



Integrating Gender Issues into Mining Sector Operations

"The more money we put into women's hands in our community, the better it will be for all of us"

— Alistair Ross – President, Lonmin South Africa (July 2005 - August 2007)

What Are the Key Characteristics of the Mining Sector from a Gender Perspective?

Mining is a highly strategic sector in most developing countries as a key foreign exchange income earner, source of taxation revenue for governments as well as integration of developing countries into the global economy, and a hub of skills and learning opportunities.

"Women should break free from the glass ceiling that limits their potential. We gain respect if we demonstrate that we are putting our pound of flesh on the table. If there is a need to climb the roof in a construction job, then we do so."



— Grace Kgomongwe, MD of Little Rock CC, an SME construction company owned and run by a group of 10 women, that has been awarded a 25 million rand contract by Lonmin South Africa, to convert single sex hostels on the mine into family housing units.

However, the following characteristics also tend to characterize mining operations:

- A very gender-biased sector, where mining-related benefits, such as employment and income, are largely captured by men whereas environmental and social risks tend to fall upon women.
- Formal unemployment rates for women in mining communities reach as high as 90%, with few employment opportunities created for them in mining operations.
- Marginalization of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community mostly impacts women, the elderly and children.
- Negative environmental effects, including dislocation from agricultural lands, pressure on water supply and depleted fish stocks affect women most directly, as they traditionally have the role of household agricultural production, drawing water, washing clothes and fishing.

- A disruptive effect on families and personal safety through migrant labor practices and influx of newcomers to the community.
- An increase in dependency and prostitution by females to compensate loss in productive land or traditional livelihoods.
- Direct and indirect health risks for women through the increase in sexual diseases, including HIV/AIDS.
- An increase in domestic and social violence due to changed family roles, income levels and social stress.

What Are the Benefits of Better Integrating Women?

- A better integration of women into the mining operation and the surrounding environment leads to more prosperous and viable communities which can continue with economic activity after the end of the mine's life.
- Supporting women's economic activity can break the cycle of poverty and increase the level of education and skills in the community.
- An Increase in productivity, efficiency, profitability and reliability for the mining operation.
- Integrating women results in an enhanced reputation for the mining house and a leadership role on developing international best practice.
- Increased stakeholder buy-in and community participation mean a true social license to operate.

Where Are Potential Issues — Questions to Ask?

Ownership and management: Are women involved in the ownership structure or, if not, are women appointed to the Board of Directors by the ownership? If owners are a multinational company in joint venture with a local consortium—are women part of the local consortium?

Community consultative forums: Are women from the communities fully involved and represented in the stakeholder forums and discussions? Is sex-disaggregated



data collected on women's perceptions towards the mine? Note that women tend to have different perceptions of the benefits of the mine and want different projects for their communities than men. For example where men might request a new hospital, women will want to be sure there are sufficient hospital staff and medication rather than new infrastructure.

Agriculture and the environment: Mining companies should ensure that a gender impact assessment is conducted to document the impact of mining on women and devise culturally appropriate mechanisms to involve them.

Women tend to be the principal productive force in rural agriculture. How does mining impact on their access and title to land for agricultural use? Do land restitution, training and extension programs reach women equitably to men?

Recruitment and employment on the mine: What are the percentages/numbers of women in top, senior and middle management in the mine? What are the percentages/numbers of women in the overall mine workforce? What attention, if any, is given to employment equity? Is there a pro-women employment policy? Are the working conditions safe for women (separate ablution facilities, zero tolerance of sexual harassment, etc)?

Education and skills: What attention is being given to training opportunities for women to skill up at high levels? This could apply to existing mine house staff as well as scholarships/bursaries to attract young women from universities or the work market. Are there scholarship schemes for boys and girls from the immediate communities? Are there awareness raising activities in the community on the value of keeping girls in school?

Women and business opportunities around the mine:

What SME linkage programs will be established and how can women participate in these programs? Is there a microfinance initiative envisaged by the mining house

or community fora? What systems are in place to ensure that women will also benefit from this initiative, that adequate business development services will be on hand to benefit both men and women micro- and small entrepreneurs? Is there a possibility to initiate a cultural/tourism village around the mining operation that could be used by visitors, mine workers and neighboring communities?

How Can IFC Help?

IFC's gender program aims to make IFC's investments more responsive to women entrepreneurs. We work with our colleagues in the investment and advisory services of IFC to help IFC clients achieve more sustainable practices in their mining operations.

We do this by:

- Using sex-disaggregated data to track the impact of mining activities.
- Providing advisory services to new or existing mining projects by offering research, best practice examples and tools on gender and private sector development.

IFC Gender Mining Project

IFC's Gender program is currently implementing innovative gender inclusive projects with Newmont Ghana Gold and Lonmin PLC in South Africa. These projects are assisting the companies to include women in a sustainable and positive manner in their workforce, as well as in their supply chains and community programs. For two years now, Newmont Ghana has had a full time gender specialist to ensure that women are adequately consulted and included in community programs, while IFC and Lonmin have appointed a joint gender project officer in Lonmin to help the company to achieve a 10% intake of women in mining operations, as per the requirements of the South African Mining Charter.

Notes

1 Strongman, John and Adriana Eftimie. "Women in Energy and Mining: Voices for Change; a Vision for a Better Future. Presentation during World Bank Energy Week, March 2004.

2 Musovo, Aleta. 2001. "Gender and Mining: Community" in Mining Minerals Sustainable Development Southern Africa.

3 Ranchood, Sarita. 2001. "Gender and Mining: Workplace" in Mining Minerals Sustainable Development Southern Africa.

4 Ibid.