Transforming natural resource management Empowering communities





Digging for Equality

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Artisanal Mining

IMPACT's Digging for Equality project aims to improve security, gender equality, and women's empowerment in the artisanal mining sectors across three countries—Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The project will support women working in the artisanal and small-scale (ASM) sector to reduce the barriers that they face and support their efforts towards gender equality.

How will **Digging for Equality** improve security, gender equality, and women's empowerment in artisanal mining?

1 Ensure laws, policies, regulations, and practices affecting the ASM sector serve to improve women's security and reduce gender inequality

Laws, regulations, policies, and government-led initiatives in DRC, Uganda, and Zimbabwe are often based on misinformation or prevailing stereotypes about women's experiences in the sector and they do not support development objectives. The project will promote a legal and regulatory context, including fiscal regime where possible, to enhance gender equality, women's security, and their participation in governance of the sector.

2 Provide capacity building, training, and awareness-raising to increase the economic benefits that women derive from ASM

Previous research has shown women lack the access and skills to perform more remunerated and status enhancing tasks in mine sites, which would increase their participation in decision making and leadership roles. The project will build the capacity of local mining organizations and their members, to improve economic benefits for women in the sector.



3 Build the capacity of women to become environmental stewards in ASM

Gendered environmental impacts are often those that are most easily overlooked or disregarded. The project will engage relevant stakeholders, and women in particular, to recognize and and mitigate the environmental conditions of their communities that have been negatively affected by mining, including the use of toxic substances such as mercury or cyanide, as well as climate change.



How does Digging for Equality support women's empowerment in artisanal mining?

IMPACT's research demonstrates that ASM is a crucial source of revenue for women and their families.

Women are an essential part of artisanal mining, taking on roles from panning and processing, to trading goods and services. They rely on the income from this sector to support their households and dependents. Yet, at the most basic level—women's diverse and active participation in the artisanal sector, and the gendered experience of artisanal mining, is often ignored by policymakers.

Women are most likely to work in the lowest-paying jobs in the ASM sector, with cultural taboos and stigma often preventing them from advancing to higher-paid positions. They are often paid less than their male counterparts for the same work. In March 2020, the project found women artisanal miners were making approximately half of what men earned for the same task at project mine sites in DRC, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Women are also less likely to organize into teams, which results in greater difficulty in accessing credit with favorable terms. This makes them vulnerable to predatory lending.

Despite this, when women participate in the sector, they contribute significantly to the economic well-being of their households and are more likely to invest their income in other income-generating activities that serve to further their goals, such as paying school fees or building a house.

The Digging for Equality project will support women to strengthen their skills and technical knowledge to access higher-paying roles at mine sites. Through awareness raising activities—aimed at women and men miners, cooperatives, and the wider community—the project will break down social stigmas and taboos that structure and limit women's economic empowerment.

Women are disadvantaged in that they often lack the knowledge, skills, networks, or capital to access and participate in local mining associations and cooperatives. The project will enhance their financial literacy or business skills, as well as provide management skills training. This technical assistance will help remove obstacles, facilitating the integration of women into mining cooperatives and associations.



These models can demonstrate the benefits of women's inclusion and empowerment in the ASM sector for a range of stakeholders including other cooperatives, private sector actors, as well as policymakers who promote and legislate cooperatives or associations as part of ASM formalization. More inclusive cooperative models will be more attuned to the perspectives and economic needs of women in the sector, which remain largely invisible otherwise.

What is the context for artisanal mining in the three countries?

This project will take place in the DRC, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, because there is a large presence of artisanal mining of different minerals and metals.

Artisanal mining is largely informal, characterized by low technology and minimal machinery. It tends to operate inefficiently and is most prevalent in developing countries where it is an important source of livelihood for many people. Artisanal mining can often damage the environment and put the health and safety of workers, as well as the surrounding communities, at risk.



In many places of the world, artisanal mining remains illegal or informal. However, many governments are working to formalize and legalize artisanal mining by providing designating specific areas for artisanal mining, licensing miners, and supporting their professionalization. DRC, Uganda, and Zimbabwe have all made efforts towards formalizing their artisanal mining sectors.

IMPACT will expand and draw on its previous research and experience working with artisanal miners, particularly in DRC, as part of this project.

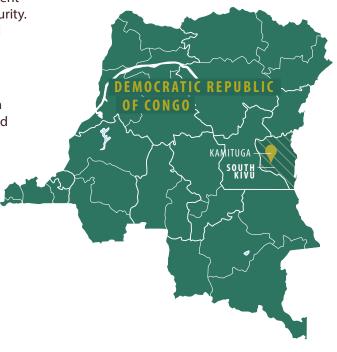
How will this project support the implementation of National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security?

A National Action Plan (NAP) defines how a country will implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. As of August 2020, 86 countries around the world have adopted a NAP, including DRC and Uganda.

The Digging for Equality project will align with and support the advancement of the implementation of NAPs on Women, Peace and Security in DRC and Uganda. Given the direct links between insecurity, human rights violations, and sexual and gender-based violence in the artisanal mining sector, the project will support a future for equitable development and peace.

While Zimbabwe has no NAP, the project will still support the implementation of women's peace and security. Women have been targeted for violence, and especially in areas that have mineral wealth, there have been significant human rights abuses and sexual and gender-based violence. Women in ASM communities have been particularly vulnerable. By supporting women's leadership, the Digging for Equality project will support women's empowerment so they may have a voice in peacebuilding going forward.





Photos by Tommy Trenchard/IDRC Women artisanal gold miners in Central Uganda where IMPACT, along with partners, researched the role of women in the sector and opportunities for their empowernent.



About the implementing partners

IMPACT, formerly Partnership Africa Canada, has been transforming how natural resources are managed in areas where security and human rights are at risk for over 30 years. We investigate and develop approaches for natural resources to improve security, development, and equality. We are an independent non-profit, collaborating with local partners for lasting change.

IMPACT's work focuses on five focus areas: regulatory and legal reform, supply chain transparency, illicit trade and financing, gender equality, and environmental stewardship. IMPACT has worked in DRC and neighbouring countries for more than a decade.

In DRC, IMPACT will be collaborating with Réseau d'Innovation Organisationnelle (RIO) to implement the Digging for Equality project. RIO is a Congolese non-profit organization based in South Kivu, promoting peace and social development in communities throughout the Great Lakes region. IMPACT has previously partnered with RIO to carry out research examining the role of women and women's livelihoods in the artisanal mining sector in central and east Africa. RIO will support the local mining association, Association de Lutte contre l'Exploitation des Femmes et Enfants des Mines (ALEFEM). ALEFEM works exclusively with women and children in ASM gold communities in Kamituga, in Mwenga territory. ALEFEM has has around 750 members, however almost 3,000 women miners have been identified in nearby mine sites, who could potentially become members or benefits from the association' services.

In Zimbabwe, IMPACT will be collaborating with the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA). ZELA, formed in 2000, is a public interest environmental law group promoting environmental justice, sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, democracy and good governance in the natural resources and environment sector. IMPACT has previously worked closely with ZELA on researching Zimbabwe's diamonds sector and calling for reforms to the Kimberley Process. ZELA will support two local mining associations in this project: Mberengwa Mining Development Trust (MMDT) and Zvishavane Women's Mining Association (ZWMA). MMDT was formed in 2015 and has more than 500 members—150 women and 100 youths. ZWMA is an exclusively female mining association with around 100 members.

In Uganda, the project will be implemented through IMPACT's Kampala office. The project will support two mining associations: Mubende Women Gold Miners Association (MUWOGOMA) and Mubende United Miners Assembly (MUMA). Muwogoma was founded in 2014 by 30 women artisanal miners and has grown to 410 members. MUMA is MUWOGOMA's umbrella organization. Only mining associations can become members of MUMA, not individual miners. It currently has 21 associations registered, representing more than 20,000 artisanal miners.



Digging for Equality is a three-year project which kicked off in 2020. Digging for Equality is undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through Global Affairs Canada.