Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining

IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Recommendations to address challenges and increase opportunities for empowerment

FINDING

Laws and policies contribute to gender discrimination and women's exclusion from mining activities. Yet, women's mining activity is both valuable to the sector and provides for an important part of their income.

- » Women face gender discrimination by being banned from mining when pregnant, regardless of the stage of their pregnancy or state of their health.
- » Women are more likely to work at the same mine site for longer periods of time than men, making them a valuable part of the workforce.
- » Women also have a consistent presence in artisanal mining, with 70% of those surveyed working at the mine sites every month out of the year.
- » On average, women make six times more income in the artisanal mining sector than in other income generating activities.
- This income is a significant source of revenue for many households. 72% of women surveyed in South Kivu contribute to at least half of the household's income, and 39% of these women are the sole income earners. 68% of women surveyed in Ituri contribute to at least half of the household's income, and 11% of these women are the sole income earners.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO





RECOMMENDATION ONE

Promote gender inclusion at mine sites and adjust it to the reality of the lives women lead while working in artisanal mining. This includes ending the prohibition against pregnant women working in mine sites.

- » Women artisanal miners were not consulted before Ministerial Order 0919 entered into force on October 29, 2015. This order, issued by the Cabinet of the Ministry of Mines, set a number of procedures for inspection, qualification, and validation of mine sites. It is not representative of the needs or concerns of women miners.
- » Women have the right and the capacity to participate in decisions about their own mining activities, including as they relate to health and safety.

» The loss of mining sector income during this prohibited period is a significant setback for the economic security of their growing family.

Allow pregnant women to work in the mine when pregnancy becomes visible. It is up to [the woman] to decide when [she] can no longer do it.

- Woman surveyed

FINDING

Mining roles tend to be divided by gender and vary by site.

- » Roles reserved for men (such as digging) earn significantly more than those reserved for women (such as grinding).
- » Even when they perform the same role (like washing), women earn less.
- » While earning potential varies for men based on roles, women tend to make the same amount of money regardless of which job they perform.
- » Almost half of the women did not work as part of a team, though a majority expressed a desire to join one, noting the benefits of team working such as enhanced production, increased efficiency, shared economic returns, and a strong social and economic support network.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

Challenge various culturally rooted forms of discrimination against women in artisanal mining.

- » End the practice of preventing women from doing certain mining jobs that are seen as only for men.
- » Promote access and opportunity for women to work as part of teams, so they can receive the same benefits as their male counterparts.

As a team we feel stronger and we help each other, we set up our common mutual aid fund if difficulties arise.

- Woman surveyed

FINDING

Women are frequently excluded from management structures within artisanal mining communities, including participation in decision-making opportunities where they could promote their concerns.

» Women in artisanal mining are also more often excluded as recognized stakeholders from government or donor initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

Include women as part of the efforts to formalize artisanal mining.

» Support the development of a mechanism that would promote women in discussions on formalization, including with community leaders and policy makers.

- » Government actors must ensure women artisanal miners are consulted in any policy developments and reforms on artisanal mining and the supply chain.
- » Ensure policies reflect and represent the voices of women artisanal miners.

FINDING

Women have limited access to credit, reducing their ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities and increase their income.

- » Many women are involved in microcredit and savings associations—over 27% of women surveyed compared to less than 5% of the men surveyed.
- » Still, 48% of the women surveyed cited a lack of capital as the main barrier to increasing their income at the mine site.
- » This lack of credit was also cited by state officials as the main impediment to women's economic empowerment.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Train women on how to mobilize their own savings as individuals or in groups.

» Credit schemes should also be put in place to support women's associations, helping them to develop and eventually evolve into small business mining activities.

FINDING

Women have fewer opportunities to access training and to strengthen their legal knowledge of the sector.

- » Less than 40% of women surveyed knew that the Democratic Republic of Congo has a Mining Code, compared to over 85% of the men surveyed.
- » 90% of women said they have never received training on mining and mining safety, or mining laws.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

Increase women's capacity and support efforts to strengthen their leadership in entrepreneurial activities.

- » Provide training for women on natural resource governance and their legal rights as provided by the Mining Code and other legal texts relating to the sector.
- » Provide technical assistance to women including training on mine site safety and equipment as well as techniques for increasing their productivity.

Provide women with tools and financial resources and strengthen their technical capacity.

 Woman miner on what would help to improve changes in the mining sector

RESEARCH IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO LED BY South Kivu: Réseau d'Innovation Organisationnelle (RIO) and the Catholic University of Bukavu; Ituri: Actions et Réalisations pour le Développement (ARED) and the University of Kisangani

RESEARCH LED BY: Carleton University, IMPACT, and Development Research and Social Policy Analysis Centre (DRASPAC)

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