THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINING

By

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.
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BACKGROUND

• Started in the 18th century, during the Industrial Revolution (women working in coal mines)*

• Feminism, 3 era
  Main objectives:
  ➢ 19th century – early 20; eradicate legal inequalities
  ➢ 1960 – 1980; focus on cultural inequalities, gender norms and role of women in society
  ➢ 1990 – 2000; range of diverse feminist activities

*Source: Celina Bland (1995)
TRENDS (1)

• **International context:**
  - Women in Mining Organizations (nationwide organizations for professionals within mining, including men);
  - Focus on: education (including community, youngsters, etc.), professional development, promoting and enhancing awareness towards mining as income generator.

• **Regional context**
  - Mujer Minera Programme (Chile);
  - Increasing numbers of female miners, formation of cooperatives and government involvement (Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina) to increase the number of female miners;
TRENDS (2)

• Regional context (Cont’d)
  - TAWOMA (Tanzania) and SAWIMA (South Africa).

• Local context
  - Increasing numbers of females within mining;
  - No formal organization;
  - No special regulation, although most mining companies comply to international regulations;
  - Women are represented in different positions except for CEO-related positions.
FEMALE LEADERSHIP

• Leadership is per definition not masculine;
• Women’s unique abilities create a balance between “soft empathic character” and “hard action-related character”;
• Direct participation of women in mining varies within the world. Asia <10%, Latin America 10% – 20%, Africa 40% – 50% (*);
• The driver to “seek” a job within mining varies: in South Africa e.g., it’s poverty driven, whereas in Zambia and Indonesia women act as mine owners and mine workers (operators) (*);
• In Kenya, women have been working as miners for generations due to their more honest behavior compared to men (*).

*Source: J. Hinton, et. al. (2003), Women and Artisanal Mining: Gender Roles and the Road Ahead
ROLE OF WOMEN IN ASM (1)

- **Positive effects:**
  - Within ASM, 30% women; occupational roles vary from labor intensive mining method to processing methods (laborers) to providers of good and services;
  - Women have a critical role within mineral production as well as in the development of sustainable communities; enhancing their role can help in the positive transformation of ASM;
  - Contribution to productivity; women in ASM communities are critical to community stability, cohesiveness, moral and general well-being and can initiate positive change.
ROLE OF WOMEN IN ASM (2)

• Positive effects (Cont’d):
  ➢ Stimulation of small entrepreneurship through the creation of different entrepreneurial businesses, such as shops, hotels, restaurants;
  ➢ Especially in Suriname, most academic research is executed by female researchers;
  ➢ Women play a more active role during training and awareness campaigns.
ROLE OF WOMEN IN ASM (3)

- **Negative effects:**
  - Human trafficking and prostitution;
  - Absence of sustainable entrepreneurial activities due to the mostly illegal mining practices;
  - Health issues as a result of e.g. mercury misuse and poor sanitary;
  - Less educational development for the women;
  - Negative spiral of less educated children due to the education level of the mother;
  - Social disruption due to long periods of absence of mothers and/or wives
SURINAMESE PERSPECTIVE

- Education Level AdeKUS (Mining Stream)

- Nationality ASM: 20% local, 70% Brazilians, 10% other nationalities

- Position of women in ASM: service providers, prostitutes, owners of machinery, researchers, concession holders

- Ratio men/female in ASM: 8/1

- Job Position: public 1%, private 30%, civil society 40%-50%
CHALLENGES

• Cultural beliefs preclude women from working in some sections of the mine;
• Entrepreneurial drive of women is not always acknowledged and seen as common work;
• Traditional gender roles keep women in roles, such as service providers;
• Over the years, policy and laws on mining are not gender bias.
OPPORTUNITIES

• Awareness at primary levels;
• Increasing numbers of well-educated females;
• Organizing and increased networking of females associated with the mining sector;
• Regulation of gender equality within national mining companies;
• Empowerment of females through different organizations, such as social and cultural existing organizations;
• Strengthening of women networks.
Thank you!