the site.

In Latin America, reports from Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia describe women in ASM as facing challenges of low wages, poor safety, and scarce recognition of the value of their work (Meruane & Romani, 2014). In Colombia, 55.6% of subsistence miners are women (GOMIAM, 2011). However, research on gender and ASM in Colombia found that women are largely relegated to secondary roles in the mining sector (Arcos et al., 2018).

To improve our understanding of the ASM sector, there is a need to improve data collection and consistency, disaggregate numbers by gender, and provide a platform to collate and share data and promote awareness raising (World Bank, 2019).

## DIFFERENTIATED ROLES OF WOMEN AND MEN IN THE ASM SECTOR

Thanks to the recent focus on the role of women in the artisanal mining sector, the literature is gradually shifting to encompass a more complex and nuanced view of the multitude of roles women play. Women's roles vary between and within countries and frequently depend on the location (proximity to villages or homes) and mineral being mined (World Bank, 2012). While women's roles and degrees of participation differ from country to country, site to site, and between mineral types, many ASM zones are built upon a foundational, gendered division of labor where men are generally engaged in pit work while women do everything else (Buss et al., 2017). Men diggers are the “miners,” and women are considered ancillary and largely ignored—although they are critically important actors in activities such as washing and processing minerals, transporting minerals to washing sites, or growing and processing the enormous quantities of food needed to sustain miners working the pits.

In the case of alluvial diamond and gold mining, ore-processing activities include the transport of excavated ore to designated washing sites, carrying water, and the washing and sorting of gravel in search of minerals. In some artisanal mining gold sites in Ghana and Sierra Leone, women participate in all steps of the extraction process on equal footing with their male counterparts. In the CAR, women are said to be excluded from diamond digging for cultural reasons, but some finance digging and even dig in the pits. Women throughout West and Central Africa pan and market alluvial gold for the regular source of income it provides. In the tin, tantalum, and tungsten mineral commodity chains, women mainly work in transport and processing and are largely excluded from extraction (digging and hauling) activities (Hinton, 2016).

The dynamic in Latin America is slightly different, even if the same trends remain. Women in Bolivia occupy a number of roles ranging from laborers conducting the most labor-intensive and informal jobs at the mine site (e.g., digging and washing), to owners and operators, to women who reprocess tailings. Reprocessing tailings involves washing waste gravel (tailings) to find any potential remnant of small diamonds to ensure that not even the tiniest, low-value fragment of a diamond is missed. Women also work as unlicensed intermediaries selling products to processing plants for reprocessing tailors and mine operators. In Brazil, women work at very small operations panning for gold along riverbanks to supplement family needs. In Colombia, women involved in extraction most commonly use pans and sluices to work rivers or rework tailings, operate equipment as crushers, or act as gold dealers (Hinton, Veiga, & Beinhoff, 2003). In addition to working directly in mining, women often work part-time at informal mining processing operations, such as stone crushing, washing, panning, and sales of the partially refined product. Women also occupy ancillary roles, engaging in small-scale commerce through the sale of food and other goods on mining sites, as nightclub entertainers, and as sex workers alongside other “traditional” gender roles like farming, babysitting, and cooking.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN THE ASM SECTOR

Women's engagement in artisanal mining has received more attention in recent years, helping paint a more nuanced picture of related social, cultural, economic, and policy considerations. A recent World Bank study in diamond mining areas of western CAR showed that ASM employment and income benefits are mostly directed to men, whereas the risks (health, social, environmental, and economic) fall largely on women and the families they care for (World Bank, 2018). Women's roles (such as stone crushing, washing, panning, or gravel transportation) can be more grueling than some roles dominated by men, who in addition to miners, are more often owners, managers, and sellers (Reichel, 2019; Hinton, 2016, 2017, 2011; and IGF, 2018).

## **SOCIAL NORMS AND TABOOS**

A range of cultural norms and taboos surround women's participation in various aspects of ASM, mostly based on the belief that women are not physically and intellectually strong enough to manage and use resources productively. Some cultural patterns assign a socially inferior role to women, especially young women and girls who are considered subordinate to men. Research on women in ASM communities in sub-Saharan Africa found that gender norms were invoked by women and men to limit women's access to digging roles, and sometimes limit work with equipment and/or in mine shafts (Buss et al., forthcoming). In some communities surrounding a wolframite mine in Rwanda, both men and women depict female miners as addicted to drugs, pregnant out of wedlock, disobedient to parents or husbands, or widowed and unable to control themselves (Hinton, 2016).

## **INCOME INEQUALITY**

Gender-based occupational differences contribute to a significant income gap between men and women in the artisanal mining sector. Some researchers have found that women work longer hours than men in mining sites but earn on average about one quarter of what men earn (Eshun, 2016; Lahiri-Dutt, 2018). Research on ASM in sub-Saharan Africa found that women were paid significantly less than men for a day's labor, but that women tended to work more irregular hours (fewer hours and days) due to agricultural and domestic responsibilities (Buss et al., 2019).

Both men and women are challenged by the inability to access finance, but the ASM context generally privileges men in terms of ownership, access to assets and finances, and authority (Buss et al., 2017). Women encounter poor access to credit because they have little or no collateral, have poor education, and face discriminatory attitudes of bankers toward women miners (Yakovleva, 2007). Unfortunately, in the absence of credit and state support, women artisanal miners cannot afford to purchase or lease the land and tools they need to achieve greater independence, including building their own operations, and thus increasing their earnings.

Discriminatory attitudes and perceptions of women continue to restrict these rights in practice and explain the gender gaps in access to financial services. For example, reports suggest that in Mexico, financial institutions continue to ask a woman for her husband's signature before opening a bank account (GEM, 2012). The experience of development projects in the ASM sector suggests that often women are not invited to consultations dealing with various parts of the value chain. Women are not prioritized in employment in the artisanal mining sector and are overlooked in compensation and royalty payments. Lacking expertise in geology and access to exploration data, women lack the informational tools needed to direct what capital they have toward investment in mining operations, let alone the appropriate machinery (AMDC, 2015).

## **LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS**

While laws and regulations structure access to subsurface minerals in many developing countries, customary tenure arrangements are often more prevalent and dominant in determining sub-surface rights. Indigenous and rural women face particular constraints in securing land and property rights in some countries, as they are more likely to face constraints based on customary law and are more likely to lack legal documentation required to secure land and non-land assets under statutory law (Deere and Leon, 2003). Due to the traditionally influenced legal constraints to owning or inheriting land and mineral rights, many women end up operating with no legal recognition (Reichel, 2019). Further, the various and overlapping institutions that regulate ASM—customary traditional authorities, license owners, formal state actors, mining committees, associations, and pit teams—are dominated by men (Buss et al., 2017).

Formalization efforts can inadvertently limit women's access to the ASM sector and reinforce existing power structures. As the mining sector becomes better organized or mechanized, women

often lose employment (World Bank, 2012). Opportunities under formalization (e.g., mineral licenses, mine site associations, or government mining authorities) often benefit those with relatively more power, money, and higher levels of education, which are most often men (Buss et al., 2019; Buss et al., forthcoming). In sub-Saharan Africa, women were less likely than men to have received trainings: 9% less likely on mining methods, laws, environmental protection, and 15% less likely on safety in the survey sites (Buss et al., 2019).

## **DISCRIMINATION IN ACCESS AND CONTROL OF SUBSURFACE RESOURCES**

Even in cases where policies ostensibly protect the rights of women to land or mineral resources, women's full enjoyment of their rights is compromised by discriminatory practices and attitudes that limit their ability to enjoy economic autonomy and make economic decisions independently (OECD, 2017). Legal provisions in mining law are usually gender neutral; yet in practice, women are sometimes denied access rights to land, licenses, and other mining necessities. This occurs for several reasons. The laws generally include no clearly stipulated provisions to strengthen women's participation in the sector. The introductory provisions in the laws generally fail to target discrimination around inheritance law, customary traditions, or the rights of women to engage in mining and commercial mineral transactions. For instance, female gold traders in the DRC play a crucial role in the supply chain, but because they are not registered with the mining authorities, recent changes in the mining law mean authorities consider them to be illegal (IGF, 2018).

In the artisanal mining sector, division of labor and cultural norms are directly linked to women's limited access to and control over resources such as land and capital. Land ownership and inheritance systems often exclude women and negatively affect women's participation in artisanal mining. Women in diamond mining areas in Côte d'Ivoire cannot own land by customary law, meaning they cannot become mining site owners (USAID, 2018). Yet, there are some promising changes. In Tanzania, mining license papers may be transferred to the widow, provided that the woman is able to present a valid marriage certificate and pays the transfer fees (IGF, 2018). In CAR, mining claims can be transferred to a woman, widow, mother, or daughter (Jiekak, 2019).

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS**

Women bear the brunt of the environmental and social risks associated with mining. Productive agricultural lands used by women food producers are often engulfed by mining operations (Eshun, 2016). Women are disproportionately exposed to mining-related health risks, such as brain, liver, and kidney damage, caused by the use of mercury or cyanide, to amalgamate gold and scavenge tailings (Eftimie et al., 2009). Artisanal gold mining is the largest source of mercury pollution in the world. Mercury is a powerful neurotoxin that can damage brain, nervous system, and other organs, as well as damage a developing fetus.

Women in ASM are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, especially in conflict and post-conflict countries like the DRC or CAR. Women may also face extremely high levels of forced transactional sex in mines, where they are compelled to trade sex for the "right" to work or provide support services in mining areas. Women miners appear to suffer from much less gender-based violence and abuse in countries like Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire when artisanal mining is an integral part of the local community in conditions of relative peace and security (USAID, 2018). Women living closer to a mine have a five percent higher risk of experiencing sexual violence than women who live further away (Rustad et al., 2016). Case study research carried out by the USAID Artisanal Mining and Property Rights Project (AMPR) project suggests that some site owners take advantage of women who are poor or desperate for money, requiring sex in exchange for access to the mines or for loans to invest in mining (USAID, 2019a). Mining sites appear to be places of high risk for the transmission of HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases because of high in-and-out migration. Sex workers around artisanal mine sites may find themselves in situations where

they are unable to protect themselves against the risk of sexually transmitted disease exposure, in part due to the absence of adequate health care facilities, but also due to cultural norms that may limit women's ability to insist on the use of protection (Hantanirina, 2008). This would explain the high prevalence of HIV in the mining zones in the DRC—4.5%—compared to a national prevalence of 1.1% (Matundu Mbambi & Kandolo, 2016).

## **IMPORTANCE OF ASM FOR WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES**

While historical and cultural factors have sometimes narrowed the types of roles women have played in the sector, women have always been part of the mining workforce. Increasingly, women are stepping out of indirect supportive roles and engaging directly in mining (IGF, 2018). Women occupy a distinct role in the management of small-scale mining operations worldwide, though they are rarely identified as miners and only sporadically attain the same decision-making stature as their male counterparts (Yakovleva, 2007). In recent years, women have come together to gain a more significant role in cooperatives and companies within a supply chain that is stereotypically considered to be a masculine profession (Solidaridad, 2018).

Despite discriminatory norms and institutions in the sector, the money that women earn nevertheless represents an important source of revenue for themselves and their families. Furthermore, even though income for male miners and community members is higher than for women, ASM contributes to savings among women as seen in a recent study in the DRC (Reichel, 2019). The artisanal mining sector provides valuable income to women who are often excluded from other forms of paid work due to illiteracy. Informal employment opportunities often open up because skilled male miners have moved to large-scale mining operations or choose to pursue other employment opportunities in urban areas. In some contexts, the economic opportunities offered by the ASM sector are more valuable for women than men. Research in sub-Saharan Africa found that men in Rwanda can earn approximately 30% more at the mine site compared to non-mining activities, while women can earn 223% more; in Uganda, men earn 64% more at the mine site while women earn 335% more (Buss et al., 2019).

## **BEST PRACTICES IN REDUCING GENDER INEQUALITY IN ASM**

Women are active in the artisanal mining sector, be it from working in the pit to being involved in a wide range of complementary economic activities. To meet national and international development objectives, women need to have the same stake in the artisanal mining sector as men. For women and men, working directly in the extraction of minerals is dangerous, arduous, and risky; however, whether artisanal mining is harmful to women is not the issue. Rather, women should have the same opportunities as men to be involved at any level of the sector if they so desire, from digging in pits to trading in the international arena. Creating opportunities for equitable access to all factors of production is the central issue—be it land, financing, or labor. From the emerging experience with implementing artisanal mining programs and projects through gender lenses, best practices are proposed below.

### **DEVELOPING SPECIFIC GENDER ASSESSMENT TOOLS**

The first step toward understanding how to support women in the artisanal mining sector is to create a common understanding of the differentiated gender roles of women and men. This requires assessments of the mining situation that look at the entire value chain around the particular commodity. IMPACT—a Canadian international non-governmental organization—developed a suite of Gender Assessment Tools that provides step-by-step guidance on how to integrate gender and human rights into every stage of drafting, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating mineral policies, laws, and institutional processes. Through a pilot in Uganda, IMPACT is applying the tool to ensure

the integration of gender equality into proposed mineral policy reforms. A similar initiative is underway in Ituri Province in the DRC to ensure the integration of gender equality during the implementation of field level projects (IMPACT, 2017).

## **DEVELOPING GUIDELINES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

The status of women at all levels of the artisanal mining sector can be improved by ensuring that gender issues are considered in project design and implementation. Gender mainstreaming checklists have been successfully integrated in project activities under the USAID Property Rights and Artisanal Diamond Development II (PRADD II) Project in Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, Gender Integration Guidelines and a Gender Action Plan were prepared for the USAID AMPR project in the CAR (Jiekak, 2019). These tools identify opportunities for integrating women miners into cooperatives and suggest ways to support capacity-building activities for women. Proposals are made to help women capture value-added benefits from the considerable flow of money in mining communities, and through this, amplify their voices in the local communities. This approach has been tested with success in diamond mining communities in Côte d'Ivoire under the PRADD II program (USAID, 2018).

## **ESTABLISHING AND SUPPORTING WOMEN'S ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS IN MINING COMMUNITIES.**

Recent donor-funded programs and projects supporting women in the artisanal mining sector have experimented with setting up women-run cooperatives and associations so that specialized training can be targeted to women members. By supporting the formation of women's mining groups, projects can tailor trainings for them on conflict resolution, peace and democracy, or women's rights. IMPACT supported the launch of a women's mining network in the DRC, which builds solidarity among women miners, improves their living conditions, and promotes women's rights and access to social services. The Network for the Empowerment of Women in Mining Communities (REAFECOM) is the first women artisanal miners' association in the DRC's northeastern Ituri Province. The network is composed of about 400 members from six mining communities. The network promotes women's rights in their communities, builds solidarity between miners and non-miners, ensures women's participation in decision-making, and advocates for peace in their respective communities. Similarly, the World Bank in the CAR is supporting the establishment of a women's artisanal mining network.

USAID's Empowering Female Miners and Promoting Gender Equality in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Project in Colombia will foster the empowerment and participation of women in the mining sector through the creation of a women miners' association. The association is expected to be the voice of female miners, putting their role in the sector in focus, bringing to light their specific problems, and implementing strategies and tools toward their safety and empowerment. Similarly, USAID's Proudly Women Miners Project in Colombia aims to foster gender equality within the sector, prevent the risk of gender violence in mining, and catalyze social behavior change to address stereotypes that can restrict women's roles in the sector.

## **IMPROVING WOMEN'S EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN MINING DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Fostering women's participation and empowerment in various segments of the artisanal mining value chain requires advocacy and engagement by women and men at the local, national, and regional levels. Platforms and networks of women involved in the artisanal mining sector can go a long way toward building leadership, confidence, and skill. Recent international conferences on mining have seen women actively involved in fostering policy changes. The USAID Capacity Building for Responsible Minerals Trade (CBRMT) project in the DRC supported the National Network of Women in Mining (RENAFEM), composed of over 300 women-led associations working in mines

across country. RENAFEM provides a space for dialogue, innovation, and collaboration among those working on gender-based violence and women's rights in the DRC's mining sector. This platform played a central role in preparing a National Action Plan to empower women in the mining sector. The network has set up monitoring committees at the local, regional, and national levels to monitor: a) inclusion of women in mining decisions, b) women's involvement in promoting peace, and c) rates of gender-based violence on mining sites. Interventions or programs aimed at reaching women can elicit resentment or skepticism from other social groups, especially men whose power or status may be threatened as a result.

## **ELICITING MEN AS CHAMPIONS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

Men can, and must, act as gender champions and play an important role in advocating for women's empowerment and more equitable participation throughout the sector. Engaging more with men in the design of interventions promoting women in the mining sector is key, especially those who may be a barrier to implementation. Some large-scale mining companies have explicitly recruited male champions of women's rights, such as Male Champions of Change initiative in Australia, and organizations such as Women in Mining Canada have produced guidance on increasing women's roles in industrial mining (see [womenandmining.org](http://womenandmining.org)). In the ASM sector, IMPACT's Artisanal Mining Women's Empowerment Credit & Savings project (AFECCOR) in the DRC applied strategies to promote female leadership from within community savings groups with significant participation from men and women. As a result, 80% of the gender-mixed groups had a women-led management committee. This approach was positively viewed by most participants, both men and women (Reichel, 2019). PRADD II in Côte d'Ivoire actively involved women and men in designing village strategic development plans, allowing women to participate in detailed decisions on tenure and zoning decisions for mining and non-mining activities, a role traditionally devoted only to women (USAID, 2018). However, gender-based norms around land tenure, especially in mining areas, can be quite difficult to surmount.

## **IMPROVING WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS**

Women play a central role in growing, processing, and marketing the food that supplies the labor force working in mineral extraction, yet women in artisanal mining communities are often ignored for the critically important role they play in growing this surplus product in what is often considered a subsistence economy. Rural development programs working in communities where artisanal mining is active should focus agricultural extension services on women food producers. Women not only grow food for the mining labor force, but they tend to invest these earnings in household maintenance, such as paying for school fees, health care, and other essentials. The USAID PRADD II women's groups in both Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea received technical, agricultural, and organizational assistance. In Côte d'Ivoire, the project supported 22 women's groups to secure land rights on abandoned diamond mining sites, which the women then rehabilitated for horticultural production. By the end of the project, the women's groups had produced nearly 100 tons of food crops and generated over \$50,000 in revenue. Women invested member dues and profits to purchase food processing mills and three-wheeled motorcycles to transport materials to local markets. These women's groups then used the profits to invest in other more productive assets, such as cattle, and in village development projects, such as rural electrification (USAID, 2018). However, some traditional leaders tried to reallocate some of this productive land owned by women to men farmers and miners, showing how difficult it is to overcome gender-based norms.

## **IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND AND FINANCING IN ASM COMMUNITIES**

By supporting awareness-raising activities around women's property rights, access to finance and credit, access to local savings and loans schemes, and involvement in land-use decisions, change does occur in the role of women in the ASM sector. From the experience of projects like those in Côte

d'Ivoire and Guinea, women build trust with their male counterparts and other men of authority in what are often very traditional rural communities. Women with money gain a greater influence in decision making forums. IMPACT implemented a community-led savings and credit project in six artisanal gold mining communities in Ituri Province of the DRC. AFECCOR supported more than 1,400 women and men in artisanal gold mining communities to access savings and credit through Village Savings and Loans Associations. In an economy where gold is often used as currency, the groups provided small loans to their members and required repayment in cash to encourage the use of currency. Over 1,000 loans were provided to invest in new or existing businesses or to pay for essential services (Reichel, 2019).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCORPORATING GENDER INTO PROGRAMMING IN THE ASM SECTOR

To address the diverse and changing gender roles in ASM areas and improve programming and policy making, donor- and government-funded programs should consider the following:

- 1. Support national policy reforms addressing gender norms and practices in ASM and in related issues,** such as land and resource rights, access to finance, and participation in decision-making processes. Strengthen gender mainstreaming in artisanal mining areas through supporting national policy development that addresses constraints and challenges for women and reduces gender inequality. Develop practical actions to introduce women's rights and gender norms into programs and policies.
- 2. Ensure that ASM formalization efforts explicitly consider gender and include economic opportunities for women in the formal sector.** Mining regulations need to include specific steps to help protect women's roles in the formalized artisanal mining sector. Clear processes for the inclusion of women at each stage of the process are needed, from registration through the licensing process. Barriers to women's economic roles within the sector must continue to be reduced so that women continue to expand their role in production (mining), and as traders, cooperative leaders, exporters, and government employees. Awareness raising and advocacy efforts need to emphasize the value of equitable access in mining; microloans to support mining-related services; and minerals market information. Additionally, advocacy efforts must lobby for comparable pay for their production, roles recognition, and mechanisms to assure women's safety so they can reap economic benefits of their labor in a formalized sector.
- 3. Enhance women's access to economic assets in ASM at the community level, especially access to land and financing.** Women are more likely to participate in greater numbers and play more significant roles if they have fair access and control over land and sub-surface minerals, financing, and decision-making surrounding land use at the local level. Identify local-level champions as well as structural impediments to women's access to the means of production. Often, progress can be made at the community level in partnership with customary leaders and the local government before national-level changes occur.
- 4. Support diverse livelihoods for women in and around ASM zones.** Increase opportunities for women to earn income through value added livelihood opportunities beyond ASM, which is inextricably linked to reducing poverty in artisanal mining communities. Through applied research, continue to test the premise that enhancing women's economic power improves their status in local communities and on a regional and national scale.

- 5. Support safe and culturally appropriate reporting mechanisms for abuses in mines, inclusive of abuses that disproportionately affect women.** OECD due diligence principles call for reporting and mitigating risks (including human rights abuses). Reporting mechanisms must protect the anonymity of the person reporting and experiencing the abuse; account for potential biases that may exist within a mining community, cooperative, or state agency; and the availability of legal assistance. Steps need to be taken to minimize the risk of retaliatory measures and to promote the likelihood of appropriate follow up by the responsible local, traditional, state, and judicial authorities. Culturally sensitive awareness raising efforts need to clearly convey the nature and impacts of abuses and devise pragmatic risk mitigation measures.
- 6. Strengthen women in ASM networks at the national and regional levels.** Connecting women's organizations working in the ASM sector to others in the value chain (traders, civil society activists, government authorities, and academics) helps identify key women's empowerment constraints and opportunities. These networks are the foundation for creating advocacy and leadership positions needed for bringing about policy changes. Inviting women artisanal mining actors to national and international conferences, as the World Bank has done in the DRC, should be replicated in other countries.
- 7. Support efforts to elevate women into leadership positions in ASM organizations and cooperatives.** There are promising examples of women stepping into more economically lucrative and socially critical roles, such as cooperative leaders, community mediators, and ministerial positions. In some cases, these changes in gender roles spur resistance from men. It is important to connect individual women leaders in networks, such as RENAFEM in the DRC.
- 8. Support data collection and sharing to increase knowledge of barriers, risks, and opportunities for women in the artisanal mining sector.** Provide adequate funding for studies, data analysis, and information sharing to fill the gaps in knowledge about women's unique place in the artisanal mining sector. Assess gender risks, and clearly identify prevention and mitigation measures. Undertake studies from the local and national scale of artisanal mining value chains to identify the ways women do—and do not—participate in the economies. Identify the niche areas where women can excel and expand mining businesses.
- 9. Expand initiatives to communicate supportive policies and best practices in gender equality in the ASM sector.** Few national and international policymaking and academic forums present on the role of women in the artisanal mining sector. Donor projects and governments should support women artisanal mining actors to identify best practices to remove barriers to women's full participation in ASM and prepare communication and outreach materials like reports, informational briefs, and visual media to inform policymakers and the general public about the vital role of women in the rapidly expanding artisanal mining sector.

## **ANNEX I: SAMPLE PROJECTS ADDRESSING GENDER INCLUSION IN THE ASM SECTOR**

### **Artisanal Mining and Property Rights (AMPR)**

*CAR. USAID (2018–2021)*

The project supports the establishment of legal, responsible supply chains and strengthening peace in artisanal mining areas with a primary focus on diamonds and a secondary focus on gold. AMPR promotes the social and economic empowerment of women to ensure broad inclusion of women in artisanal mining communities. Identifies inequalities between men and women in its intervention areas and examines opportunities for integrating gender considerations into improving compliance with the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) requirements.

### **Artisanal Mining Women's Empowerment Credit & Savings Project (AFECCOR)**

*DRC. IMPACT, European Partnership for Responsible Minerals and Dell (2017–2019)*

The project supported women and men in artisanal gold mining communities in Ituri, DRC to access savings and credit to promote entrepreneurship and economic security. It promoted women's leadership and economic empowerment in their homes, at artisanal mine sites, and in the wider community. The project facilitated sensitization on gender equality and led discussions with female members and their partners to challenge traditional stereotypes and gender roles.

### **Assistance to the Professionalization of Mining Cooperatives (APCM)**

*CAR. World Bank (2019–2021)*

The project is piloting a process of strengthening and formalizing artisanal miners' organizations to provide them with knowledge and tools to carry out their mandated functions and align them with international frameworks and best practices. The project has initiatives to support women, targeting 30% of women participation in miners' organizations.

### **Capacity Building for a Responsible Minerals Trade (CBRMT)**

*DRC. USAID (2014–2018)*

The project strengthened the capacity of the DRC and regional institutions to transparently regulate the trade in conflict minerals (tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold) to transform the region's minerals into economic growth and development. CBRMT worked with several international partners and local organizations in promoting women's economic empowerment in and near mining sites and its connections among gender, power dynamics, and women's roles in the supply chain, vulnerability, governance, and economic empowerment.

### **Commercially Viable, Conflict-free Gold Project (CVCFG)**

*DRC. USAID (2018–2023)*

Seeks to scale-up exports and sales of conflict-free, artisanal gold from eastern DRC by developing market linkages with responsible gold buyers, particularly in North America and Europe, and will consider gender and produce sex disaggregated data.

### **Creative Capacity Building to Address Gender Based Violence in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Sector in Colombia**

*Colombia. USAID (2020–2021)*

The project integrates gender-based violence prevention and response into existing projects in the Antioquia region of Colombia that aim to increase socio-economic opportunities for women miners while mitigating environmental impacts. The project uses innovative techniques to build skills to enable women to self-organize in associations and implement an advocacy roadmap to address gender-based violence in extractives industries in their communities.

### **Golden Line Program**

*Ghana and Tanzania. Solidaridad, Simavi, and Healthy Entrepreneurs. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016–2020)*

Contributes to the economic empowerment of women living in and around gold ASM communities in Ghana and Tanzania, with a focus on improving women's positions, fair mining practices, and gender-sensitive policies. It supports women to engage in economic activities, while seeking to improve women's sexual and reproductive health in artisanal gold mining communities.

### **Moyo Gemstones**

*Tanzania. Pact, Tanzanian Women Miners Association, ANZA Gems, Nineteen48, and Everledger (2019–ongoing)*

Moyo Gemstones is an ethical gemstone program focused on the female artisanal gem miners in Tanzania's Umba Valley. The effort is building the first scalable, artisanal and small-scale mined colored stone sourcing program and assures responsibly produced, ASM-mined rubies, sapphires, garnets, and tourmalines, from mine to market. The program was co-designed directly with women-miners and empowers women miners to work safely; mine better; improve financial security; and create stable, equitable markets for fair trade. All gem transactions are backed by blockchain technology. More than 60% of participating miners are women. In partnership with Pact's Mines to Markets program and Pact's Innovation unit, Pact Ventures provided a forgivable grant investment to launch Moyo Gemstones and is exploring revenue generation models for long-term financial sustainability. Moyo Gems are now available to designers, jewelers, and consumers worldwide, and the program has been featured in Forbes. "Moyo" means "heart" in Swahili and Shona. One of the program's taglines is "Gems from the Heart."

### **"Oro Legal" Artisanal Gold Mining Program**

*Colombia. USAID (2002–2021)*

The project promotes environmentally and socially responsible ASM gold mining, alternative livelihoods, and environmental rehabilitation of degraded mining areas. The project has a particular focus on ensuring that women and youth are included and benefit from the project. Significant efforts are being made to ensure that economic activities are available to both men and women in mining communities. Women comprise 55% of all participants in the apiculture (bee keeping) initiative and participate in growing the cash crop annatto. Women are actively involved in the rehabilitation of degraded lands and the monitoring brigades to prevent the re-incursion of illegal mining.

### **Property Rights and Artisanal Diamond Development (PRADD) II**

*Côte d'Ivoire, CAR. USAID (2013–2018)*

Supported countries' compliance with the Kimberley Process and increased the percentage of diamonds entering the legal chain of custody, while improving the livelihoods of artisanal diamond mining communities. PRADD II promoted women's access and rights to productive land and financing, the lack of which contributes to their inability to invest in agriculture and mining-related activities.

### **Proudly Miners-Women Miners United for Gender Equity**

*Colombia. Alliance for Responsible Mining. Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (2018–2019)*

The project empowered miners and promoted gender equality in artisanal and small-scale mining, supporting the creation of a women miners' association that allows female miners to have a voice and put their role in the sector and foster gender equality. The association brought to light women miners' specific problems as gender violence in mining and implemented strategies and tools toward women's empowerment, women's participation in the sector, and the promotion of human rights knowledge and education among artisanal and small-scale miners.

## **Resourceful Empowerment: Elevating Women's Voices for Human and Environmental Protection in Congolese Small-Scale Mining**

*DRC. USAID (2020–2021)*

The project addresses human rights, gender-based violence, women's protection, and measures for mitigating environmental impact of artisanal mining in four project sites in eastern DRC. Expected outcomes include: development of an evidence-based, scalable, and replicable curriculum to address human rights, gender-based violence, and environmental protection; reduction in the number of women who have to trade sex for access to economic opportunities; increased knowledge of women's rights and protections under Congolese law; and increased knowledge of good environmental practices for safe digging, reinforcement of mining tunnels, and land recovery.

## **Somos Tesoro**

*Colombia. U.S. Department of Labor (2003-2020)*

The *Somos Tesoro* project in Colombia works with more than 3,500 women in coal and gold mining communities to reduce their vulnerability to labor exploitation and gender-based violence. It helps artisanal and small-scale female miners, including gold panners, improve their mining practices and comply with legal requirements to mine; and it partners with female head of households to set up vegetable gardens, start new businesses, and develop job skills. The *Somos Tesoro* project also works with mine owners and management, mining workers, and the Association of Entrepreneur Female Miners to raise awareness of gender-based violence, set up protocols for grievance mechanisms, and develop support networks to help female miners detect and address discrimination and gender-based violence. The project is implemented by PACT, in partnership with the Alliance for Responsible Mining, *Mi Sangre* Foundation, and *Fondo Acción*. To learn more about the *Somos Tesoro* project, click [here](#).

## **Sustainable Mine Site Validation Project**

*DRC. USAID (2018-2022)*

SMSV aims to reduce conflict that builds off the illegal mining and trade of tin, tantalum, and tungsten by implementing a new Mine Site Qualification and Validation model in North and South Kivu, DRC, that is financially and technically sustainable; meets all requirements laid down in the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Regional Certification Mechanism, and DRC law; allows for adequate flexibility on the ground to enable Q&V of new mine sites in a timely fashion and in accordance with local needs. SMSV has conducted training on gender mainstreaming, advocated for women's work in the mines, increased awareness on SGBV, clarified rules and regulations pertaining to women's rights on mining sites per DRC regulations, and assisted women working in mines to set up their own associations.

## **Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Central and East Africa**

*DRC, Rwanda, Uganda. IMPACT. UK's DFID, Hewlett Foundation, IDRC, and Global Affairs Canada (2015–2018)*

The research project studied the role of women in the artisanal mining sectors for tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold and opportunities for their empowerment. The research developed recommendations for provincial, national, regional, and international policymakers to improve women's opportunities in the ASM sector.

## **Zimbabwe Accountability and Artisanal Mining Program (ZAAMP)**

*Zimbabwe. Pact. DFID (2014-ongoing)*

ZAAMP mainstreams gender aspects throughout its programming to include and empower women in ASM, targeting 30% of women participation in all its interventions. ZAAMP's work with female miners includes formalization assistance and mercury education, alongside additional programming on financial literacy, leadership and confidence, creation of safe spaces, economic empowerment initiatives that encourage women to be independent, lobbying and advocating for gender sensitive policies, and specific networking opportunities.

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