

Women in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining

IN RWANDA

Recommendations to address challenges and increase opportunities for empowerment

FINDING

Women face barriers to employment in the mining sector because of discriminatory beliefs, including the impropriety of mining by married women.

- » Amongst those surveyed, women were much more likely than men to be unmarried, and most have dependent children.
- » In one small-scale site in North Rwanda, company records indicate that nearly two out of three female mine workers are unmarried and/or the head of their households. Overall, 55% of women identified as unmarried (single, widowed, divorced or not cohabiting) compared to 37% of men. 91% of women we spoke to have children under the age of 18.
- » The strikingly high number of single women and single mothers results from stigma and discrimination. Single mothers said they faced condemnation in their communities and started working at the mine site because of poverty. Once married, women are discouraged from working at the mine site by their communities and their husbands.

RECOMMENDATION ONE

Challenge culturally rooted forms of discrimination against women in artisanal and small-scale mining.

RWANDA



LEGEND Mine sites researched



- » End the practice of discouraging married women from accessing mining jobs by positively demonstrating how women can contribute more to their marital household through their earnings.

FINDING

The current mining law—no13/2014 enacted on May 20, 2014—on mining and quarry operations does not reflect gender dimensions in mining.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

Ensure policies reflect and represent the voices of women artisanal miners.

- » Support the development of a mechanism that would ensure women's representation across the whole spectrum of mining activities including semi-industrial mining.

- » Centralize gender considerations and the involvement of women artisanal miners in policy developments and reforms on artisanal mining and supply chain initiatives.
- » Provide training for women on natural resource governance and their rights within the Mining Code and other legal texts relating to the sector.

FINDING

Women experience inequality and are subject to gender bias in the sector. These biases make it difficult for women to acquire the experience and skills necessary to move up to more senior roles, including leadership positions.

- » According to those surveyed, women who go into mining tunnels, for example, are said to “lack good manners”. Women are also thought to be incapable of sluicing at the South Rwanda site because they are not experienced or strong enough, yet some women do perform these roles. These women, we were told are “like a man and not really a woman.”
- » In the semi-industrialized small-scale mining site adjacent to the artisanal mining operation, none of the 350 employees are women. Respondents said women have not been hired for the highly desirable semi-industrialized positions (where a daily wage is paid regardless of fluctuating production levels) because the manager said they would “make men uncomfortable.”

- » Women are less likely than men to work as part of a mining team, with men reporting they didn't like having women on their teams due to women's perceived lack of physical strength. Women themselves also reported that in many cases they chose to work as individuals,

as it provided more freedom to divide their time between the mine site and household responsibilities. Women therefore, do not have access to the benefits associated with teamwork, including a network and learning from the experience of others.

FINDING

Women have difficulty accessing credit from banks because they require their husbands' permission. This permission, we were told, can be difficult for the women to secure, and high service fees further limit women's access to banking services.

- » Without access to credit, women are unable to invest in mining activities as a subcontractor, a position which would allow them to move from subsistence to accumulation activities. The reasons for excluding women from certain roles are generally based on discriminatory views about women.
- » Becoming a subcontractor requires investment and capital flow to cover business fees, purchasing equipment, protective clothing and insurance for workers. Women face challenges accessing capital because of the widespread view that she must first get her husband's consent.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

Include women more systematically in all levels of mining work.

- » End the practice of preventing women from doing certain mining jobs – usually the highest paying and most status-enhancing – that are seen as only for men.
- » Pay women and men miners a daily rate rather than by production which would allow women more livelihood security. More women would be motivated to join the mining sector if they were paid a daily rate rather than by production, as women around the Northern site reported being discouraged from mining after seeing other women mining for months without any production—and income.
- » Promote access, support and opportunity for women to work as part of teams, so they can receive the same benefits as their male counterparts.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Support women's ability to access credit needed to undertake entrepreneurship at the mine sites, including the role of sub-contractor.

RESEARCH IN RWANDA LED BY Women In/And Mining (WIAMO)

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