

Empowering Women in Mining in the Great Lakes Region



What is the problem?

Women constitute a significant proportion of the mining sector across the Great Lakes Region (GLR) yet they face often significant discrimination and risk in many areas. They often receive low pay for their work. Very frequently women are excluded from any form of training and therefore end up relegated to menial and lower-paid tasks. Women are often expected to combine their work in mining with their household responsibilities leading to a very heavy work burden. This can also mean that women are obliged to bring their children to the mines which can be a starting point for child labour.

Despite the fact that mechanization should intuitively make it easier for women to work in mining as it reduces the physical strength needed, in fact the number of women in mining reduces with mechanization due to discrimination against women receiving formal training and access to equipment. For this reason, a gender focus in ASM formalization is essential to ensure the result is inclusive of women rather than causing further discrimination.

Awareness of women's rights in mining is at a very low level in many areas, not just with the miners themselves but also with government agencies, local authorities and even international organizations.



What can be done?

Empowering women in mining – A major effort is needed to improve the status, security and resources of women working in the ASM sector, notably in the DRC. This effort is needed at every level, from the home, to the mine, to the market and the ministry. Women in all iTSCi areas need direct support in order to enable them to engage with this process in a collective, informed and empowered way. Further, raised awareness of the illegality of banning women from mining, and abusing women, is urgently needed as part of the enabling environment for women to assert their rights.

Sharing experiences and building solidarity

– The situation facing women in mining differs across the GLR. Whilst women suffer significant discrimination in the DRC, in Rwanda the Government has a positive promotion policy to encourage gender equity in the mining sector and supports the active participation of women in all areas of the mining sector which merits support and peer-sharing across the region. Sharing of experiences between the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda could deliver significant benefits and demonstrate the positive impact of gender-equity in the mining sector.

Supporting national associations and network – The PROMINES project of the DRC Government and the World Bank is leading the development of a new, national, network for women in mining, *Réseau National des Femmes dans les Mines* (RENAFEM). In Rwanda, a new Rwandan Women In/And Mining Organization (WIAMO) is being created. Both of these nascent organizations have important roles to play and need support.

Objectives of the national Women in Mining networks

- Advocacy for women's constitutional representation in decision-making and formal employment in mining
- Facilitation of women's investment in the mining industry
- Facilitation of women miners to organize and access required financial, technical and marketing services
- Capacity building and skills development of female miners and employees
- Promotion of partnerships between national, regional and international, governmental and non-governmental gender and mining stakeholders
- Advocacy for the establishment of "Gender and Mining Department/Unit or posts" in national government
- Research on women in mining and sharing results with gender and mining stakeholders for action

What will your support do?

US\$20,000 will pay for local sign-writers to produce signage in three key mining centres about women's rights in mining and penalties for violence against women.

US\$30,000 will pay for printing of leaflets and posters about women's rights in mining in local languages for distribution.

US\$50,000 will support the creation of a local level women's group in one iTSCi area, enabling them to discuss and address issues they face in mining, plus to send 2 representatives to their national Women In Mining processes.

To contribute to the iTSCi Programme's ongoing field work infrastructure, contributors should also budget for an additional US\$7,500 per year for iTSCi membership.

US\$70,000 will fund a national awareness campaign to include radio and TV broadcasts, interviews with women working in the sector, and promotion of success stories about women in mining.

US\$150,000 will pay for a GLR Women in Mining conference to promote gender equity in the sector, partnership and shared learning.

US\$200,000 will provide a sponsored scholarship for six women to attend formal education on mining courses in national universities.

For More Information

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